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Anarchy

Thus far, each chapter has employed the concept of contact: contact between participants and language, students and facilitator, rules and communities, and individuals in that community and each other. We have intentionally avoided the word “relationship.” While the term “relationship” is popular in educational philosophy—indeed there is even an edited volume titled *No Education without Relation*¹—we would offer up the suggestion that relation is not reducible to contact as experienced in P4I. According to Agamben, relationship as an ontological category is problematic as it always emerges from the presupposition of at least two different identities that must be put into relation. In learning relations, these identities are often formulated according to the immature and the mature, the ignorant and the knowledgeable, the adult and the child, and so forth. We can develop this idea further and suggest that all relations concern means and ends. For instance, learners view teachers as a means to achieving certain ends in the form of skill development or graduation certificates. And perhaps teachers view students as a means to achieving their ends (as professionals whose salary depends on learning outcomes). Yet for Agamben, there is a paradoxical space and time that suspends relationality. This is a contact point, or point of neutralization that puts into play free use through the sudden appearance of potentiality. This is why Agamben can argue that potentiality “is capable of always deposing ontological-political relations in order to cause a contact ... to appear between their elements [manners, gestures that cannot be assigned specific identities and specific values within a law].”² It thus concerns “intimacy,” which Agamben describes as a space “unmediated by any articulation or representation.”³

It is our wager that P4I concerns contact rather than relation. There emerges an educational contact within the space and time of contemplation that suspends preconstituted identities and necessary teleologies (hence the idea of the teacher-as-not-a-teacher as well as an undestined notion of infancy). This

is not, as stated throughout this book, a negation. It is merely a deactivation of the activity of relations (and the need to always *build* something to suture over the gap between constituted identities). This contact touches that which is presupposed by relationality but never thematized: potentiality (to do and not to do something, to be and not to be someone). Perhaps we can go so far as to say that if there is no education without relation, then *there is no studious play without contact*. This contact happens when the law of learning is suspended and the student and facilitator (teacher-as-not-a-teacher) start to babble without predefined destinations in mind. In this scenario, the role of the facilitator is not to cause or verify learning so much as to keep open a space and time for the studious play with language that, in a certain way, preexists relationality as a common form of infancy that both the facilitator and students share (although they share it in different, asymmetrical ways).

We will end this book with one final point of contact between P4I and politics. There seem to be two paradigms for thinking about politics and education. First, there is the instrumental approach that reduces education to a means to an externally defined political end. Liberal educational theory is symptomatic of this (i.e., education as preparation for democratic life). We can think here of P4C and how it is often cast as preparation for democratic citizenship. Sharp summarizes this telos nicely with the following opening to the essay aptly titled “The Community of Inquiry: Education for Democracy”: “I would like to focus on the classroom community of inquiry as an educational means of furthering the sense of community that is a precondition for actively participating in a democratic society. The community of inquiry cultivates skills of dialogue, questioning, reflective inquiry and good judgement”⁴ that are essential features of a global democratic society. Likewise, Lipman writes, “One might say, to employ a metaphor of instrumentalism, that the lathe on which the democracy-to-be is turned is equipped with a great many cutting tools, of which at least three are facets of the discipline of philosophy,”⁵ including the open-ended ideas of truth, justice, and freedom; the centrality of higher-order thinking processes; and an emphasis on dialogue and deliberation when making judgments, all of which are cornerstones of P4C. Sharp and Lipman both emphasize how adult, democratic citizenship calls for a philosophical education at a young age. In this sense, philosophy is an instrument of democracy, and perhaps its most important instrument.

While the intentions are noble, the worry with this paradigm is that education will lose its *educational* value and become nothing more than a means for creating a particular end (a certain notion of a political community). This

instrumentalization predetermines what counts as reasonableness and directs such reasonableness toward a destiny (a political telos). Of course, there is the noninstrumental approach that asserts the autonomy of education (and philosophy, for that matter) from politics. We can find this perspective in a number of conservative educational camps that assert various arguments for education as an end in itself. While addressing the issue of instrumentalization, in fully separating education from politics, it nevertheless produces another problem: the charge of elitism and/or quietism in the face of political, social, and economic inequalities. Education becomes detached from the problems of political life. Using Agamben as a point of departure, we suggest a rethinking of education (and P4I more specifically) as a pure means. To make this argument, we put forward the following theses. First, P4I is, at its base, an occupation of educational infrastructure (language, the classroom, desks, equipment, etc.) that suspends the function of this infrastructure within an administered learning society. Second, such activity becomes political when the occupation of infrastructure is made into a public issue. Third, the politics that arises from this occupation is troubling and disconcerting because it is a noninstrumental politics that cannot be reduced to a set of clearly defined goals or objectives. The same process can happen in reverse. One can start with a public occupation of infrastructure, and the non-teleological nature of such occupation lends itself to a collective form of contemplative, studious play. An example of the latter would be the occupation of Tiananmen Square in the 1980s. What is at stake here is defining occupation as the zone of contact between education and politics that displaces both: education becomes a public issue and politics loses its instrumental ends, becoming educational (a zone for contemplating its own conditions of possibility through the use of itself).

