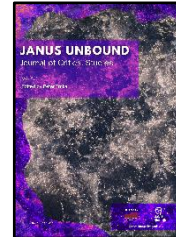


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Multitudo vs. Gespenst: A Comparison of the Marxist Conceptions of Popular Power by Negri and Derrida

Ilgin Aksoy

Abstract

This article compares Antonio Negri's and Jacques Derrida's conceptions of popular power. First, I examine Negri's reading of the Spinozist concept of *multitudo* and how it develops from his two conceptions of power: *potentia* as concrete power and *potestas* as authorized power. Then, I survey how the popular power of *multitudo* is organized or unified by sovereign power, the discontent within this unification due to *potentia*'s competitive nature, and the revolutionary possibilities it harbors. I will draw from Negri's *The Savage Anomaly* (1991) and *Multitude* (Hardt and Negri 2004) to clarify these concepts. Next, I will examine Derrida's conceptions of specter (*Gespenst*), spirit (*Geist*), and hauntology, challenging classical ontology and exploring conjuration as a principle for unifying popular power, along with its revolutionary potentials, as discussed in *Specters of Marx* (1994) and "Marx and Sons" (2008). Finally, I will compare these two conceptions of popular power by showing their juxtapositions and divergences through the examples of Romanism, Byzantinism, and autonomous Marxism. I ground this theoretical comparison in practical examples of the unification of popular power in Roman and Byzantine histories, as well as contemporary autonomous Marxist endeavors.

Key words: Marxism, Ontology, Political Theory, Derrida, Negri, Spinoza

To comrade Toni...

*"So my mind sinks in this immensity:
and foundering is sweet in such a sea."*

—Leopardi (2010, 177)

Introduction

Popular power is the cumulative power of a group of individuals within a political relation. Key questions surrounding this concept include: how does this cumulative power come into being through the powers of disparate individuals? How do these individual powers spontaneously produce com-

peting and cooperating forces? And how is it that some of these collective forces come to dominate and subjugate others? I will address these questions through analysis of Antonio Negri's *Multitudo* and Jacques Derrida's *Gespenst*, two unusual Marxist concepts developed in dialogue with Benedict Spinoza and deconstruction. The first section analyzes Negri's understanding of popular power through his reading of Spinoza's conception of *multitudo*. Negri sees this concept as effectively grasping the plurality of popular power. I will elucidate Negri's reading of Spinoza's two conceptions of power—*potentia* and *potestas*—and how they construct *multitudo* as a plural singularity. Finally, I will examine how the popular power of *multitudo* unifies under a sovereign power and how it harbors revolutionary possibilities. The second section focuses on Derrida's reading of Karl Marx's notion of specter (*gespenst*), using it to understand popular power. I will analyze Derrida's concept of hauntology in contrast to classical ontology and survey how *gespenst* functions in Marx's thought. After explicating the role of *gespenst* in understanding popular power, I will examine conjuration as a principle for unifying popular power and its relation to Marxist revolution. The third section compares Negri's and Derrida's conceptions of popular power. I will shed light on the theoretical juxtapositions and divergences between their approaches. Following this theoretical comparison, I will apply these concepts to real-world examples, examining historical unifications of popular power in Romanism, Byzantinism, and contemporary autonomous Marxist movements.

I *Multitudo* as a Concept for Understanding Popular Power

I analyze Negri's understanding of popular power through his reading of Spinoza's conception of *multitudo*, which, according to Negri, is successful at grasping the plurality of popular power. I first lay bare Negri's reading of Spinoza's two distinct conceptions of power—*potentia* and *potestas*—and, next, set forth how these concepts construct *multitudo*. Finally, I examine how popular power of *multitudo* unifies under a sovereign power and how it may be revolutionary.

I.1 *Potentia* and *Potestas* as the Principles of Plurality and Unity

In *The Savage Anomaly* (1991), Negri analyzes the Spinozist concept of *multitudo* as a framework for understanding popular power. *Multitudo* is, accordingly, constituted by a plural singularity of concrete powers (*potentia*) unlike the authorized power (*potestas*) of sovereign institutions.¹ In this reading, Spinoza emerges as the champion of radical democracy, since he finds genuine political power on the unrepresentable and untransferable (*pace* Thomas Hobbes)² concrete power (*potentia*) of the popular multitude.³ The two concepts of power, *potentia* and *potestas*, are central to Negri's understanding of *multitudo* and eventually of popular power even in this early stage. In his foreword to *The Savage Anomaly*, "The Anatomy of Power," Michael Hardt (1991, xi) points out that the investigation of political power in its variety of forms which penetrate the entire public and private space has been an idiosyncrasy of contemporary philosophy, espe-

cially that of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. I believe this current of investigating political power as a pervasive feature in all political levels has culminated in feminist theories, which succeeded in demonstrating and politicizing power relations within private spaces by exposing issues such as the exploitation of women's domestic labor, domestic violence, and marital rape—territories long neglected and even denied of political space by traditional political theorists.⁴ This current of thought contrasts with the prevailing conception of political power as something institutionalized or organized. Negri's discovery of the two distinct conceptions of power in Spinoza, as Hardt (1991, xi-xii) observes, is an important contribution. *Potentia* is the actual concrete causal constitution of the world. *Potestas* is the centralized, unilateral, transcendent force to rule and control the *potentia* of the people. The former is an ontological conception, whereas the latter is ontologically an illusion, yet historically and politically very real, as Hardt reiterates (xiv).

Negri argues that, according to Spinoza, there is no such thing as possibility but only actuality because there is no analogical being or degradation of being since “being is univocality” (1991, 43). By negating the idea of potentiality and analogy, Spinoza overcomes both the Neoplatonic and Scholastic representations of *potestas*, depicted through the image of God, as well as “the Cartesian and idealist flight from the responsibility of [this] transformation” (43). Substance is “the scheme of the ontological system in its circular complexity,” says Negri (48). This is a system composed of *potentia*: substance is the totality of *potentia*. The essence of infinite substance is cause and *potentia*, and it is organized according to the modality of its causal mechanism (53). Spinoza's “modes are in and conceived through substance” (E1D5),⁵ and a body is “a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing” (E2D1). How should we understand essence then? Spinoza answers: “to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing” (E2D2). So, essence is not some ultimate being or principle which underlies a singular object, as Aristotelians and Scholastics held; rather, Spinoza interprets essence as a more flexible concept with respect to how we can conceive a singular thing. And singular things “are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing” (E2D7). Negri concludes that modes are versatile singularities as Spinoza depicts them merely in terms of an *effect* and not some essence or subject which they inhere in or are predicated of (1991, 60). Consequently, *potentia* is the engine that drives this fluctuation of singularities, while substance is the organic whole of it. Applied to the political context then, the political sphere is composed of these fluctuating singularities. Individual human beings as well as varying political organizations are instantiations of such fluctuations of singularities. As all singularities are both synchronically and diachronically variations of *potentiae*, the singularity of these singularities, which is *multitudo*, is itself a synchronic and

diachronic variation of these fluctuating singularities.⁶ *Multitudo* is thus a plurality of competing and cooperating singularities of varying *potentiae*. *Potestas*, the idea of a unilateral force, on the other hand, is an illusion in the ontological context (Negri 1991, 62-3). Spinoza criticizes the idea of a God of such unilateral force, and the idea of a political power, *potestas*, which derives its significance from the idea of the former. He compares the *potestas* of God to the power of monarchs, who have arbitrary will over their subjects:

By God's power (*potentia*) ordinary people understand God's free will and his right over all things which are, things which on that account are commonly considered to be contingent. For they say that God has the power (*potestas*) of destroying all things and reducing them to nothing. Further, they very often compare God's power with the power of Kings. But we have refuted this ... and we have shown that God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself. ... For no one will be able to perceive rightly the things I maintain unless he takes great care not to confuse God's power with the human power or right of Kings. (E2P3S)

Nevertheless, in the political context, *potestas* is very real: the unified *potentia* of people. Ontologically, it is still *potentia*; yet, politically, it has a distinct characteristic as it is the most dominant mode of *potentia*, conceived as a transitive cause that contrasts with the immanence of *potentia*. Thus, it possesses the ability to subsume and govern others. Negri points out that Spinoza invokes in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* in a number of passages (1991, 111). For instance, when defining the conditions of democracy, Spinoza refers to the absolute power of *potestas* as the unification and organization of the *potentia* of the people:

Since we have shown that the natural right of each is only limited by its *potentia*, it is clear that by transferring this power to another, either willingly or under compulsion, one necessarily cedes also one's right; and further, the supreme right over all belongs to the one who has supreme *potestas* to coerce all, to restrain them by the threat of a supreme penalty that is universally feared. Of course, he will retain this right only as long as he maintains the power to do everything he wishes; otherwise his rule will become precarious, and no one who is stronger than he will be bound unwillingly to obey him. (TTP 16/24)

Deleuze (2023) points out that *potestas* (*pouvoir*) is, in fact, a diminution of *potentia* (*puissance*) of the people: an exercise of power of the ruling over the ruled. It persists by limiting individual *potentiae* for the sake of optimizing the total *potentia* (that is, *potestas*) of the unity. Furthermore, *potestas* is by definition a sad passion as Spinoza defines sadness as the affect that diminishes *potentia*, whereas joy is the one that increases it. Consequently, this organization of *potentia* of the people turns out to be what Spinoza calls *multitudo*. *Multitudo* is a singular thing, but like all singular things, for Spinoza, it is also a plurality, which cannot be defined by a substance, subject, or essence. It is a flexible, dynamic, fluctuating singularity, as Negri remarks:

... the multitude itself is a human condition. The condition is a modality, a determined being. But being is dynamic and constitutive. The human condition is therefore human constitution. (1991, 188)

In conclusion, *potentia* and *potestas* are distinct concepts in Spinoza's philosophy, with significant implications for understanding political power. *Potentia* refers to the actual, dynamic power that permeates the world, constituting both nature and human beings, while *potestas* is the organized, centralized power of sovereign institutions, which attempts to control and limit the popular power, or the *potentia* of the people. The confusion between these two concepts arises when one conflates the ontological reality of *potentia* with the political, institutionalized form of *potestas*. Spinoza critiques this confusion, arguing that true political power lies in the decentralized *potentia* of the people, which forms the foundation of *multitudo*—a fluctuating, dynamic plurality that resists being reduced to a singular, centralized authority.

1.2 The Plurality of the Popular Power of the *Multitudo*

As *multitudo* is not an absolute entity determined by a substance, subject, or essence, but rather a variation of modes of *potentia* of people, it is more plural than singular. In this regard, *multitudo*, as popular power, defines a space of variations of competition and cooperation. In their work *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri compare this conception to other concepts of the unification of popular power, such as “the people, the masses, and the working class” (2004, xiv). *Multitudo*, however, is not characterized by a subject or a single identity but a plural singularity, unlike other notions of popular power which are conceived as a unity:

The population, of course, is characterized by all kinds of differences, but the people reduces that diversity to a unity and makes of the population a single identity: “the people” is one. The multitude, in contrast, is many. (2004, xiv)

Multitudo is composed of a variety of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as different forms of labor, ideology, and political desires. In this regard, it is different from the concept of the working class or the proletariat, as Hardt and Negri remark (xiv). The concept of the working class refers to wage workers who do not own the means of production and must sell their labor to sustain themselves. This class is distinguished not only from those who own the means of production (the bourgeoisie) but also from other groups of workers in agriculture, services, and other sectors, emphasizing their reliance on wages rather than ownership or control of productive resources. Marx (1970a) defines the proletariat as the social class lacking any substantial ownership of the means of production, and whose only means of subsistence is reliant upon selling their labor power for a wage. In a broader sense, though, the working class includes all wage-dependent workers, excluding not only owners of the means of production but also the unemployed, domestic laborers, and others who do not rely on a wage for their livelihood. *Multitudo*, by contrast, is a more inclusive concept, encompassing a singularity composed of

the plurality of agents of social production, regardless of their monetary or economic relations.

If a singularity is defined as the cause of a certain effect, as according to Negri's reading of Spinoza, then cannot the working class be defined with respect to two very different powers: the cause of industrial production and proletarian revolution? Though the working class, at least in its narrow sense, may not be the engine of revolution, it is still possible to conceive it as a *multitudo*, despite Hardt and Negri's objection that this concept differs, a versatile nomenclature for various *multitudines*. Hardt and Negri emphasize two characteristics of *multitudo* that are relevant for contemporary democracy. Its economic aspect, through which, unlike the identity of the people or the uniformity of the masses, the plural singularity of the *multitudo* may organize around its common interests against competing interests, thus potentially accomplishing a cooperation (2004, xv). Second, *multitudo* well accounts for the contemporary forms of organization, which they consider to be trending towards an "increasingly democratic organization, from centralized forms of revolutionary dictatorship and command to network organizations that displace authority in collaborative relationships" (xvi).

