

Maurizio Lazzarato. *Governing by Debt*. Trans. J. D. Jordan. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013. Pp. 280.

Maurizio Lazzarato. *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. Trans. J.D. Jordan. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014. Pp. 280

Maurizio Lazzarato is an Italian sociologist and philosopher who lives and works in France. He collaborated on collective works with important figures like Antonio Negri and Yann Moulier-Boutang in the 1990s and has been a frequent contributor to the journal *Multitudes* in which the same two intellectuals were also leading voices. During the same period, he was closely involved as a theorist and activist in the long and inventive struggle of the *intermittents du spectacle*, French cultural workers defending a social security regime that took particular account of their unstable employment and the way in which their creativity overflowed their periods of paid activity. This involvement fed into a broader reflection and theorization around mutations of labor, the rise of precariousness, neo-liberal governance and leftist mobilization that found expression in a range of texts published in the 2000s. Lazzarato came forcefully to public attention in the English-speaking world when his timely, important book on debt, *La Fabrique de l'homme endetté*, was translated into English as *The Making of the Indebted Man* in 2013. That book came out of his broader concern with neo-liberal governance and the subjectivities associated with it, but it was tightly focused on debt. The two books to be discussed here return to that larger picture, the prime focus of *Governing by Debt* being neo-liberal governance and that of *Signs and Machines*, the production of subjectivity under capitalism. Like *La Fabrique*, both books are in close dialogue with Foucault and particularly his famous analysis of neo-

liberalism in his *Birth of Bio-politics Lectures* at the Collège de France, an analysis which, in one way or another, they seek to update. Again like *La Fabrique*, both are also heavily influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and make ample use of some of the main concepts that they deploy in books like *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (e.g. codes, deterritorialization, flows and their capture, axioms, assemblages, machines). The denser and more demanding of the two works, *Signs and Machines*, is also particularly indebted to Guattari's discussion of signifying and a-signifying semiotics and draws heavily on theorists like Bakhtin and the filmmaker Pasolini while engaging in a sustained critique of key contemporary critical theorists like Judith Butler, Jacques Rancière, Alain Badiou and, to a lesser extent, Slavoj Žižek. Collectively, the latter are seen by Lazzarato to be part of a more general preoccupation with language, signification and the subject, at the expense of a more rounded account of capitalist subjection in its machinic and a-signifying dimensions. Badiou and Rancière are also criticized for neglecting the political dimension of the economic and developing theories of politics singularly lacking in any grounded sense of how contemporary capitalism produces subjection.

Governance

Governing by Debt begins in rather unconventional manner with a glossary that explains how Lazzarato understands certain key terms, but in fact it feels more like a bullet point summary of issues to be developed. The explanation proper starts when, in characteristically forthright terms, Lazzarato states his disagreement with

both orthodox and heterodox economists. While for both groups, appropriation is secondary to production (with production and growth preceding any distribution), for Lazzarato appropriation and distribution come first. In other words, it is the apparatuses of capture and distribution that define the conditions of production and not vice versa. It is for this reason that Lazzarato insists on the political nature of the economic: economic and labor relations are always already political; that is, power asymmetries define them from the start so that it is naïve, say, to think of liberating labor from capital, because labor, as we now understand it, is not defined simply by production but is fundamentally shaped by the broader system of appropriation and distribution.

For Lazzarato, there are three main mechanisms for financial capture and distribution. These are profit, rent and taxation and each has worked in different ways and in different combinations to ensure capitalist profitability. In the period of post-war growth, for example, a combination of high taxation, including the Keynesian “death of the rentier,” and state investment allowed production and the ensuing profit to become the main sources of capital increase. But this dominance of production and profit was not the natural (capitalist) order of things but rather a historically specific arrangement. It depended on a specific concatenation of the profit-rent-debt trio rooted in particular power dynamics such as the partial independence of financial and industrial capital, the relative independence of the state, the power of the workers’ movement and the co-existence of private and public ownership (*Governing* 30). Now that the state, finance and industry have become more deeply imbricated and the workers’ movement no longer serves as

an effective counter-weight to these forces, any return to something like a Fordist compromise, or a new “New Deal,” is no longer possible (39).