The failure to think politics and education has thus far been the result of trying to think the two in relation. For us, making public the occupation of infrastructure is precisely the point of contact between education and politics that displaces where education can happen and who can participate while at the same time revealing a new, noninstrumental politics that does not care to know what it is or where it is going, and is therefore happy (in and through the study of its own potentiality). If Agamben once argued that politics is the name for the “dimension in which works—linguistic and bodily, material and immaterial, biological and social—are deactivated and contemplated as such in order to liberate the inoperativity that has remained imprisoned in them,”⁶ then contemplative educational practices like P4I are already in contact with radical politics through a shared logic of inoperativity. This final chapter will expose this deep contact point in order to expand the discussion beyond the brick-and-

mortar schoolhouse. In particular the Tiananmen Square occupation will emerge as a paradigm (i.e., that which makes something intelligible) of a collective form of studious play through its use of linguistic and social potentialities. Such play is as infantile as it is anarchic and as anarchic as it is infantile. In this sense, the linguistic practices we have theorized in P4I can help clarify what is infantile in the political view of Tiananmen, while Tiananmen can help clarify the political in the educational view of infancy.

To explore these interconnected theses, we will have to shift away from the political story P4C tells about itself and its roots in American liberal, deliberative democracy.⁷ Instead, we will have to situate P4I within the critical theory tradition. This is because Agamben locates his own project on this terrain, as emerging from within, problematizing, and developing certain ideas that are essential to this tradition yet somewhat foreign to the American liberal democratic, pluralistic, and pragmatist traditions. While some strands of P4C might also find themselves at home within critical theory,⁸ we will not engage with this important literature in this conclusion. Instead, we will take up the problem of P4C from another angle outside usual discussions surrounding Peirce, Dewey, Rawls, and others in order to expose and develop the more anarchic political side of P4I.

The Context: Living the Learning Society

This analysis is urgent precisely because of the ways in which education and politics have dovetailed in recent years, forming the learning society. In the learning society, political relations become learning relations and vice versa. While we discussed the learning society in broad details in the Introduction, it is now time to return to this topic in order to clarify the backdrop against which we must think the practice of P4I as a contact point that suspends the operativity of the relation that is already circulating throughout society. A key argument proposed by critical theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri is that capitalist expropriation is no longer restricted to the factory. Drawing on Marx's original theory of capitalist expansion during the industrial era, Hardt and Negri focus on a shift from formal to "real subsumption"⁹ of social relations by capitalism. Whereas the former emphasizes expansion of capitalism the latter emphasizes intensification of its disciplinary forms of control. No longer is there an outside to capitalism needing to be colonized. Instead, social relations, communication systems, information networks, and affective modes of labor are all subsumed

within capitalism. Social life as a whole becomes “immaterial labor”¹⁰ for capitalist expropriation. Capitalism now operates through biopower, or a power that concerns the management of habits, affects, and social relationships. This notion of power undermines the classic Marxian distinction between the base and the superstructure, as the superstructure (culture, politics, and the social, broadly conceptualized) is now central to economic production (rather than mere ancillary reflections). The corollary of this thesis is that the industrial proletariat can no longer be *the* central and sovereign motor driving revolution, hence the centrality of the multitude outlined above. The working class cannot, in other words, be a stand-in for all other political movements and political concerns. The agents of revolution pluralize and multiply, but more interestingly, the locations of revolution out of bounds of the factory are potentially infinite. Or, perhaps more aptly, society itself has become a factory exploiting the immaterial labor of an underpaid and/or unpaid multitude of “employees.”

The multitude of political actors is continually subsumed under forms of subjectivity resulting from the command and capture of Empire. These subjectivities include the indebted, the mediatized, the securitized, and the represented.¹¹ We agree with this list, but we find a major oversight in Hardt and Negri’s work in this regard: the subjectivity of the lifelong learner. This is a subjectivity that is (a) continually indebted to institutions, (b) continually under threat of economic obsolescence, and (c) forced to become entrepreneurial by seeking out new skills needed to be seen as productive and efficient. Circling back to the question of the oath, we can say that the lifelong learner takes an oath to constantly search out options for self-learning in order to optimize his or her potentials for efficacy and productivity, but in so doing curses the life that does not live up to these expectations (essentially abandoning the self to a life of debt and guilt over this debt). If social life has become a factory for producing certain forms of subjectivity desirable to capitalist command and control, then so too has this very same social life become a *schoolhouse* full of entrepreneurial learners faced with the task of searching out learning opportunities to develop the skills and dispositions that are deemed as desirable by a fast-paced knowledge economy. Schooling is no longer restricted to the school; it expands outward until the world itself becomes the school. Learning and laboring thus emerge *together* as mutually reinforcing discourses and practices—learning economies and immaterial economies of affect, information, and knowledge can no longer be separated.