1.3 The Unification of the Popular Power with Sovereign Power and its Discontents

How does the *potentia* of the *multitudo* turn into *potestas*? How do the varying *potentiae* of people unify to form a *multitudo*? In Spinoza's *oeuvre*, the tension between cooperation and competition is obvious. According to the *Ethics*⁷ and *Tractatus Politicus* (2/7), every individual human being strives to persevere in its own being. This perseverance is not only against the threat of wildlife but also against other humans, who can be "more shrewd and cunning" (TP 2/14). This means that every individual human being may turn against the others in order to compete for their perseverance. The competitive nature of human beings to persevere in their being leads to such acts as murder, theft, and rape. However, perseverance is most achievable through cooperation since other human beings are the most useful to human beings.⁸ Thus, when two humans cooperate, they possess more power than they would individually. This power increases geometrically proportionate to the number of individual human beings who join them, which will not only protect them from competitive threats but also enable them to organize the world in accordance with their common benefits.

Both cooperation and competition pertain to the nature of human beings according to Spinoza: neither can be historically, logically, or ontologically prioritized. Human individuals are always in a political relationship, striving to balance cooperation and competition in contrast with Hobbesian conservatism, which conceives the state of nature to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," as individuals are in a "war of all against all" (Hobbes 2004, 186), and Lockean liberalism, which considers men "living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, [which] is properly the state of nature" (Locke 1999, 280). This perpetual tension between cooperation and competition is the human condition, according

to Spinoza, and can only be overcome by reason.⁹ Insofar as human beings act reasonably, they act in *concert* to be the cause of *one* action, hence forming a kind of particular plural singularity he coins *multitudo*. However, for Spinoza, a singularity is not an Aristotelian particular substance or subject that stands still behind every change; instead, it involves a plurality that is both a synchronic and diachronic variation of the *potentiae* of people, which forms a singularity with respect to one effect. With respect to another effect, though, another singularity, in competition with the former, is in operation, and an infinity of variations. Therefore, these singularities, or *multitudines*, are always in competition because of the conflicting effects they cause, hence possibilities for social and political transformations. After all, Marx's conception of class struggle is the conflict between the powers of various classes, and proletarian revolution is a calculus of the powers of classes in industrial capitalism.

When this plural singularity of the *potentiae* of people, or popular power, is held by an agent, it is called sovereignty. If this agent is one person, it is a monarchy; if it is restricted to a group of elites, it is aristocracy; and if it belongs to a council of people who compose the *multitudo*, then it is democracy (TP 2/17, 3/2, 3/7, 3/9). Thus, the power of the sovereign is ontologically rooted in *potentia*, but from a political perspective, it is a specific organization or manifestation of *potentia*, which Spinoza refers to as *potestas*.

Potentia—and its translation into political language, natural right—cannot be transferred to another. It is inherently tied to the body of an individual. Thus, the plurality of the popular power cannot be truly dissolved in its unification under sovereign power, since the plural *potentia* that constitutes the popular power is inherently active, belongs to individuals, and cannot be transferred to the unity of *potestas*, which is misconceived as a unilateral power.¹⁰ This understanding of natural right, in its very foundation, is opposed to the Hobbesian analysis of the political space, where the plurality of the popular power dissolves into the unity of sovereign power through the transfer of the power of people to the sovereign through the social covenant. Hobbes argues that individuals alienate their natural right to the sovereign, transferring their power to ensure collective peace and security.¹¹ It also contrasts with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conception, where the plurality of popular power is dissolved in the *volonté générale*.¹²

Negri (1991, 114, 194) argues that *multitudo* opens a space between the individual and the state. Sandra Field defines this space as a “non-juridically conceived collectivity of human beings” (2020, 160). I find this definition useful as it captures the dynamism of the *multitudo* while reiterating its pre-judicial character. This is in opposition to the juridical character of the Hobbesian sovereign, who can impose its will on the totality of the people, even in the case of democracy where dissenters are obliged to abide by the decision of the popular will (Negri 1991, 68-73, 112-13, 139). However, according to Negri (1991, 68-73, 108-19), when Spinoza defines sovereign power in terms of popular power, or *potestas* in terms of *potentia*, he demystifies state power and reveals the concrete source of power: *multitudo*. Therefore, *multitudo* not only allows us to grasp the absolute plurality of popular power and promote radical democracy but it

also shows the possibilities of fundamental social and political transformations.¹³

2 *Gespenst* as a Concept for Understanding Popular Power

I contend Derrida offers the hauntological conception of *Gespenst* to understand popular power and the revolutionary possibilities it carries in Marxist thought. I will first analyze Derrida's depiction of hauntology against classical ontology, then survey his exploration of the function of *Gespenst* in Marx's thought. After laying bare the conception of *gespenst* as a framework for understanding popular power, I will examine the principle of conjuration as a means of unifying popular power and its relation to Marxist revolution.

2.1 Ontology vs. Hauntology

The term "hauntology" is introduced by Derrida in his *Specters of Marx* (1999). It works on several levels. First of all, it is a playful allusion to ontology, as the terms are almost homonymous in French, implying that Derrida is offering an alternative to ontology. Despite its centrality to his examination of specters, Derrida uses the term only four times throughout the book, which makes deciphering it a difficult task. Still, as a starting point—if a starting point is even possible for Derrida—let us see how he introduces this concept.

The first appearance of the term is in the first chapter "Injunctions of Marx," where Derrida depicts hauntology by referring to presence and past. He starts by questioning what is "the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a specter" (1999, 10). A specter is supposedly ineffective, yet it is virtually in effect when haunting someone. In that sense, Derrida compares it to a simulacrum, questioning whether there is a difference between a specter and the thing itself? Similarly, there is no difference between the specter and the present, once the former haunts you. The idea that Derrida repeats here is the recurrence and persistence of social and cultural elements from the past in the manner of specters.

He then compares hauntology to ontology: the former is accordingly a more comprehensive and powerful instrument for understanding being (if it is a matter of being at all). It is more comprehensive and more powerful because it is not limited to the present, but also accounts for the past and the future as an eschatology and teleology:

Let us call it a hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being (of the "to be," assuming that it is a matter of Being in the "to be or not to be," but nothing is less certain). It would harbor within itself, hut like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. It would comprehend them, but incomprehensibly. How to comprehend in fact the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end? Can the extremity of the extreme ever be comprehended? And the opposition between "to be" and "not to be"? (Derrida 1999, 10)

Later, in “Conjuring-Marxism,” Derrida presents hauntology as a concept which makes the other relevant concepts of ontology, theology, and positive or negative onto-theology possible (63). Here, it becomes more apparent that hauntology is deeply related to Derrida’s project of turning back to the spirit of Marxism—that is, conjuring Marxism, particularly in response to its alleged failures and critiques from figures such as Francis Fukuyama (1992), who famously asserted that with the demise of communism, capitalism achieved a conclusive victory, marking the end of history.

