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Thijs Lijster

Critical Common/Common Critique

Or How to Regain Steam

Abstract: In the past decade, there have been several philosophical, societal, and artistic critiques of critique. Alain Badiou, for instance, rejects the critical Kantian tradition in favor of being ‘true to the Event,’ while Bruno Latour concluded in a seminal article that critique had ran ‘out of steam.’ In certain artistic practices, finally, participation and proximity is preferred over the traditional critical and contemplative attitude of the observer. Although such attacks have their reason, I will argue that we should not give up on critique too hastily, even though that might mean that we have to search for alternative concepts of critique. In order to contribute to that search, I will consider the concept of critique in relation to the concept of the ‘common,’ that has been widely debated in recent political philosophy and art theory. To do that I will first discuss the tensions between these two concepts, and next try to go beyond this tension by bringing them into a dialectical relationship, by investigating the implications of a ‘critical common’ and a ‘common critique.’ I will argue that these categories can strengthen one another: While commons provide fertile soil (‘common ground’) for critical theory, critique can prevent the romanticization and appropriation of the commons into traditional notions of ‘community’ or ‘common sense.’

Keywords: Critique, commons, common sense, community, dialectic

In his 1928 book *One Way Street*, the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin bluntly states that only *Narren*, clowns or fools, lament the decay of critique:

For its day is long past. [Critique] is a matter of correct distancing. It was at home in a world where perspectives and prospects counted and where it was still possible to adopt a standpoint. Now things press too urgently on human society. The “unclouded,” “innocent” eye has become a lie, perhaps the whole naive mode of expression sheer incompetence. (Benjamin 1996: 476)

Where does this leave us, worrying about the crisis of critique some ninety years later, when again things seem to be pressing too urgently on human society? Are we indeed *Narren*, clowns or fools, for lamenting its decay? One is indeed tempt-

ed to believe so if one considers the recent surge of postcritical or even anticritical discourse. In the past decade, there have been several philosophical, societal, and artistic critiques of critique. Critique is accused of many different things, from many different directions. We can summarize these accusations as follows. First, critique is considered as negative or even nihilistic. This is a point made most famously by Bruno Latour, who in his essay “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?” (2004) scorns the gratuitous demystifying gesture of the modern critic, who concerns himself only with the shattering of the fetishes of others, thereby neglecting the great fetish of critique itself. We also encounter it, in a different way, in Alain Badiou, who rejects the critical Kantian tradition in favor of being “true to the Event” (Badiou 1999), and even already in Peter Sloterdijk’s rejection of the pure negativity of “cynical reason.” As diverse as these thinkers may be, all agree that critique is somehow self-defeating, a dead-end-street, that does not and cannot lead to action.

Second, critique is said to be detached and isolated. We recognize this already in Benjamin’s abovementioned disavowal of the “unclouded” (*Unbefangenheit*) and “innocent eye” (*freier Blick*). Today this form of anticritique perhaps most prominently features in participation and community art, and the discourse surrounding it. As Claire Bishop has shown, these artistic practices favor the perspective of the participant over the contemplative and detached view of the observer or critic (Bishop 2012). From this point of view, to be critical equals to remain an outsider, to remain uninvolved and unengaged.

Thirdly, critique is said to be conformist. Fredric Jameson addresses capitalism’s interest in “‘Enlightenment’-type critiques and ‘demystification’ of belief and committed ideology, in order to clear the ground for unobstructed planning and ‘development’” (Jameson 2007: 43). Following Jameson, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten question the status of the academic critic: “He claims to be critical of the negligence of the university. But is he not the most accomplished professional in his studied negligence? [...] Does the questioning of the critical academic not become a pacification?” (Harney/Moten 2013: 39) This disavowal of critique is expressed even more forcefully by the Dutch sociologists Willem Schinkel and Rogier van Reekum:

Critique has become order, and complains that it is not order enough, that it does not order the order. But critique has been elevated to an ordering principle everywhere. [...] So we are not writing critique, at least we try not to, since critique is a reflex, a privileged second nature built on the order of the first nature of orders [...]. Critique is academic necrophilia. (Schinkel/Van Reekum 2019: 45, 49)

So now we went from clowns, via nihilists, outsiders, and conformists, to necrophiles. What a journey! But what to do with these clownesque necrophiles or

necrophile clowns? Should we just give up on the critic and on critique? But then the next question would be: Can we do without it?