Indeed we might go so far as to argue that the learning society is a society that is predicated on the management (or government) of the *relationship*

between learning and economic logics. In other words, relationality enables an *articulation* between these two spheres of life through various means-ends equations that can be assessed and evaluated according to specific criteria internal to the learning society. Relationality enables learning to become a means for the economy and vice versa, producing synergistic flows of subjects, immaterial labor, and knowledge between otherwise separate sectors. The result is an advanced form of communicative capitalism that appropriates the immaterial wealth of linguistic and social resources put into circulation between learning and laboring. In learning, capitalism finds its educational logic and exploits it to create increasingly flexible laborers for an immaterial, communicative-based knowledge economy. And in capitalism, learning finds its economic logic, which transforms personal development and skill maximization into future-oriented promises of returns on educational investments. As such, relationality concerns the functionality of two systems that operate through one another.

To suture the relation, communicative capitalism issues a *command*. A command, for Agamben, is an *arche* or that which “gives a beginning” and “is also what commands and governs [something’s] growth, development, circulation, and transmission.”¹² Communicative capitalism commands that people speak and that this speech becomes a commodity within an information economy. The command is an *arche* or order that founds and then governs speech, putting it in relation with various systems so as to ensure an economy of utterances for capitalist ends. In the context of the learning society, the economic *arche* insists that children speak and that such speech be reified as a representation of their aptitudes for later economization. These commands can take a number of forms including “Teach children for the economy of the future” or “Develop the soft skills to help students find jobs in the information economy.” Here, the command creates an imperative from without to fashion relationships between schools and economic needs in such a way that education is instrumentalized. At the same time, the laws of learning command capitalism to orient itself toward the learnification of production in the form of continual assessment and testing of employees so as to manage skills and increase performance. In this sense, the commands between learnification and economization pass through one another, creating intricate relay points for multiple scalar relations to be produced. Perhaps more telling is how these commands are often given in such a way that liberal democracy conceals the learning-economic commands. Thus “Let your voice be heard!” can equally be read as a liberation of speech and as a mechanism of capture that enables the speech to be controlled, policed, or co-opted by a knowledge economy that thrives through the circulation of opinions

and voices. In this sense, the liberal democratic command to “speak up!” that is so dominant in progressive, constructivist educational circles (including certain variants inspired by Lipman and Sharp) is yoked to a certain notion of economic viability that secures its hold over life by folding within itself human communicability as such.

Opposed to relational negotiation between the means and ends of learning and the economy, we are interested in *contact* that fundamentally suspends the logic of relationality. Instead of finding overlaps between existing means and ends in order to promote functional hybridization and output maximization, contact interjects an anomalous zone wherein existing means and ends are suspended, rendered inoperative, and opened up for free use that is not determined in advance. Contact takes up the infrastructure of the learning society as a pure means in suspension from the ends of the learning society, and in so doing deposes the command of communicative capitalism.

Given that the learning society collapses the space and time of the schoolhouse and of the economic and political spheres—transforming us all into lifelong learners who must learn the lessons taught by the economy as the ultimate teacher—we cannot postpone a discussion of P4I and politics. But this discussion is fraught with dangers as it is often the case that education becomes a mere means to a political end outside of itself, resulting in the instrumentalization of education. Thus our task is to think education and politics without falling into this trap. We will argue that the occupation of learning infrastructure—the infrastructure (as a pure means) that underlies and makes functional the learning society—is a way in which education and politics *contact* one another without the former being reduced to an instrument of the latter.

A Coming Politics

Although often referred to (rightly so) as an impolitical thinker, Agamben’s work is driven by a certain political question: How can we ensure that Auschwitz does not happen again? We can see this play out in two political events that were formative for Agamben: the May ’68 protests in Paris and the Tiananmen Square occupation in 1989. To understand why Agamben would see traditional politics as insufficient, it is important to point out that for him, the May ’68 protests were, not just indirectly, but essentially, about the threat (and legacy) of totalitarianism, and the Holocaust, in particular. While in France, the emphasis

of the protests was on established bureaucratic, political, and military elites, capitalism, and traditional institutions and values in general, in Germany, the student movement was to a significant degree a reaction to the continuation of officials in all areas of society—including in schools and universities—who had been active Nazis (targeting, for example, the president of Bonn University who had been involved in the building of concentration camps). Something similar could be said—although to a lesser degree—about France, with regard to the collaboration of the Vichy regime with Nazi Germany. While the Holocaust was only one of the issues and only in some countries, for Agamben, it could be said to have been of crucial importance, calling Auschwitz “the decisive lesson of the century.”¹³

What the lesson of Auschwitz consisted in, for Agamben, is directly related to the insights he gained during his study of the law, as it allowed him to gauge the vastness of Auschwitz: “With the exception of occasional moments of lucidity,” he writes, “it has taken almost half a century to understand that law did not exhaust the problem, but rather that the very problem was so enormous as to call into question law itself, dragging it to its own ruin.”¹⁴ In other words, for him, Auschwitz cannot be understood (and, thus, not opposed) in conventional legal or political terms. What this meant for his perspective on the events of May ’68 was that he saw the politics of the student revolt as still operating within a legal framework (i.e., seeing conventional political measures and efforts to reform educational and other institutions as an adequate form of protest), whereas, for him, the fact that Auschwitz had been possible meant that politics had to be fundamentally rethought.