Derrida does not yield to such assertions, finding in Marxism a universal and a temporal aspect, which is why it keeps haunting the world. This haunting cannot be made sense of through ontology, which will always fall short because it is conditioned by the notion of presence. Instead, Derrida offers a “deferred non-origin,” which is based on his doctrine of *différance*. The term is introduced as a difference and deferral of meaning in his *Of Grammatology* (1998). *Différance* describes a linguistic notion which does not function within the traditional linguistic distinctions between sense and reference; instead, it operates in a network of linguistic moments which derive their meaning from their relations to each other. Yet, *différance* is not something which exists before meaning but rather is its condition of possibility. Hauntology is an appreciation of being in a non-identical sense. It takes its objects not as substantial or essential entities which have synchronic or diachronic identities determined by some latent substance, subject, matter, or form. Instead, it views them as actualities that are always already transforming. This concept resonates with Negri’s notion of *multitudo*, in the concern for understanding the world in dynamic ways.

The tradition of ontology traces back to Aristotle, who defined the objects of his research of metaphysics as singular things. For Aristotle, singular things were the primitive concepts to be accounted for through metaphysics. This is understandable as ordinary experience is not composed of quantum fields, say, but of singular things. Thus, in his *Categories* (1991a), he took particular objects as substances that can neither inhere in nor be predicated of another. In his *Metaphysics* (1991b), Aristotle analyzed these objects in terms of his notions of matter and form, which make possible the singular things.

Unlike ontology, hauntology can account for the equiprimordiality of past and future in our experience instead of the primordiality of presence. Hauntology is a conjuration, whereas ontology is an exorcism (Derrida 1999, 202). The latter is an exorcism since it exorcizes the past and future from the present as if a demon; while the former treats them as something which is and should be called back in the present. Despite the similarity of concerns with Derrida, Negri sticks to the orthodox terminology of ontology. In his “Marx and Sons,” Derrida criticizes Negri for his obstinacy of keeping this term:

I agree, agree about everything with the exception of one word, “ontology.” Why do you cling to that word? Why do you want to put forward a new ontology, after having duly noted the transformation that renders the Marxist paradigm of ontology obsolete? Why do you want to re-ontologize at all costs, at the risk of restoring everything to order? to the grand order, but to order? I was

first given pause, in my enthusiastic approval, when, somewhere, I came across a first reference to ontology. (2008, 257)

Derrida, in a similar vein to Negri in his reading of Spinozist ontology, develops the concept of hauntology to account for the synchronic and diachronic dynamism of our experience and to emphasize the equiprimordiality of past and future. This conception of being will be crucial to understanding his depiction of *gespenst* as a conception of popular power in Marx's thought.

2.2 Hauntology of the *Gespenst*

Is it possible to speak of such a specter of popular power through Derrida's reading of Marx and, if so, what is its character? As Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg remark in their introduction to *Specters of Marx* (1999, x-xi), it is impossible to conjure all the specters that haunt Derrida's text, let alone Marx's, in such a short paper. Therefore, I focus on the *gespenst* or the specter of popular power. As its name suggests, by taking specter as his primary object of examination, Derrida revives a concept in-between life and death (Magnus and Cullenberg 1999, xvii-xviii). I have already established that hauntology offers a method of research into being, which does not take as its object an identity, in terms of traditional metaphysical concepts of substance, subject, or essence, thus overcoming what Derrida calls the "ontology of presence." Following this analysis of being through hauntology, Derrida considers the specters of Marx as beings which are principally non-identical and transcend the ontology of presence by expressing themselves only as past and future (Magnus and Cullenberg 1999, xix).

Derrida's introduction of the specters is conspicuous: it is not a definition but an exhibition carried out in reference to the plurality, multiplicity, and autonomy of the power of a people—that is, popular power:

The specters of Marx. Why this plural? Would there be more than one of them? *Plus d'un* [More than one/No more one]: this can mean a crowd, if not masses, the horde, or society, or else some population of ghosts with or without a people, some community with or without a leader—but also the less than one of pure and simple dispersion. Without any possible gathering together. Then, if the specter is always animated by a spirit, one wonders who would dare to speak of a spirit of Marx, or more serious still, of a spirit of Marxism. Not only in order to predict a future for them today, but to appeal even to their multiplicity, or more serious still, to their heterogeneity. (1999, 1-2)

Three characteristics of specters are pointed out here. First, specters come in a plurality; they are neither unified nor *absolute* singularities. They precede a crowd, masses, horde, society, or people, which are all unified in varying degrees. However, specters are not unified to any degree; they do not have an identity to be unified. Secondly, specters are autonomous, not only because they lack a unifying identity but also because they precede any such identity. They might or might not be consolidated by a leader, but this consolidation is different from an identification. An identification finds a common characteristic and

essence in all the members of a certain group, whereas a consolidation is the organization of the varying powers of a group to produce a common effect. Finally, as a multiplicity, specters are heterogenous. They are not composed of identifiable individuals, but rather of varying ones that cannot be understood with respect to a certain identifying principle such as essence, form, or substance. Yet, there is still a singularity to the specter, although it is plural and not an identity. This singularity is described as a “paradoxical incorporation” by Derrida (1999, 4-5). The specter appears in a spectral flesh until it disappears the next moment. Its appearance is never a certainty but a paradox.

Derrida’s notion of specters parallels Negri’s conception of *multitudo*: each is a plurality of heterogenous singularities; preceding any social unification; autonomous; multiplicities, they can only be vaguely understood as a singularities. Of course, there are differences as well: Derrida does not provide us with any identifiable principle to understand his conception of specters, whereas Negri takes the notion of *potentia* as the most primitive term of his interpretative thesis of popular power. I will come back to this comparison later; but for now, we should continue to shed light on Derrida’s reading of specters.

2.3 Conjunction as the Unification of the Popular Power

In “Injunctions of Marx,” Derrida introduces conjunction as a concept to make sense of the unification of plurality of specters. He invokes two meanings of the French noun “conjunction,” which gathers up two English words: on the one hand, it designates *conspiracy* and the magical incarnation to evoke a charm or spirit (1999, 49-50); on the other hand, it is an alliance among the specters to unify their plurality of power for a political end: “A conjunction, then, is first of all an alliance, to be sure, sometimes a political alliance, more or less secret, if not tacit, a plot or a conspiracy. It is a matter of neutralizing a hegemony or overturning some power” (1999, 58). This alliance, or the unification of the plurality of the power of the specters, then, is characterized by a conspiracy and a non-ontological, non-identifiable principle of an incarnation to evoke a charm or spirit. It cannot be reduced to any ontological principle, as Negri’s concept of *multitudo* could in terms of the ontological notion of *potentia*.