In this chapter I will argue, without disregarding the abovementioned shortcomings of critique, that we cannot do without it, that in fact we are in dire need of it, even though that might mean that we have to search for alternative concepts of critique. I want to give a hint of such an alternative concept by relating the concept of critique to the ‘common,’ a concept that has been widely debated in recent political and social philosophy, as well as in economic and legal theory. To do that I will first discuss the tensions between these two concepts, and next try to go beyond this tension by bringing them into a dialectic relationship with each other, and by investigating the possibilities and implications of a ‘critical common’ and a ‘common critique.’ In my conclusion, I will return once more to Benjamin’s reflections on the decay of critique.

1 Common vs. critique

The ‘common,’ as a phenomenon, practice, and concept, has been widely discussed in different fields of research, for instance, and most notably by Elinor Ostrom in economic theory (Ostrom 2015), by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in political philosophy (Hardt/Negri 2009), by Lawrence Lessig in legal theory (Lessig 2001), by David Harvey and Stavros Stavrides in critical urban studies (Harvey 2012; Stavrides 2016), and Nico Dockx and Pascal Gielen in art theory (Dockx/Gielen 2018). Due to the variety of these discussions and discourses, it is not an easy concept to delineate, alternately referring to certain resources (such as lands, woods, water, or information shared in common) to social relationships, and to organizational forms. Some scholars prefer to speak of “commoning” as an activity rather than “commons” as entities (cf. Harvey 2012). Leaving aside these debates for the moment, I will follow Dardot and Laval, who in their exhaustive study *Common* write:

[I]f the “commune” is used to name a specific, local, self-governing polity, and the “commons” is the name given to a diverse array of objects or resources managed by the activities of individuals and collectives, “common” is more properly the name of the principle that both animates and guides this activity. (Dardot/Laval 2019: 7)

So, like critique, I will here treat ‘the common’ first as a concept or principle, rather than as a practice or phenomenon (although, as noted in the quote, practices can be based on this principle). At first sight, the concept or principle of the common might be an unlikely candidate to salvage the concept of critique. If we

look at the respective etymologies of these concepts, they almost seem to be mutually exclusive. “Common,” from the Latin “*commun*” and the Greek “*koinón*,” refers to ‘sharing,’ ‘living,’ and ‘being together,’ a “shared mode of existence” (Dardot/Laval 2019: 11). The concept critique comes from the Greek “*krino*” (κρίνω), ‘to separate,’ ‘divide,’ and ‘distinguish,’ or ‘to judge’ and ‘decide.’ Indeed, while “commoning” means ‘bringing things together,’ “to criticize” is ‘to put things apart’ (which still resounds in the German “*ur-teilen*”).

Furthermore, if we again consider the critique of critique coming from post-critical or anticritical discourse, one can see how the common would ‘score’ better on all points. The common is neither negative nor nihilistic but designates actually existing and positively formulated alternatives. Although these alternatives often present themselves as emphatically anticapitalist, the common does not emerge as a reaction against capitalism, but rather, as Massimo De Angelis noted, as an alternative and autonomous system that has its own origin and exists next to (and in some cases even within) capitalism (De Angelis 2017: 103–105). If anything, modern capitalism emerged out of an enclosure and appropriation of the commons. The common, finally, refers not to a detached, unengaged, or solitary attitude, but to sharing, collective action, and reciprocal relations.

Before giving the impression that the common is able to right all the wrongs of critique, let us remind ourselves that there is, conversely, also a critical discourse on the common. From the perspective of critique, the common, as expressed in ‘common sense’ or the power of the ‘community’ can be and in fact has been considered as a gray, anonymous, and dangerous entity, threatening the critical capacities or even the very existence of the autonomous individual. As Theodor W. Adorno writes in his essay “Critique”: “[W]hoever criticizes violates the taboo of unity” (Adorno 2005: 283), and this violation was sometimes punished severely. Or consider Jean-Luc Nancy’s words in his essay “The Confronted Community” (2009):

I could see from all sides the dangers aroused by the use of the word community: its resonance fully invincible and even bloated with substance and interiority; its reference inevitably Christian [...] or more broadly religious as it is used to support an array of so-called ethnicities. All this could only be a warning. It was clear that the emphasis placed on this necessary but still insufficiently clarified concept was at least, at this time, on par with the revival of communitarian trends that could be fascistic. (Nancy 2009: 24–25)