The event that led Agamben to eventually turn his focus toward politics, and, more specifically, toward the formulation of a response to the question of what kind of politics was still possible (or indeed necessary) after Auschwitz, were the 1989 protests in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square that ended with a violent crackdown by the Chinese government. What made Tiananmen an example for a different (nonconventional) politics, for Agamben, was the kind of community that the protesters gathered in Tiananmen Square represented. In contrast to their French counterparts, two decades earlier, which Blanchot described as a “negative community,” that is, a community mediated by a simple absence of conditions rather than by a condition of belonging, Agamben describes the community formed by the protesters in Tiananmen Square as a community mediated by belonging itself, meaning that the participants did not *belong to* a certain community but rather exhibited or displayed the potentiality to belong without content (identity or destiny).

What accounted for this difference, for Agamben, was that among the protesters in Tiananmen Square there was a “relative absence of determinate contents in their demands,” given that “democracy and freedom are notions too generic and broadly defined to constitute the real object of a conflict, and the only concrete demand, the rehabilitation of Hu Yao-Bang, was immediately granted.”¹⁵ Instead, what prompted the violent crackdown, for Agamben, was that for the leaders there was nothing worse than an opposition without some kind of identity. What he saw was an example of a new kind of politics (*a coming politics*) that is no longer characterized by a “*struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization.*”¹⁶ As Agamben emphasizes, this is not the same as an opposition between the social and the State, given that “[w]hatever singularities cannot form a *societas* because they do not possess any identity to vindicate nor any bond of belonging for which to seek recognition.” And he continues:

In the final instance the State can recognize any claim for identity—even that of a State identity within the State. ... What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple presupposition).¹⁷

For Agamben, Tiananmen thus represents both a manifestation of a community in a positive sense (the fact that it is undefined makes it open to possibilities), while, for the same reason, representing the largest threat to—and the most effective safeguard against—dogmatism, totalitarianism, and oppression.

If Auschwitz was the decisive lesson of the century, what it taught us, we could say through Agamben, is that conventional forms of politics are not able to protect us from another Auschwitz (or a continuation of the conditions that made Auschwitz possible). But this poses an interesting problem for us. Although Agamben clearly articulates a coming politics, how do his remarks on Auschwitz and Tiananmen connect to his remarks on studious play, study, and contemplation? While not making any overt gesture in this direction, we would like to highlight a passage from *The Use of Bodies*, which is the last installment of the *Homo Sacer* series. At the very close of this final text, Agamben writes the following: “Contemplation and inoperativity are in this sense the metaphysical operators of anthropogenesis, which, in liberating living human beings from every biological and social destiny and every predetermined task, render them available for that peculiar absence of work that we are accustomed to calling

‘politics’ and ‘art.’”¹⁸ To summarize, contemplation (studious play) liberates humans by encouraging a certain form of anthropogenesis through the use of thought to think and speak its own coming into being (its own infancy), rendering human life “available” for politics. In this sense, contemplation and politics are necessarily *connected* through a shared inoperativity. Contemplation deactivates certain roles, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and world views by encouraging studious play with the preconditions of our subjective constitution just as politics deactivates human actions and works, opening them up for free use. The hinge that unites and separates the two is precisely inoperativity, and by extension, a returning to human potentiality.

If this is indeed the case, then we can return to the Tiananmen Square occupation with an eye toward how it not only embodies a coming politics but also and equally a coming education that made participants available for a political experiment with the time and space of its own self-constitution.

The Space and Time of Contact between Education and Politics

In this section we want to tease out the paradoxical contact zone between education and politics with explicit reference to the space and the time of inoperativity. What does such a zone look like? In particular, the space of contact is a weakly utopian occupation of infrastructure, and the time of contact is always contemporary. These two dimensions emerge when the function of the infrastructure supporting learning is suspended and the time of deferral (into the past or present) is deactivated and returned to the contemporary moment.