As previously noted, Marx’s specters, according to Derrida, are not given in the present; they are rather an expression of the past and future as well as the present. Specters are gathered in a moment of insurgency against a political hegemony. Derrida’s conception of conjunction does not presuppose a state of nature devoid of political unification; rather, the human condition is inherently a political state in which some spectral powers struggle against always already constituted political power. In this sense, Derrida’s idea of conjunction can be compared to Negri’s conception of *potentia*, or the concrete power of the people against the *potestas* of the hegemonic powers of the state.

At least one of the specters that Marx addresses is the specter of communism. In his analysis, Derrida emphasizes the non-presence and non-identity of this specter: the specter of communism does not have a *Dasein*, that is, a presence; yet it is the condition of possibility of *Dasein* (1999, 125). That is to say, human experience is always conditioned by some specters—specters of a *plural*

singularity—akin to Spinoza’s and Negri’s concept of *multitudo*, which is a loose bundle of human beings. However, unlike concrete power in the Spinozist sense, this specter is an atemporal horizon for the human beings that it encompasses.

The relationship between spirit (*Geist*) and specter (*Gespens*) can also be understood in the context of time. The conjuration of a specter is an instantiation of a spirit. Apparently, spirit is something much more temporally widespread than a specter, while the latter is a more temporal expression of the former, although not temporally present (Derrida 1999, 156-8). The expression of the specter as a conjuration from spirit takes place in the public space where human beings come together. Many specters interplay in this space: they compete and cooperate, simultaneously diminishing and enhancing each other. Popular powers, in the form of specters, interact in the public space. Yet, as they do not have identical or substantial beings, there are no defined or given limits of these specters. They interact as organic dependent moments, rather than mechanically independent pieces. Edmund Husserl’s analysis of mereology distinguishes independent parts (pieces) that are separable entities and have attributes extrinsic to their wholes, and dependent parts (moments) that are inseparable entities and only have attributes intrinsic to their wholes (2001, 4-5, 17, 29). Such a dependent composition of specters as organic wholes interplaying in human public spaces is expounded by Derrida:

There is the gathering place toward which all the repatriated specters run: the forum or agora for all those who come back, for there is a lot of talking going on. Marx then prescribes that one proceed with the reappropriation while taking into account all the practical and social structures, all the empirico-technical detours that had produced the initial ghosts. It is not enough to destroy as if with a spell, in an instant, the “corporeality” (*Leibhaftigkeit*) of the ghosts in order to reincorporate them alive. (1999, 161)

For Derrida, specters are non-substantial and non-identical social bundles that make up the prevalent popular powers in a society. These popular powers are always in both competition and cooperation. Among them, there are some hegemonic specters, with the most hegemonic ones making up the state power. Conjuration is the principle of the unification of these popular powers, bringing them together as specters.

Yet, since the specters are not fixed in a singular moment but rather are conditioned by the future and the past as much as the present, this bringing together in the form of conjuration is an activity of opening a horizon concerned with both the past and future. Every conjuration then, whether conservative, liberal, or Marxist, needs to account for this concern in bringing together popular power. From a Marxist perspective, the challenge is how to conjure the revolutionary communist powers of the people as specters.

3 Multitudo vs. Gespenst

3.1 A Theoretical Comparison

The concepts of *multitudo* and *gespenst* are quite analogous. The first, most obvious similarity between them is their shared emphasis on the non-identical, non-substantial, anti-essential, and anti-subjective character of popular power. They deviate from the Aristotelian and Cartesian traditions, which locate identity in the ever-changing diversity of this world through a pre-ontological conviction that the world is made up of singular things and some substance which grounds them, an essence which unifies their changing characteristics or a subject of which these characteristics can be predicated. Such deviation aligns with Marx's perspective in *Grundrisse*, where he states that "[s]ociety does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand" (1973, 265). Negri and Derrida's agreement on the non-identity of political subjects can be observed through their playful correspondence on Marrano culture. The Marrano, according to Negri, chooses a secular, this-worldly life by denying the presumed promise of transcendence in Judaism and Christianity (2008, 11-2). Marranos, of Judaist heritage, are disguised as Christians, yet live as secular people in a hermeneutical web of meaning and values which express this-worldly practices. So, what is their identity? Are they Judaists, Christians, or atheists? Derrida responds to Negri that he considers himself a Marrano, as he denies any identity (2008, 261-2). Furthermore, Derrida reads Marx as a Marrano since he was a "clandestine immigrant, a Hispano-Portuguese disguised as a German Jew who, we will assume, pretended to have converted to Protestantism, and even to be a shade anti-Semitic?" (262). His sons and daughters, those who inherit his legacy and claim to be Marxists, are inheritors of this complex blend of Hispano-Portuguese and German Judaism, along with Protestantism and anti-Semitism. Their ontologies are unconsciously laden with these multifaceted conceptions. This analysis of Marranism can be extended to all political subjects. All political subjects harbor levels of intertwined identities that cannot longer be discerned. They are not determined by any identity but by a confluence of past burdens, present practices, and future horizons.

The second juxtaposition between the concepts of *multitudo* and *gespenst* is their reiteration of plurality and multiplicity. Both Negri and Derrida criticize orthodox conceptions of political subjects, such as "the people," which always suppose a unity in spite of their undeniable plurality and multiplicity. For Negri, *multitudines* are bundles of concrete powers, which can be recognized in an infinite number of ways with respect to their various effects. For Derrida, specters are non-present, spectral—in the sense that they carry the heritage of the past into the future—and heterogeneous existences. In this regard, they encompass a plurality and multiplicity of individual subjects.

Third, both Negri and Derrida explicitly acknowledge the autonomous character of popular power. Negri reiterates the autonomy of the *multitudo* in several passages both from *The Savage Anomaly* (1991, 193-4, 198, 201-2, 209) and *Multitude* (Hardt & Negri 2004, 78, 84, 86), while Derrida mentions it in several

critical passages in his *Specters of Marx* (1999, 157-8, 161, 192-3, 226-7). The idea of autonomy is a modern concept, which can be traced back to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (2003), where he defines genuine freedom and morality as the autonomy of the rational self. Negri, however, finds the antecedent of this idea in Spinoza's definition of freedom.¹⁴ Accordingly, what is free for Spinoza is what is determined by itself and thus autonomous. A *multitudo* is analytically autonomous as it is defined with respect to being the cause of an effect. Yet, there are levels of autonomy, and as much of an effect a *multitudo* can produce, the more autonomous it will be.