Are critique and the common mere opposites then, or can they be brought into a potentially fruitful interplay with each other, perhaps as a mutual corrective to right each other’s wrongs? I would like to emphasize that this is not a mere academic or scholarly issue, as we seem to be living in an era of mass movements and mass protests. In previous years, we have witnessed numerous climate

marches, women's marches, and worker's protests. At the same time we sometimes hear critique on such protests: that they are disorganized, uninformed, misdirected, hysterical, or irrational. And this is not only critique coming from right-wing or conservative commentators but also from progressive commentators, such as Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams who criticized the "folk politics" of such movements, their term for the bad and unproductive romanticization of immediate and direct action at the expense of long-term strategy, the critical study of new ideas, and "the long march through the institutions" (Srnicek/Williams 2015). Indeed, we should not step into the pitfall of romanticizing the collective or community per se. Next to all the protests just mentioned, and next to Occupy, Extinction Rebellion, and the Arab Springs we have in recent years also witnessed white supremacists marching Charlottesville, and Polish far-right nationalists, or collectives more difficult to position on either side of the political spectrum such as the yellow vests. Finally, the way the concept of the commons has in recent times been embraced by neoliberal policy makers should also raise some suspicion. One can see how a certain understanding of the common – for instance, David Cameron's "Big Society" – perfectly fits the neoliberal agenda of austerity and further cutting basic social services.

This raises the question of the possibility of a critical common, and/or a common critique. Addressing this question entails a double movement, wherein our understanding of both the common (or community) and our understanding of critique are expanded and adjusted.

2 Critical common

Let us start with the possibility of a critical common. In his book *Common Ground* (2014) Jeremy Gilbert discusses the "Leviathan Logic" that has been dominant in the understanding of collectives and communities, which runs from Hobbes onward, and later can be found in writings of several conservative thinkers, such as Gustave Le Bon and Ortega y Gasset. According to Gilbert, this Leviathan Logic is characterized by the following three assumptions: 1) an ontological individualism, i.e., the "implicit belief that social relations are not constitutive of the person and their most fundamental forms of experience" (Gilbert 2014: 31–32); 2) a vertical understanding of the group, namely as constituted by singular relationships of each individual member with the (real or metaphorical) leader; 3) a meta-individualist conception of collectives, which has the properties of and acts like an individual (as illustrated by the famous frontispiece of Hobbes' *Leviathan*). Taken together, these assumptions lead to a conception of the collective as a mere aggregation of individuals, while at the same time considering it as

essentially hostile to the individual's autonomy. For Gilbert, this logic prevails in contemporary neoliberalism, which takes the individual as "the basic unit of human experience" (Gilbert 2014: 38). It is strategically deployed when neoliberal politics considers the individual's creativity as the main source of production, and individual responsibility as the legitimization for cutbacks and austerity. Interestingly, however, Gilbert argues that the same Leviathan Logic is present in antiliberal political movements from left to right, although it is of course valued in an entirely different way, such that the power of the group over the singular individual is indeed legitimized for the higher good. Soviet Communism too, considered the crowd as homogenous and with one will, represented by the party, and this logic still pervades in contemporary left-wing notions of populism of Laclau and Mouffe, where individuals gather under the "empty signifier," that is, "the people."

According to Gilbert, the main contemporary political challenge is to conceive of a different understanding of the collective or the community, neither as disorganized rabble nor as totalitarian meta-individual but rather "as a condition of dynamic multiplicity and complex creativity" (Gilbert 2014: x). He makes the useful distinction between "community" and "common." While the first is "dependent upon a shared, but static and homogeneous identity, [that] is often evoked in order to neutralise any possible criticism of the power relations obtaining within 'communities'," the latter "can be understood as that domain of creative potential which is constituted by, and constitutive of, sociality as such" (Gilbert 2014: 164, 167).

The subject of the common (if we can name it such) is indeed not 'the people' nor the traditional community, understood as an identitarian unity, but rather the Spinozean "multitude," which of course has been elaborately discussed by Paolo Virno, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The multitude, in Hardt and Negri's understanding, "is a form of political organization that, on the one hand, emphasizes the multiplicity of the social singularities in struggle and, on the other, seeks to coordinate their common actions and maintain their equality in horizontal organizational structures" (Hardt/Negri 2009: 110). In contrast to the people or the community, the multitude is in a constant process of becoming and cannot be fixed into a unity or identity.

The multitude does not have the clear delineation of Marx's proletariat. Though, like Marx, Hardt and Negri emphasize the link of their political subject to capitalist forms of production, at the same time they note that once capitalist production has become "biopolitical," almost all forms of life can be considered to be forms of production. As I see it, the concept of the multitude first and foremost poses the challenge to think of the collective and the individual not as opposing and mutually excluding forces, but to rather think in terms of a produc-

tive and fruitful interrelationship between the two. Or more radical, since ‘inter-relationship’ still presumes the ontological distinction and separation between the two, multitude rather implies that the in-dividual is always already part of, and originates in, a common. As Paolo Virno formulates it:

Precisely because they are the complex result of a progressive differentiation, the “many” do not postulate an ulterior synthesis. The individual of the multitude is the final stage of a process beyond which there is nothing else, because everything else (the passage from the One to the Many) has already taken place. (Virno 2004: 76)

Most importantly for my purposes in this contribution, it puts critique in the heart of the common, since it is only through critique, both directed outward and directed inward, that the multitude remains the dynamic multiplicity that these theorists envision. The self-identification of the collective should never be total if it is still to remain critical. Otherwise, we risk relapsing in traditional notions of ‘the people’ or ‘the community,’ governed by the Leviathan Logic that Gilbert was talking about. In contrast, what I call a ‘critical common’ is precisely characterized by the possibility of self-criticism, dissent, and the potential of transformation.