Space

There are essentially two ways to think about the underlying spatial model informing the politics on the Left. The first is the classical Marxist notion of politics as ultimately a struggle over the control of the economic base. On this view, there are certain, clearly prescribed and privileged political subjects of social emancipation: the proletariat. It is the *objective contradictions* existing between the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie that define the political terrain of struggle. The kind of education internal to this model of politics concerns learning to see one’s self as a member of a universal, revolutionary class (the proletariat). Thus the learning here is really about understanding one’s objective

position in the forces and relations of capitalist production and how this position also ascribes certain objective, material interests that can only be met through a total negation of class-based economic structures. A key reference point in this respect can be found in the writings of V.I. Lenin. Lenin writes,

[I]t [the trade union] is not a *state organization*; nor is it one designed for coercion, but for education. It is an organization designed to draw in and to train; it is, in fact, a school: a school of administration, a school of economic management, a school of communism. It is a very unusual type of school, because there are not teachers or pupils; this is an extremely unusual combination of what has necessarily come down to us from capitalism, and what comes from the ranks of the advanced revolutionary detachments, which you might call the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat.¹⁹

In short, the site of the school is displaced into the site of politics: the factory and its unionization. Through mobilization of the union, workers can come to recognize themselves as universal subjects of emancipation (revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat). Notice that this “very unusual” combination of education and politics comes down from capitalism itself, which, as we have discussed, has slowly displaced education from the schoolhouse into the factory and the factory into the school. But as much as this is reactionary, it is also revolutionary, coming down from “advanced revolutionary detachments.” In other words, while the conditions of the factory that the workers find themselves within have been generated by capitalism, this has not precluded an appropriation of these conditions, now detached from their capitalist ends, for revolutionary advancement. Also notice that what has been appropriated from capitalism is not simply *any* educational displacement but specifically the law of learning. This learning lacks teachers and pupils, but it operates in terms of organizing means and ends. The union is a school that sets up a relationship between learning as an educational means to a political end (proletarian subjectification) within the schoolhouse of the factory. The factory no longer simply produces capitalist profits but also revolutionary subjectivity. In sum, education is (a) displaced (into the factory) and (b) instrumentalized (according to the laws of learning).

As the objectivity of class struggle was increasingly called into question throughout the twentieth century through the rise of a variety of nonclass-based struggles (around issues of gender, race, sexuality, and disability as they emerged in the aftermath of May ’68), a new, post-Marxist emphasis on the question of symbolic *antagonism* emerged in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.²⁰ The location of struggle shifted to the superstructural domain of rhetoric, semiotics, and discourse, and how signifiers come to be

sutured together into a (counter) hegemonic formation. If politics is a struggle to network together signifiers, then it becomes increasingly diffused, relational, and differential. It is no longer prescribed to a fixed location (factories) and a fixed subject (industrial workers). Counter-hegemonic coalitions of different groups can be sutured together through the constitution of a chain of equivalences between different, particular groups around an empty signifier such as “justice” or “equality,” which bring all the competing special interest groups together into a contingent and antagonistic bloc. Politics, on this model, is a collective investment into a common name that is capable of holding within itself (precisely because it is virtually empty) an expansive coalition. The goal here is to take symbolic, social, legal, and state power(s) through discursive struggle over the language of emancipation (whose voices are included/excluded).

Discourse is central to this understanding of politics, but as Laclau and Mouffe point out, discourse also is fundamentally *pedagogical* in nature in that it functions to change ways of thinking, imagining, and understanding²¹ through the articulation of an “imaginary”²² that networks together previously separated struggles. If classical Marxist education in trade unions reveals what capitalism conceals (the objective interests of the worker as proletariat), here post-Marxist education through discourse produces new subjects through articulation—subjects that are contingent and not guaranteed by laws of history. Nevertheless, similarities remain between the two approaches. In both cases, education is instrumentalized for the sake of political ends. While the first concerns revolution and the second expansion of democratic rights, the point for us is that education is oriented toward certain predetermined functions within a set of contradictions or antagonisms. Second, as with classical Marxism, the model of education here is learning, which lends itself to such means-end thinking. In short, both Marxism and post-Marxism concern the construction of *relations* between learning and politics. And in this sense, they reproduce the essential logic of articulation found within capitalism (and maximized in communicative capitalism).

This is not to deny that there are benefits to both positions outlined above, and there have been historical payoffs for constructing revolutionary and counter-hegemonic relations between learning and politics. But we want to ask a different question—not one based on relationality but on contact. What kind of contact between education and politics becomes possible if we shift *location* of the problematic from the economic base or discursive superstructure to the space of *infrastructure*? Hardt and Negri’s theory of the common as a positive production of immaterial labor (language, affects, habits, and so forth) from below is one