Finally, all these three characteristics of popular power amount to an endorsement of radical democracy by both Negri and Derrida. Their insistence on the non-identical, non-substantial, anti-essentialist, and anti-subjective character of popular power, along with plurality, multiplicity, and autonomy, brings such a conclusion. Therefore, no central hegemonic government can possibly capture the variations in the popular powers except through a pure, direct democracy.

Hardt acknowledges Negri's reading of Spinoza as a radical democrat in his preface to *The Savage Anomaly*:

He is a philosopher of being who immediately effects the inversion of the totality of the transcendent imputation of causality by posing the productive, immanent, transparent, and direct constitution of the world; he is a radical democrat and revolutionary who immediately eliminates even the abstract possibility of the rule of law and Jacobinism. (Negri 1991, xxii)

In *Multitude*, Negri and Hardt allude to the Italian activist group "White Overalls" from the 1990s as a centerless radical democratic movement. The origins of the White Overalls go back to the 1970s and 1980s, when groups of young people took over abandoned buildings and turned them into collective social spaces. In a similar vein, the White Overalls turned any part of the city on any given night into a carnivalesque dance party, without any centralized organization. The movement ultimately expanded to include organizing demonstrations with illegal immigrants, political refugees from the Middle East, and other liberation movements (Hardt and Negri 2004, 264-7). This emphasis on decentralization and grassroots movements was obviously a reaction to the centrist inclinations of real-socialist states such as the USSR and the People's Republic of China, with their all-powerful party organizations. Derrida is critical of and frustrated with these "disastrous historical failures" of real-Marxism (2008, 221-2). These critiques are not new; Marx himself criticized the centralization of power under the state, as seen in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1970b), where he warned against the concentration of power in the hands of a bureaucratic elite.

This was not how these socialist states organized themselves initially though. The Bolshevik motto, "all power to the soviets," insisted on a non-centralized form of government before the October Revolution. Similarly, Mao Tse-tung was straightforwardly critical of the Soviet Union's centralized form of govern-

ment, which monopolizes all economic activity and means of production, in his *On State Capitalism* (1953). Mao's own vision of socialism in China was initially marked by an emphasis on peasant-led rural revolutions and decentralized forms of governance, though this later shifted in practice to more centralized, top-down control as the Chinese Communist Party solidified its dominance. The decentralization emphasized by these movements and thinkers challenges the conventional state-based organizational models that have historically been associated with Marxism and socialism, calling instead for a more fluid, participatory approach to political engagement and social transformation.

All these historical tensions relate back to how popular power is naturally plural yet also singular and autonomous, raising the question of how these attributes can be unified under different governmental systems. What would be the unifying principle in a socialist and liberal state, or a feudal and theological one?

3.2 A Case Study of Romanism, Byzantinism and Autonomous Marxism

In this section I will demonstrate how the non-identity of popular powers has historically been brought into unification to create a hegemonic political power, through a comparison of Roman and Byzantine state structures. Next, I will discuss if a non-hegemonic social structure is possible, or to what extent it is possible, through the contemporary examples of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and Rojava.

Roman history presents the paradigmatic case for political theory not only because it is the best-documented piece of ancient history but also because it provides great illustrations for a wide range of political theoretical themes from popular power to hegemony and class struggle to democracy. Furthermore, these examples are not only limited to the historical era of Ancient Rome from 753 BCE to 476 CE but also extend to later empires such as the Byzantine Empire, Holy Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, and Tsardom of Russia, as well as to the modern political structures of the American Revolution and the United States, the Soviet Revolution and the Soviet Union, Western democracies, and the Third Reich, spanning over more than 2,500 years, all of which inherited the legacy of Ancient Rome to some extent. An examination of Roman political history can clarify many of our contemporary political issues and help to strategize for the future.

From its very beginning, Rome was an open city. It was a haven for immigrants, outcasts, and runaway slaves. The foundation myths of Rome, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* (2024), portray figures like Evander, who fled from Arcadia in ancient Greece to found the city of Pallantium on the future site of Palatine Hill of Rome. Virgil describes the Romans as descendants of immigrants who had survived the Trojan War, and Remus and Romulus, the founders of the city of Rome, as runaways from Alba Longa. It was governed as a kingdom for the first few centuries (753 BCE - 509 BCE) until Sextus Tarquinius, son of the last king of Rome, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, was overthrown following his rape of Lucretia. The aftermath of the exile of Tarquin led to the birth of the republic. The Romans devised a political structure which would hinder any

such concentration of power in any single hand ever again. The Roman Republic was governed by two councils which were elected every year, and which held the right to veto each other's decisions. The councils were controlled by the senate, which was composed of 300 *patricians*.

Even at this point, it is possible to observe the interplay of popular powers. The Roman Monarchy unilaterally unified popular powers, in the sense of concrete powers or *potentia*, into a single arbitrary hegemonic power of the kings, in the sense of *potestas*, which resulted in the exploitation of this power for their own interests in the story of Sextus Tarquinius's rape of Lucretia. The story shows how the bodies and lives of all (and the virtue of women, including the wives of aristocrats, as well as their husbands in the framework of this story), are under threat in such a regime.¹⁵

So, the first unification of popular power in the Republican period under the councils was established by taking the plurality, multiplicity, and autonomy of the popular powers into consideration. However, the *plebeians*, who were not born into patrician families were deprived of the right to be involved in state affairs. The struggle between patricians and plebeians led to the inclusion of the plebeians into the government of the republic, which demonstrated the power of the plebeians as a self-organized *multitudo*.¹⁶

The Roman Empire was established when Julius Caesar was appointed the perpetual dictator of Rome. Governing the popular powers in the then vast state was increasingly difficult within a democratic framework in the manner of the *Senātus Populusque Rōmānus* (SPQR). Competitions among popular powers came to the fore during the era of *Pax Romana*. One of the first blows to the Empire was the rise of Christianity, which emerged as a subversive movement and ideology against the Roman Empire. The Christian movement was able to consolidate popular powers into a Derridean specter, addressing the past anger towards the Roman Empire in the Middle East—especially the destruction of Jerusalem and Herod's Temple during the Jewish War of 66–73 CE, as Friedrich Nietzsche argues in *The Anti-christ* (2010)—and offering a future promise of a *constitutio libertatis* in its theological instantiation of an imminent Kingdom of God.¹⁷ The Empire was able to survive the increasing *potentia* of the Christian republic by embracing Christianity as its official religion. After Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor, moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium, the competitive *potentiae* in the Empire consolidated under two *multitudines*. Within a century following this gesture, the Roman Empire and its now official religion were split into two when Theodosius bequeathed the Empire to his sons Arcadius in the East and Honorius in the West.¹⁸