Since the 2008 sub-prime crisis, the same three financial apparatuses have been involved, but taxation has risen to the fore as the principle tool for capture and distribution. With capitalist valorization through profit and financial rent both stalled, and with major corporations sitting on mountains of cash that risked losing its power as capital, simply becoming exchange money, taxation had to step in to monetize the crisis (35). Taking up the slack left by other mechanisms, taxation determines who must pay and where the money must go in a way that ensures the wholly political reproduction of the economy. At the same time, as Lazzarato explains, taxation takes on the evaluative role that, at other times, was assumed by the other apparatuses mentioned above. During the period when production was the main source of profit, labor time was the privileged way to assign value. After the 1960s, when financial capital and rent became dominant, stock market price and annual rates of return on investment became the main measures of value. Now it is the turn of tax, says Lazzarato, by which I assume he means not simply that taxpayers provide the money needed to keep the market and its weighing of equivalences functioning, but that the collection and distribution of tax becomes a measure of who should pay what and which claims on funding should or should not be respected. What is clear, however, is that Lazzarato does not align himself with some of those in the Marxist tradition who rather puzzlingly still see labor time as the only measure of value.

Lazzarato's reading of the current crisis also develops key areas where he feels Foucault's thought needs to be modified. To begin with, he suggests that Foucault overestimates liberalism's opposition to the state. Following Deleuze and Guattari's lead, he maintains that capitalism has always been state capitalism, and has always depended on state, or supra-state sovereignty in one way or another. Thus, since 2008 for example, countries like Greece have come under extreme pressure from other states and from institutions like the EU, the European Central Bank or the International Monetary Fund to ensure that banks and finance are saved and the population pays. This is not to say that the state is simply an extension of capital. In its capacity for creative destruction (or anti-production), capital is essentially deterritorializing, in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense of the term. Because of its restless flows, and its reduction of all specific values to monetary equivalents, it undoes borders and bounded social and cultural identities. The state, in contrast, "encodes": that is, it establishes fixed codes governing territory, borders and community. Because these two logics are fundamentally heterogeneous, their coming together can only be the result of a particular and historically variable assemblage, the state being essential to capital because of its compensatory stabilizations and its disciplinary and governmental powers. Rather than seeking to dissolve the state, neo-liberalism has molded it, accelerating its subordination to economic logics but also putting its apparatuses to work. Competition does not arise spontaneously but needs to be incited and protected by laws. Flexibility is imposed on job markets. Pensions and social spending have to be cut and/or privatized. A tax regime favorable to capitalist rent must be put in

place. While neo-liberalism brought in an era of intensified deterritorialization (of capital, goods, communication and labor) and of the violent decoding (or destruction) of the protections, containments and disciplines of Fordism, the state was still essential to its functioning, as the current crisis, with its move to post-democratic, authoritarian governmentality underlines (112).

Lazzarato also only agrees to an extent with Foucault's insistence that one should engage with different capitalisms and the institutional arrangements and contexts conditioning them, rather than talking about capitalism in the singular as the outcome of some intrinsic logic of capital. When neo-liberalism frees capitalism from Fordist institutions, Lazzarato notes, it does so through the release of capital's destructive, deterritorializing power. Furthermore, the finance capital dominant under neo-liberalism is not simply one type of capital amongst others, but is the form, as he puts it, that is closest to capital's concept. Finance and its accounting mechanisms are indifferent to the specific qualities of production or labor. They simply need to extract surplus in monetary form, and so come closest to expressing capital's fundamental drive (141). Furthermore, the credit money of finance represents the most deterritorialized form of capital. It is, in Lazzarato's words, "like a 'flow of financing' which constitutes the true power and veritable 'police' of capital" (123). Put differently, credit decides which activities will or will not take place, evaluates profitability, and can withdraw approval as a way of exercising disciplinary control. Credit money, finally, is the best expression of what one can call the "collective capitalist." Independent of any particular activity, but able to connect radically disparate sources of profit, whether pre-industrial,

industrial, or post-industrial, it is where capital comes closest to expressing a collective consciousness. So, while neo-liberalism is inevitably conditioned by specific contexts and histories, it can only be understood with reference to some of the core logics of capital.

Debt

Where does neo-liberalism's mobilization of debt fit into this larger picture? As an initial approximation, one might say that it confirms Lazzarato's critique of Foucault's overly sanguine reading of neo-liberalism. If we accept, says Lazzarato, that governmentality involves actions upon actions rather than more direct compulsion, the neo-liberal variant does not simply incite, solicit and facilitate, as per Foucault, but also prohibits, directs, commands and normalizes. This is especially in evidence in the American university which, suggests Lazzarato, is a model of the debt society.