possible starting point for theorizing a politics of infrastructure,²³ but here we want to focus on another possible entry point: Agamben's theory of gestures (as a kind of bodily infrastructure). The space of gesture is, as Agamben highlights, a space of pure mediality.²⁴ We can see gestures in the dancing or playing or contemplating body where movement shows itself moving or thinking shows itself thinking. And in showing themselves, movement and thought become open to free use. So too with infrastructure, which is the basic supporting *space* of economic production and *praxis*. By infrastructure, we mean material and immaterial (linguistic) means that make action and work possible. While one might think that the struggle over the economic base in classical Marxism concerns infrastructure (in the form of the relations and forces of production), we would argue that this approach already places means in relation to ends, inscribing within them a predetermined functionality (productivity). The same can be said of post-Marxism, which already prescribes a certain function to the empty signifier (which, we might add in passing is a *negative* basis of politics, rather than an affirmative and positive one) within a hegemonic struggle and also prescribes a certain rhetorical *form* to this struggle (the chain of horizontal equivalences organized around a central emptiness that can only ever be partially filled). The question of classical Marxism is not about the relation between means and ends but rather about who controls this relationship in the first place (and how it can thus be exploited for private rather than public gains). Likewise, post-Marxist approaches to discourse always presuppose the speakability of language (its infancy) as destined for antagonist purposes (be they conservative or progressive). Our point is that these approaches fail to theorize the means (infrastructure) as such and therefore repeat the ancient Aristotelian bias that favors actions, ends, and actualization over and above potentiality. Politics deploys gestures, commanding them to take on certain operative forms within economic production or discursive action. An impolitical politics, on the other hand, would not deploy gestures but rather exhibit them as such. It would not try to optimize (take advantage of) infrastructure so much as render its operativity inoperative, put it out of work, in order to see what kinds of uses become possible beyond the material laws of history (Marxism) or the discursive laws of hegemonic struggle (post-Marxism).

With the shift from Marxism to post-Marxism, we find a broadening of the spaces where politics can happen (and *must* happen). We do not critique this trend toward expanding the political horizon. Instead, we want to claim that it does not go far enough. For post-Marxists, hegemonic antagonism takes place with relation to juridical and state institutions and is primarily oriented

toward rights to expand democracy within constituted forms. Yet, as articulated by Agamben, it is not clear that state-oriented counter-hegemonic discourses (calling for the expansion of civil rights) are an adequate response to the current state of exception exemplified by the extra-juridical status of those spheres operating outside the law (to preserve the law). These conditions necessitate a different space for politics—one that is not strictly oriented toward the economic base or the legal/state superstructure. Such a politics would be out-of-bounds of the spaces of Marxist and post-Marxist conceptual frameworks, and in this sense, be largely invisible, or non-political (impolitical).

Time

The space of inoperativity is also always contemporary. As Agamben argues, the contemporary moment is not a mere point in a chronological, linear organization of time. Instead, it is a rupture that is characterized by a “disconnection” and “anachronism.”²⁵ To be truly contemporary, one does not belong to their time, adjusting a form-of-life to certain social norms and values. Instead, the contemporary person is more or less “irrelevant”²⁶ to those around them precisely because they seem out of joint or untimely. In this sense, the contemporary is a temporal moment of *noncoincidence* with one’s time that, precisely because of this condition, enables an individual to *contemplate* time. Tiananmen was a contemporary occupation precisely because it was untimely, opening up a fissure in the present for occupants to contemplate a coming politics (a politics without an identity or a destiny). It was neither a flash from the past (as in a nostalgic return to that which has been lost) nor simply a utopian projection into a future (as the negation of what exists in the present). Instead, it was “no more” in the present while “not yet” in the future. What was unleashed was a temporal contact point between “what is” and “what is to come” that defines the peculiar nature of all potentiality. If this is correct, then as a consequence we can say that politics in Marxism and post-Marxism is *never in contact with the present*, is *never contemporary*. Instead, it merely *negates* the present in the name of a future to come.

In sum, Agamben’s notion of an impolitical politics does not struggle over economic relations (by raising class consciousness) or over superstructural legal/juridical discourses of civil society (by creating the conditions for democratic speech) but rather exposes a more basic infrastructure that supports production, action, and works. This infrastructure is the *common space* of potentiality, with infancy being the name for the common space of potentiality in language. It is

also the *contemporary time* of the present moment released from teleological ends always posited in a deferred future to come or a past needing redemption. The infrastructure of language is (a) common and (b) always already in use and thus contemporary (as use is never to come but also about becoming in the present moment of auto-affection). It can be appropriated and made to function according to specific teleological commands, but *ontologically* speaking, infrastructure is first and foremost free and open for use (as with Agamben's analysis of gestures). Occupying the common space and contemporary time of infrastructure returns politics to use. Such use does not assume a specific space for the appearance of the political, nor does it prescribe a particular actor, nor does it necessitate a specific orientation/end. Instead, this use is unbound as much as it is out-of-bounds of Marxism and post-Marxism.

Returning to Tiananmen, we can now rethink Agamben's example of a coming politics to see how it is also a contact point between politics and education that is not instrumental. Our rereading highlights how politics and education pass through one another via a space and time of inoperativity opened up through occupation of infrastructure.