The Western Roman Empire disintegrated in the 5th century due to Germanic and Hun migrations and invasions, ultimately coming to an end in 476 CE when Romulus Augustulus abdicated to the Germanic warlord Odoacer. The lands of the Empire were quickly divided into many autonomous feudal sovereignties due to the unification principle of the popular powers. This form of government made feudalism in the west possible following the demise of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire did not end, according to the Eastern Romans, though. Roman Empire was the official name of what we call the Byzan-

tine Empire today. Yet, the latter's governance of popular powers distinguished it from the Western Empire. The central government of Byzantine never shared its *potestas* with its local bureaucratic offices. This was most obvious in its beacon system, which consisted of a series of semaphores to inform the capital of its borders. This was why the Byzantine Empire was never dissolved into smaller autonomous units, unlike the Western Roman Empire.

After the demise of the Byzantine Empire with the Ottoman capture of Constantinople, the Ottoman Emperors kept using the title “*kayser-i Rûm*” (“Caesar of Rome”). This was not only a nominal title, though; the Ottomans inherited and continued the Byzantine central government structure, bureaucracy, and the principle of unifying popular powers in their territories as well.¹⁹ The Ottomans were not alone in inheriting this legacy; the Russian sovereigns assumed the Slavic adaptation of the title Caesar, “Tsar,” along with other Byzantine terms, titles, emblems,²⁰ and state systems after Ivan III Vasilyevich married Sophia Palaiologina, a successor of late Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos, in 1472.

It was not a coincidence that the Western European countries, which inherited the Roman Republic tradition, evolved into decentralized democracies. The SPQR experience of dividing the *potestas* of the state into the *potentia* of a number of competing autonomous *multitudines* provided a strong tradition of decentralization and democracy in Western Europe. Even during the imperial era, this tradition survived in Rome, whereas in the Byzantine Empire, although the emperors were chosen by the Senate and army, this was only symbolic.

While Romanism provided Western Europe with a tradition of decentralization and democracy, Byzantinism, conversely, brought strictly centralized and anti-democratic governments to the easternmost borders of Europe. The tradition of Romanism is evident in almost all Western democratic regimes today, such as the United States, Federal Republic of Germany, or the Cantons of Switzerland. The Third Reich experience can be seen as an anomaly within this tradition; nevertheless, it referred itself to the Roman Empire through the Holy Roman Empire, rather than the SPQR.

The most significant plebeian struggle or insurgence that happened in the SPQR could arguably be the February Revolution in Russia. In comparison to it, even the October Revolution was a central action led by a single political organization that quickly transformed into a centralized mode of government, despite its initial constitutional motto of “all power to the Soviets.”²¹ The Russian Federation, as the successor to the USSR experience, inherited the centralist and antidemocratic tendencies, much like the Turkish Republic inherited similar traits from the Ottoman experience. However, Marxists drew lessons from these experiences and kept experimenting with new ways of organizing and unifying the *potential* of the people. Two notable examples stand out. The first is the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, as discussed by Hardt and Negri (2004, 85, 89, 93, 266, 286, 342). EZLN emerged as a peasant and indigenous movement when they declared war on the Mexican Government on 1 January 1994. They have consistently emphasized the plurality and autonomy of the Chiapas people by promoting indigenous languages, community participation

in policymaking, religious freedom, and women's rights (Godelmann 2014). In a similar vein, the experiment of Rojava has been administering northern and eastern Syria amidst the region's ongoing violent conflicts. It has obtained *de facto* autonomy since 2012 during the Syrian War, which started in 2011. Rojava has adopted a charter of social contract, which is a form of constitution that established democratic confederalism modelled after the Cantons of Switzerland, organized around neighborhood communes and tribal organizations, with a commitment to freedom of religion and a radical feminist agenda establishing gender equality in political organizations (Graeber 2016).

Conclusion

Negri's reading of the Spinozist concepts of *potentia*, *potestas*, and *multitudo* are endeavors to develop a radical democratic solution to the failures concerning plurality and autonomy in real-socialist experiences. I believe Derrida shares similar concerns, which lead him to an overall critique of ontology and to offer, instead, his ironical conception of hauntology. I have argued that these concerns relate to the analyses of popular power in the form of *potentia* and *potestas* for Negri, and specters and spirit for Derrida. Derrida's reading of Marx's specters and spirits is, at least partially, an attempt to solve the problem of popular power and its unification or organization in real socialism, similarly to Negri. Derrida diverges from Negri in emphasizing the importance of the past and future in this organization of popular powers. However, I argue that Derrida's ideas can be easily accommodated into Negri's thought.

The problem of the unification of popular powers has been the primordial problem of the political. I have attempted to clarify this problem through the historical examples of Romanism and Byzantinism, demonstrating how Western political questions continue to be burdened with these two modes of organizing popular powers, even though these modes are by no means comprehensive or universal.

Despite these deeply ingrained historical patterns of organizing political powers, there remains hope for an egalitarian, socialist, pluralist, and radical democratic unification of popular powers—one that is rooted in cooperation over competition, and peace over wars that pit oppressed multitudes against each other. Such a vision would offer an alternative to the exploitative modes of state organization that have dominated history.

Biography

Ilgin Aksoy is a researcher, writer, and educator specializing in ontology, the history of philosophy, political theory, and the intersection of philosophy with social activism, with a particular focus on Early Modern Philosophy and Spinoza. His work explores the connections between the nature of being and our scientific, political, and environmental relationships.

Notes

1. The English translations of these two terms, *potestas* and *potentia*, have been problematic due to the lack of precise equivalents indicating their

distinction, unlike in most other languages. For example, the corresponding terms *potere* and *potenza* in Italian, *puissance* and *pouvoir* in French, *Macht* and *Vermögen* in German, and *qudra* (قدرة) and *iqtidar* (اقتدار) in Arabic. Michael Hardt (1991) overcomes this problem by capitalizing the former in his translation as *Power*, while the latter is translated as *power* with a lowercase. Nevertheless, the problem is reflected in Hardt's translation of the subtitle of Negri's *The Savage Anomaly*, which would have literally translated as "Essay on Power and power in Baruch Spinoza's work" ("*saggio su potere e potenza* in Baruch Spinoza"). So, he opted for the more creative subtitle: "The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics." Therefore, I will be using the original terms for the sake of clarity.