Lazzarato notes the sheer size of outstanding US student debt: it is more than half of France or Italy's public debt in March 2012 and much more than the sum for which Greece was savaged by the EU and the IMF (65). He also notes that more than one third of the debt is securitized; that is, it is carved up, repackaged and sold on, just as the notorious sub-prime mortgages were. The banks are apparently still confident that, should things go wrong, they will be protected and the costs of default will be borne by the public (67). He also observes that, by transferring the cost of education to students, the system frees up money that can

then be returned to the wealthy and the corporations by the tax system in its operation as a device for the capture and distribution of wealth.

Beyond these initial observations, however, Lazzarato is especially interested in the light student debt casts on neo-liberal governance and the production of subjectivity. Firstly, he notes that, in the production of knowledge, the creditor-debtor relationship has replaced that which bound capitalists and wage earners, and suggests that neo-liberalism would like this new form of class relation to apply across society. Secondly, he observes how, in contrast to older disciplinary mechanisms, the reach of debt is much wider. While industrial workers were enclosed in a circumscribed space and were fully aware of their enclosure, debt functions across space and is interiorized by the subject. Similarly, while the worker was only contained for his or her labor time, debt colonizes the time of life, past, present and future. In particular, it takes hold of the time of possibility, shutting down the subject's chance to effect radical change. When it grouped workers together in factories, capitalism created a collective identity for those it exploited. Debt, in contrast, isolates. Debtors stand alone and interiorize shame rather than exteriorizing anger and engaging in revolt. Put simply, the machinery of debt is the most adequate way to produce *homo economicus*, the domesticated subject who sees him or herself as a miniature enterprise. The indebted person is effectively forced to become a calculating machine, seeing educational and career choices as good or bad investments that are more or less able to pay off the money borrowed.

Lazzarato's account of debt puts him clearly at odds with a range of mainstream and more oppositional thinkers. In contrast to those who would equate market exchange with liberation from traditional social obligations and frame debt as merely free exchange extended over time, Lazzarato emphasizes the asymmetrical (unequal) power dynamics of the creditor-debtor relationship and the necessary open-endedness of debt. Under financial capitalism, he suggests, any general exit from debt would in fact spell the end of capitalism itself, given the centrality of the credit-debt nexus to the system. Lazzarato also stresses his disagreement with French regulation theory economists like Michel Aglietta or André Orléan. He gives the latter credit for linking the emergence of money to debt rather than market exchange as in mainstream accounts, but then criticizes them for resorting to an ahistorical account of primordial debt within which one is *always* indebted to the gods, the state or society. In contrast to this naturalization of debt, and taking inspiration from Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari, Lazzarato stresses the specific power dynamics and historical roots of modern debt. He suggests that debt was in fact finite and mobile (shifting between members of a group) in archaic societies, and that infinite debt, far from being a universal, was a product of the emergence of imperial states and monotheisms. It was then left to capitalism to take it forward and to mobilize the no less infinite guilt that monotheistic religions associate with it. This account of the emergence of *capitalist* debt is also turned against David Graeber's monumental work, *Debt: the First Five Thousand Years*. Lazzarato gives Graeber credit for underscoring the difference between credit money and commodity or exchange money but suggests

that Graeber's long-term account of cycles when one or other money form dominates dissolves any sense of the historical specificity of the capitalist deployment of debt.

Outside of the way he takes issue with certain theorists, and his particular focus on US universities, Lazzarato's discussion of debt here essentially condenses what is laid out at greater length in his earlier book, *The Making of the Indebted Man*. What *Governing by Debt* adds to his that work is, firstly, a contextualization of debt within a wider account of neo-liberal governance and, secondly, a discussion of the machinic dimension of capitalist subjection that is developed at greater length and in combination with the semiotic in *Signs and Machines*.

Machinic Capitalism and Semiosis

Machines, Lazzarato notes drily, are everywhere except in critical theory (*Governing* 23). Capitalism, he adds, is machinocentric not logocentric (25). By this he does not simply mean that, having once been localized within factories, electronic/mechanical technical machines are now omnipresent. His concept of the machine is broader than that. For him, as for Deleuze and Guattari, the machinic implies the co-imbrication of human elements, technical machines, material spaces and objects and semiotic processes. A machine never simply consists of technical machinery but is the outcome of any functional assemblage of interdependent elements.