The Tiananmen Square occupation offered a fleeting image of what happens when the suspension of infrastructure through studious play becomes a public concern, revealing a different space of politics outside economic or statist/legal struggles. In this case, the coming community occupied a space in the heart of Beijing, a space of great symbolic power for the Communist Party and for the identity of the state—a space where citizens *learn* how to be Communists, a space dominated by the command of the party to behave in a certain way. Once occupied, this law of learning was suspended, opening the space up to new kinds of experiences that were not strictly reducible to either education or politics but rather exposed the contact between the two. Notice, the space of the coming community was not *outside* or *over there* in a utopian displacement. Rather it was right in the middle of the city where action happens and where civic learning displays itself. But instead of turning the space into a space for a protest movement, the space was rendered inoperative through durational occupation, and in turn, its learning function was deactivated (as a space for civic instruction by the Party). The result was a studious community defining itself by its own rules of self-formation through experiments in living together rather than a protest movement defined by a clear identity and a clear political or economic agenda. What was so frustrating for the Chinese Communist Party was that the space no longer *taught* citizens how to be or who they were, and, in turn, there was *nothing to learn* from the coming community about what

kinds of concessions the state ought to give in order for life to return to normal. Instead, the community was simply whatever it was and preferred not to teach or learn but rather contemplate its own potentiality to be thusly. And in doing so, it made its studious play with its own potentiality a public, and by extension, political concern.

The demand that Tiananmen responded to was *internal* to itself, internal to its constitution of itself through the use of itself. Thus Tiananmen can be interpreted as studious play with its potentiality to become this or that kind of social body, figuring out how to use its awkward linguistic and social gestures as it played with them. As such, the infantile demand for self-constitution was *contemporary* to the emergence of the multitude in the square. It was not predetermined ahead of time as in the Marxian model by the laws of history calling forth a specific set of political actors (the proletariat). And it was not a demand that was oriented *away* from itself toward a specific constituted institution (such as the state of a juridical apparatus) as in the post-Marxist model. While the law of history *places* a demand on certain political actors from the *past* (as it is inscribed in the forces and relations of production), the post-Marxist model of discourse projects the demand of participants *outward*, away from itself toward an institutional body, in the hopes of *future* political gains. In the former, the worker learns to be a proletariat (and thus justifies past losses by taking up the mantle of revolutionary action), and in the second, the state learns of the demands of the marginalized (and thus negotiates for hegemonic reform in the future). In both cases, the kind of relation between learning and politics always misses the contemporary moment. When a demand emerges from within a collective's use of itself to constitute itself in its infancy, then the demand institutes a *contemporary* point of contact between education and politics in the form of study now made into a public concern (and thus containing a certain political dimension, even if this dimension is invisible to traditional political paradigms).

When occupation of the space and time of infrastructure becomes a public concern (as in Tiananmen), then a contact point erupts between contemplation and politics, often times with ambiguous results that do not satisfy either the educational establishment (as it is unclear what the outcomes are or what is learned) or political activists (who want to transform studious communities into political movements with a clear identity and agenda that can teach those in power). While critique from educationalists and political activists is not in itself misguided (and certainly there is more than enough room for these perspectives), all we want to point out is that perhaps jumping to these more or

less instrumental approaches to the education-politics articulation misses what is most singular and unique about occupation of infrastructure: that it is a space of infancy and use. Politics and education thus contact each other when they *lose* each other through mutual occupation (and thus exodus from preexisting functionality). Politics and education can therefore only be thought as a kind of relational non-relation or a relation that functions only in so far as it renders nonfunctional the identities put in relation in the first place. And in this sense, a coming education (one that is contemplative, playfully studious) can and does make available a coming politics: weakly utopian (everywhere and thus nowhere in particular) and contemporary.

P4I as a Contact Point

Turning to P4I, we can now see how it offers a certain contact point between education and politics that does not collapse one into the other but rather situates itself in a kind of exodus that suspends the identities of both at their mutual point of potentialization. For instance, the paradoxical time of P4I no longer functions according to the instrumentalized and functionalized temporality of school clock time (where each second is dominated by a disciplinary law of efficiency), yet it is not yet outside the time of education. Stated differently, it is not learning time (which is always on the clock), but rather study time, or the time that remains when the clock stops and when the teacher allows students to respond to the demand to babble (play with language).