2. In *The Savage Anomaly* (1991), Negri follows the widespread characterization of Hobbes as authoritarian and anti-democratic. However, Richard Tuck (1989) challenges this view by emphasizing Hobbes's insistence that all proper forms of sovereignty—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—are equal, demonstrating his commitment to popular decision making in democratic sovereignty.
3. Negri's account of radical democracy has attracted widespread affirmation and criticism since then. For example, see Ernesto Laclau (2004); Paul Passavant (2004); Kam Shapiro (2004); and Slavoj Žižek (2005). Negri's recourse to Spinoza was also questioned by Sandra Leonie Field (2020; 2012).
4. Hannah Arendt (1998), for one, straightforwardly denied the political character of the private sphere through her distinction of public-private by limiting it to the former.
5. I use the following abbreviations when referring to Spinoza's writings: E: Ethics (*Ethica*); Ep.: Letters (*Epistole*); TTP: Theologico-Political Treatise (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*); and TP: Political Treatise (*Tractatus Politicus*). References to passages from the *Ethics* are abbreviated: A: axiom; C: corollary; D: definition (when it appears immediately on the right side of E), or D: demonstration (in all other cases); E: explanation; L: lemma; P: proposition; S: scholium; App: appendix; and Pref: preface. The number to the right of E indicates the part of the *Ethics*. References to TTP and TP are abbreviated as follows: TTP 10/12 = *Theologico-Political Treatise* Chapter 10, section 12; TP 2/4 = *Political Treatise* Chapter 2, section 4.
6. Singularities can be understood as *synchronic* variations of *potentiae* as they are composed of a variety of *potentiae* in an atemporal moment. However, they can also be viewed as *diachronic* variations since they are in a state of perpetual change and becoming. This is because *potentia* is pure activity, change, and becoming.
7. "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (E3P6); "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing" (E3P7).

8. “For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all” (E4P18S). And “If two men make an agreement with one another and join forces, they can do more together, and hence, together have more right over nature, than either does alone. The more connections they’ve formed in this way, the more right they’ll all have together” (TP 2/13).
9. “There is no singular thing in Nature which is more useful to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason. For what is most useful to man is what most agrees with his nature (by P31C), that is (as is known through itself), man. But a man acts entirely from the laws of his own nature when he lives according to the guidance of reason (by IITD2), and only to that extent must he always agree with the nature of the other man (by PH). Therefore, among singular things there is nothing more useful to man than a man, and so on, q.e.d.” (E4P35C1); “When each man most seeks his own advantage for himself, then men are most useful to one another. For the more each one seeks his own advantage, and strives to preserve himself, the more he is endowed with virtue (by P20), or what is the same (by D8), the greater is his power of acting according to the laws of his own nature, that is (by TIIP3), of living from the guidance of reason. But men most agree in nature, when they live according to the guidance of reason (by P35). Therefore (by P3SC1), men will be most useful to one another, when each one most seeks his own advantage, q.e.d.” (E4P35C2).
10. “As far as Politics is concerned, the difference you ask about, between Hobbes and me, is this: I always preserve natural Right unimpaired, and I maintain that in each State the Supreme Magistrate has no more right over its subjects than it has greater power over them. This is always the case in the state of Nature” (Ep. 50).
11. Hobbes discusses individuals alienating their natural right to the sovereign in *Leviathan*, Chapter 14, “Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts,” where he argues that in order to ensure peace and security, individuals must transfer their natural rights to a sovereign authority.

“The right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing which, in his own judgement and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto. This liberty is to be understood, not as a restraint upon any man’s actions, but as the free-

dom of each man to do as he pleases, provided that it does not conflict with the liberty of others” (Hobbes 1994, 79).

Later, Hobbes argues that to escape the “state of nature,” individuals collectively agree to form a social contract and alienate their natural rights to a sovereign in exchange for peace and protection: “The mutual transferring of right is that which men call a contract” (Hobbes 1994, 82).

12. “There is often a considerable difference between the will of all and the general will: the latter looks only to the common interest, the former looks to private interest, and is nothing but a sum of particular wills; but if, from these same wills, one takes away the pluses and the minuses which cancel each other out, what is left as the sum of the differences is the general will” (Rousseau 1997, 60).
13. Negri is not alone in reading Spinoza’s political theory as a deepening of democracy. Etienne Balibar follows a similar line in his *Spinoza and Politics* (1998, 51-75). However, there are also significant objections to this reading. For instance, see Lewis S. Feuer (1958, 136-97), and Raia Prokhovnik (2004, 75-181), who observe a tendency toward aristocracy in Spinoza’s *Political Treatise*.
14. “That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary; or rather compelled, which is determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner” (E1D7).
15. Michel Serres reads the moment of the forging of the Republic coincidental with the expulsion, exclusion, and forgetting of the king; this act is the founding of the Republic, which serves as the unifying principle (2015, 140-2).
16. Ironically, the *plebeians* were degradingly called the “multitude” (*plebes*, from *pleo*, *plenus*) because of their demand for political rights; for the history of plebeian struggle for political rights, see Theodor Mommsen (2010, 90-103).
17. Cf. Hannah Arendt (1990).
18. For a comprehensive discussion of the decline and fall of Roman Empire, see Edward Gibbon (2001).
19. The extent of the Ottoman inheritance of Byzantine legacy has been a tension for Ottoman studies. Some prominent historians such as Herbert Gibbons (2015) and Arnold Toynbee (1948) accepted the thesis that the Turks were composed of nomadic tribes that were incapable of establishing a state system (thus unifying the popular powers, *potentia*, to establish a hegemonic power, *potestas*); according to this thesis, as they Turkified and Islamized the Greco-Roman populations of Asia Minor, the latter managed to transform the Turkic chieftaincies into complex political organizations with their high government and civilization traditions; others such as Fuat Köprülü (1981) and Halil İnalcık (2017) argued that there were two other traditions which influenced the

Ottoman state system, while admitting the Byzantine heritage: these were the Central Asian Turkic civilization (particularly in state legislations and Turkish folk religions) and Islamic civilization (particularly through Islamic law and bureaucratic administration which goes back to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations).

20. The Byzantine double-headed eagle was not only used by the Russian Tsardom but also remains in use in the coat of arms of modern Russia; it was also the emblem of Seljuks, the predecessor of the Ottomans.
21. The Kronstadt mutiny is an important case that exhibits the early conflicts in the unification of powers in the Bolshevik government; see “Kronstadt” (2024).

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