Semiosis, in Lazzarato's tri-partite, Guattari-inspired scheme, involves symbolic, signifying and asignifying semiotics. Described by Lazzarato in the

context of archaic societies, symbolic semiotics includes gestural, ritual, corporeal, musical and other elements. Signifying semiotics is linguistic. Asignifying semiotics includes things like stock listings, currencies, corporate accounting, budgets, computer languages, mathematics, scientific functions and equations. Because it involves more abstract modes of semiotization than language, it “slips by” our minds without producing significations or representations. Typically, it manifests itself in the sciences, industrial corporations or the stock market rather than in the world of civil society or political representation (55-80).

The symbolic semiotic forms of archaic societies are non-hierarchical. They co-exist with each other without any one kind providing a higher unity and thus allow for a plurality of realities. Their subordination to the signifying semiotics of language is essential for capitalism. Language splits reality from representation, rendering the former singular. Just as importantly, language abstracts enunciation (semiotic production) from its collective, existential context and attributes it to individuals (I, you etc.), this separation being necessary both to ground property relationships, and to attribute the coded, differentiated roles (man/woman, boss/worker) necessary to the functioning of the capitalist economy. But language is too territorialized and too cognitive to connect to the burgeoning multiplicity of machinic processes involved in contemporary capitalism. Here, the asignifying semiotics of finance, of computers etc., with its more abstract, more deterritorialized forms, comes into its own. For capitalism to function, not as any specific machinic assemblage but as an assemblage of assemblages (social, communicational, productive, financial, etc.), it has to be able to organize, connect,

evaluate and capture a heterogeneous multiplicity of processes. Within this framework, not all asignifying semiotics are equally powerful. While a chemical formula or an organization chart, say, can shape production, it is financial capital, precisely because of its greater deterritorialization (its ability to evaluate and capture a disparate multiplicity of processes with the aid of computers, money, markets etc.), that reigns (*Governing* 189-93; *Signs* 39-42, 83-8).

We can flesh out this powerful but general account by seeing how it applies to specific cases. We might note how the factory, for example, can be seen not simply as a place where technical machines are housed, but as itself a productive machine that only works through the combination (the assemblage) of a particular set of social arrangements, economic practices, flows (of raw materials, power, goods, etc.), human activity and technical machinery. If the factory needs subjects (individuals associated with particular roles and positions in the hierarchy, deemed worthy of particular rewards), it also needs human cogs (that is sub-individual or de-individualized human movements, gestures, behaviors, that enter into interaction with mechanical cogs to create a productive apparatus). At the same time, the factory is a place of semiosis. Clearly, because its machinery involves human interaction, linguistic interchange or signifying semiotics, in Lazzarato's terminology, is necessary. But, because production also responds to charts, plans, diagrams, statistics, blue-prints, programs and so on, another kind of semiotics, of an asignifying nature, is also involved (*Signs* 113-7).

Taking a more obviously contemporary case, we could look at Lazzarato's analysis of the stock-exchange and the trader's machinic subjectivity. To begin

with, he notes how the trading room contains data, curves or “diagrams” traced by a worldwide computer network, “diagrams” being a particular type of “power” sign that mimics elements of the shape of some phenomenon (in this case company prices) and acts upon it (by, for example, channeling investment). Within this context, the trader’s subjectivity establishes what Lazzarato calls “focal points of proto-enunciation” (96). Bidding prices up or down, anticipating profitability, components of subjectivity (memory, understanding, attention, perception) combine with the machinic proto-subjectivity expressed in curves and data to form enunciations. The human subjectivity involved has no choice but to rely on technical machines, asignifying data and information codified by mathematical instruments. Likewise, when the trader expresses the mood of interest groups such as political parties, lobbies or economic interests, he or she can only do so because he or she is connected to all the apparatus of modern communication. The product of complex assemblages, the trader’s moods and enunciations are in no way a simple expression of the human individual or, indeed, of human cognition. Yet, at the same time, the discourse of economists, media, experts and judges make us believe that it is indeed the individual who acts and therefore must be compensated or punished. The semiotics of signification thus allows for the generation of stories, information and commentary which legitimate the role and the reward of these individuated subjects in the eyes of the public (96-100).