In terms of space, we can think of P4I as the space opened up and sustained by a certain demand (i.e., the demand to speak, created by the silence of the Voice of the teacher). As stated above, relationality presupposes two, distinct, predefined identities that must negotiate what, who, and how they are with regards to one another. The relationship between learning and the communicative, knowledge economy of liberal democracies is best articulated in terms of the command. Another way of stating this is that communicative capitalism *commands* that we speak. A command is a non-apophantic imperative that is, for Agamben, linked directly to law, religion, and magic. All three of these discourses operate with an injunction in mind (think here of the Ten Commandments in Christianity). In the current historical moment, Agamben finds the ontology of the command gaining increasing prevalence. For instance, the imperative of communicative capitalism is “Speak!” It does not care *what* is spoken, but rather *that* speaking must happen (regardless of content). In this sense, what is captured by capitalism

is speakability itself. And this is most pernicious in liberal democratic societies. As Agamben writes,

I believe that a good description of the so-called democratic societies in which we live consists in defining them as societies in which the ontology of the command has taken the place of the ontology of the assertion, yet not in the clear form of an imperative but in the more underhanded form of advice, of invitation, of the warning given in the name of security, in such a way that obedience to a command takes the form of a cooperation and, often, of a command given to oneself.²⁷

The liberal democratic command is to “freely” speak one’s mind and put one’s speech in circulation. This command is covert as it comes disguised as one’s autonomous choice rather than an external imposition. The relation between economy and learning is precisely this command. Indeed, we might go so far as to suggest that the problem with P4C (as envisioned by Sharp at the outset of this chapter) is not that it is not democratic enough but that it is *too* democratic, meaning that it reflects back the command of the communicative, knowledge economy.²⁸ The learning society is precisely a society of commands where individuals as entrepreneurs learn to speak for themselves. In turn, this freedom to speak necessitates the management and government of speech acts by individuals as self-regulating, democratic subjects.

But if this is the case, how is P4I any different? Like P4C, P4I also concerns speaking, and it would appear at the outset that it also reiterates the basic tenets of the communicative, knowledge economy. Yet there is a significant difference. Agamben writes, “The spectacle [of communicative capitalism] still contains something like a positive possibility—and it is our task to use this possibility against it.”²⁹ Because communicability has been thrown into relief by capitalism’s appetite, it can now be struggled over, and in this sense, the greatest darkness becomes an opportunity. Agamben summarizes, “But exactly for this reason, the age in which we live is also that in which for the first time it becomes possible for human beings to experience their own linguistic essence—to experience, that is, not some language content or some true propositions, but language *itself*, as well as the very fact of speaking.”³⁰ On our reading, the appropriation of language in the current moment is not purely negative but actually unleashes the conditions necessary for us to playfully study language as a pure means, as social infrastructure. To do so means we have to suspend the relationality of education and economy of liberal democracies via the command and, instead, recognize a contact point between education and politics in the form of the *demand*.

Drawing on Chapter 1 of this book but placing it in a political context, we argue that while a command is always to speak (and in a sense take an oath to speak and speak well!), a demand is to return to the very conditions of speakability. It is not actually an imperative (neither extrinsic nor intrinsic) but much more akin to an apophantic statement that says, “Language is!” In this sense, the demand does not command (in terms of oath taking, cursing, or blessing). Instead, it reminds us that language is our common infrastructure, and that it is this infrastructure that is to be wrestled with (more so than any debate concerning what to say or how to say it).

As such, the demand of P4I is not that we make language function better (so that it becomes more reasonable and more deliberative according to democratic ends), but rather that we are reminded that language as such—as infrastructure—is what is most common and what is most at risk. The demand returns us to the *common space and time* of language that we all belong to without belonging to anything in particular. This space and time is without command (*arche*) and is thus inherently *an-arche* or anarchistic (without law, without oath, without command). Politics and education meet at this anarchic contact point where each is undestined. Agamben’s notion of infancy is, as he reminds us, a “common power”³¹ underlying any and every act of communication, every specific language game, and every mother tongue. Indeed, any communication is, for Agamben, “first of all communication not of something in common but of communicability itself”³² as this common power. P4I is a sharing with friends this common power in a space of being-thus. It is not *for* the development, growth, or progress toward a particular notion of a political life or in accordance with a predetermined law of reasonableness. Instead it is a form-of-life that is infantile, meaning without foundations and without destiny. In the end, infancy is anarchic and anarchy is infantile (in that both are impotential remnants that depose the law).

Perhaps we can summarize P4I with as simple procedural demand: *Let children use language (babble), and through that use rediscover what is most common (infancy) and thus without law (anarchic)*. “Anarchic” in this context refers to a form-of-life that is (a) without negative foundation and (b) without destiny. Anarchism is the contact zone between education and politics wherein the functioning of infrastructure is rendered inoperative and opened up for common use. Of course, this impolitical education and educational politics might seem strange as it does not critique the mode of production or the division of labor. Nor does it build up counter-hegemonic, democratic knowledge through the construction of chains of equivalence between disparate identities.

At the same time, it is not reducible to a post-critical lineage either.³³ Instead, we conclude that it is *pre-critical* in that it exposes students to the free use of language as infrastructure that supports (without being absorbed and exhausted by) critical or post-critical endeavors. It is time that this infrastructure itself be seen for what it is: a pure means that enables us to finally contact the potentiality that subtends all binaries separating education from politics in the first place.