The example of the trader or the factory worker illustrates well the dual nature of subjection under capitalism. On the one hand, people are positioned, especially by language, in individual roles because capital needs them to occupy

specific social or occupational places. On the other, people (their gestures, moods, attention, preferences, tastes and so on) are disassembled and put to work in larger ensembles by what Lazzarato calls machinic enslavement. This does not mean that people are sometimes self-contained individuals and sometimes disaggregated parts. It simply means that they are treated differently by two types of machinic assemblage: one type, involving signifying semiotics, encodes and individualizes; another, involving asignifying semiotics, decodes and deterritorializes. Within the former, with its binary logics, humans relate to machines as subjects to objects. Within the latter, in contrast, fusion takes place and human “parts” are simply cogs of the hybridized, human-technical machine. So, when we pick up our cell phones, we are addressed by signifying semiotics as fetishized, consumerist subjects even as machinic enslavement disaggregates elements of our subjectivity, electronically reassembles them with those of others, and sells them on to advertisers as data.

What light does all this throw on the functioning of debt? We have already seen how debt needs to produce bounded individuals, indentured entrepreneurs of the self, who can be held to account, feel guilt and take responsibility for what they owe. But we can now also appreciate how the subject status accorded to individuals has no place once they are processed as data and figures by the financial machine. In Lazzarato’s own words:

[T]he credit/debt incorporated into the assemblage loses all reference to the subject who contracted the debt. Credit/debt is literally torn to pieces (in the same way the assemblage tears the subject to pieces) by the financial machine, which the subprime

crisis has shown all too well. It is no longer a matter of this or that investment, of this or that debt: the financial assemblage has transformed the subject into a currency that acts as “capital,” as money that generates money.” (48).

With debt, as in other areas, subjection requires individualized subjects and machinic cogs. Under neo-liberalism, Lazzarato notes, both forms of subjection have been put more intensely to work: we are more individualized yet more exposed to machinic enslavement.

The Failings of Critique

This highly persuasive account of the dual nature of capitalist subjection goes a long way in explaining Lazzarato’s argument that other analyses of the contemporary period and other leading critical thinkers simply fail to get to grip with the object under study. In the case of “cognitive capitalism,” for example, the linguistic, cognitive and representational dimensions of capitalism are privileged in a way that suggests that the knowledge held by individuals or groups can open up liberatory possibilities. However, as Lazzarato rather drily notes, far from unleashing creativity, so-called cognitive capitalism saturates public space with ignorance and subjective impoverishment. It destroys knowledge, cultures and understandings that are not beholden to capitalist logics even as it opens education, research, culture and art to privatization, competition, profitability and corporate commercialism. In this context, a Marxist account that separated the knowledge and creativity of living human labor from the dead labor of machinery, systems or

spaces would entirely miss the point: to the extent that human labor is constructed by both the machinery of subjectivation and machinic enslavement, it is naïve to think that its creativity or knowledge could somehow be liberated or desert (*Signs* 120). In any case, Lazzarato notes, any specific focus on cognitive or cultural capitalism distracts from the broader power and knowledge relations that mold the subjectivities of the population as a whole (221-2).

Lazzarato criticizes both Badiou and Rancière for their narrowly political framing of the political and their consequent neglect of the politics of the economic and in particular the machinic dimension of contemporary capitalism. Unless we understand subjection more adequately, he maintains, we are ill-placed to think what form a break with capitalism's hold on subjectivity might take (13). Rancière is more specifically taken to task for the centrality he gives to language and the equality of speaking subjects in his understanding of politics and the emergence of oppositional subjectivities. This is mistaken, says Lazzarato, because subjective mutation is not primarily discursive but comes from much deeper, in the existential relationship to the self, others and the world (16).

The existential is a difficult, elusive term in this context. We can perhaps get closer to it if we look at Lazzarato's critique of Butler. Drawing on Bakhtin and Guattari, Lazzarato takes issue with Butler's mobilization of the performative, notably as she uses it to account for the force of Rosa Park's famous refusal to give up her seat to a white man. Firstly, he sees no reason why the performative should be accorded a privileged role when one examines the political force of speech acts: any speech act, he suggests, involves a self-positioning because it is dialogic in a

Bakhtinian sense. It arises in a situation where there are always plural voices and, not simply tied to the moment, it must locate itself in relation to preceding utterances and anticipate possible responses. Nor is enunciation a purely discursive phenomenon: apart from gestures, postures, tone or facial expression, it also involves, as Bakhtin notes, an affective and social evaluation of the situation and a felt awareness of how speech positions the speaker (187-190). This sense of a complex, contextual self-positioning takes us closer to what Lazzarato means when he evokes Guattari's existential pragmatics. Yet for the latter, the existential unsurprisingly has a machinic dimension and is characterized by "a logic of intensities and affects established prior to the distinction of identities, persons and functions" (208). The question which then arises is whether, creating new assemblages, this existential refusal can reconfigure the relation with existing discursive, cognitive, social and economic forms in a durable way.

Despite the difficulty one might feel grasping this thought, there is a clear consistency to it. Subjection and revolt are thought within the same frame and using the same terms so that one can understand their potential articulation. Because the former works linguistically and non-linguistically, through subjects and through machines, it is important to approach the latter in the same way. Moreover, if we accept that subjection involves assemblages, rather than rigid structures, then we can also see how emergent oppositional subjects might seek to create new assemblages.

The Current Impasse

While Lazzarato is clear about the overwhelming domination currently exercised by neo-liberalism, he is convinced that capitalism is in crisis. His understanding of this crisis does not rely on the usual suspects of debt bubbles, diminishing rates of return or environmental exhaustion, as real as these things may be. Instead, he sees it as primarily one of subjectivity or, rather, of the articulation of economic, technological, and social flows with the production of subjectivity (*Signs* 7-10, *Governing* 14). Under Fordism, there was a complementarity of the worker-consumer and productive and social arrangements. Neo-liberalism sought to replace the Fordist worker with the self-realizing entrepreneur-of-the-self. But since the sub-prime crisis, this project has collapsed (*Governing* 14). Positive entrepreneurial, creative or cognitive figures have been abandoned for the majority and debt, its modes of subjection, and the figure of the indebted man (sic) have come to dominate. The subjective economy of capitalism, an intrinsic part of its hybrid assemblages, rather than something merely “superstructural,” is not working. Yet, at the same time, new political experiments such as the Occupy movement have been unable to develop alternative modes of “macropolitical, reproducible, and generalizable subjectivation” (*Signs* 21). This is why Lazzarato considers that the task he sets himself of developing new theoretical tools with which to understand the conditions of political subjectivation is an urgent one.

In part, surely, because of his experience with the French *intermittents*, or his response to the uprising in some French suburbs in 2005 (*Signs* 169-200), Lazzarato is drawn to the strike, riot and revolt as sites where new subjectivations

can arise. In particular, he seeks to build on the lessons of the classic workers' strike and how it not only blocked the valorization of capital but also generated equality by releasing workers from the division of labor. He is of course aware that, colonizing the leisure time won by workers' earlier struggles, contemporary capitalism exploits leisure, communication, consumption and not simply production. Striking, or lazy action as Lazzarato calls it, now means blocking the general mobilization decreed by capital by refusing to work as a consumer, communicator, user or unemployed person. Suspending identities tied to capitalist production but also to the social / gendered division of labor, lazy action opens the time both for the collective production, organization and recomposition of subjectivities and for the intense work on the self required for a radical change of perspective (*Governing* 245-55).

One of the things that Lazzarato takes Rancière to task for is his neglect, in his conceptualization of politics, of the ethical and the need for work on the self to resist capitalist mobilization of subjectivity or the state exercise of bio-power (*Signs* 246). The latter concept, of course, takes us back to Foucault. Lazzarato underscores the latter's use of *parrhesia* and of the Greek Cynics when he develops a sense of what an ethical commitment might mean. *Parrhesia* is a free or bold speech. It involves not simply a claim to equality as a speaking subject (as in Rancière) but also the taking of a stand in support of a truth, a positioning of the self that sets one in opposition to others and involves risk. This is where the Cynics come in. Known for their defacement of the *nomos*, the laws, customs and conventions of society, they had little interest in creating a common "stage" on

which to make claims to equality (as is the case in Rancière), but were instead focused on developing new, better forms of life through their own practices and behaviors, even if that meant shamelessness and impudence. Although Lazzarato does not explicitly do so, it is perhaps useful to bring the strike, *parrhesia* and the cynics together. It is surely only by refusing to work for capitalism in all spheres of life that one can create the time to explore new modes of life even at the risk of taking a stand and causing outrage.

Martin O'Shaughnessy, Nottingham Trent University

Correspondence: martin.oshaughnessy@ntu.ac.uk