3 Common critique

For the reverse question of how to think of a common (or communal) critique, the notion of critique discussed in the first part – as negative, detached, and distanced – needs to be rethought and contextualized, namely as 1) situated, 2) institutionalized, and 3) politicized. To elaborate on these three features, I will subsequently draw from Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault, Luc Boltanski, and Antonio Gramsci.

Following Donna Haraway and other feminist scholars, we should think of critique as emerging from “situated knowledge” (Haraway 1988: 583). During the 1970s and 1980s decolonial anthropology and feminist theory have revealed the extent to which critics, theorists, and scholars of culture produce their knowledge from a situated perspective. While critical and rational consciousness has long pretended to be a kind of view from nowhere and disqualified any form of knowing that was situated (in a body, a tradition, a particular point of view), Haraway by contrast argues that “knowledge from the point of view of the unmarked is truly fantastic, distorted, and irrational” (Haraway 1988: 587). In recent years, this insight has come more to the foreground in public debates. Critics are increasingly required to account for their own social position and the

aesthetic, cultural, and political biases that this position may entail. Critique, then, is always situated, but this obviously does not mean that it accepts its situation, quite the contrary. Michel Foucault famously defined critique as “the art of not being governed like that” that is not “in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them” (Foucault 2007: 44). The “like that” in this phrase is crucial, for it excludes from the outset the very possibility of not being governed at all, and therefore indeed principally situates and contextualizes critique. For Foucault, critique is not something that was invented by philosophers in the eighteenth century, and does not come out of nowhere, but is an attitude that exists and has existed everywhere and every time that people revolted against certain (historical and situated) modes of governmentality. In this understanding, then, critique is not some kind of characteristic or skill of the individual, but something thoroughly collective and relational.

This brings us to Luc Boltanski. In his 2011 book *On Critique*, Boltanski distinguishes between a critical sociology and a pragmatic sociology of critique. Critical sociology, which he associates with the work of his former mentor Bourdieu, faces several theoretical and methodological problems. First, the dominated as described by critical sociology are themselves utterly oblivious to the forms of domination exposed by the sociologist. To account for this ignorance, the critical social theorist assumes that these actors suffer from “false consciousness” or a distorted understanding of their own situation. This means, however, that the sociologist or social critic necessarily underestimates, or even ignores, the critical capacities of the actors he or she is analyzing, and at the same time overestimates the explanatory power of his or her own sociological approach. There is, in other words, an “asymmetry between the sociologist enlightened by the light of his science and ordinary people sunk in illusion” (Boltanski 2011: 23). In this way, critical sociology not only overestimates its own range of vision, pretending to know people better than they know themselves, but it eventually also undermines its own emancipatory potential: the contempt for people’s critical capabilities and practices ultimately robs critical sociology of an addressee. In *On Justification* (2006) Boltanski and his coauthor Laurent Thévenot responded to these problems with what they call a “pragmatic sociology of critique.” This pragmatic sociology of critique is not primarily interested in its own critical perspective but rather in “observing, describing, and interpreting situations where people engage in critique” (Boltanski 2011: 24). This means observing situations in which actors find themselves confronted with indignation and suffering, and the ways in which they deal with these, especially in how they criticize each other and justify their own actions.

This ‘pragmatist turn,’ however, has several drawbacks of its own. Placing the actors’ own critique at the center, the pragmatic sociology of critique made itself dependent on what Boltanski calls the actors’ “sense of reality.” Actors have a sense of what they consider “normal” – one might also say a “common sense” – and this sense shapes the extent to which they experience feelings of indignation and anxiety, and hence the extent to which they are willing to criticize what they consider as the sources of these feelings. Critique might be happening all the time, the scope of it is often quite local and limited. According to Boltanski, with the exception of revolutionary situations, “ordinary people rarely call into question [...] the general framework in which the situations that provoke their indignation and protests are inscribed” (Boltanski 2011: 32). This also means that the sociologist might miss out on societal developments that occur over longer ranges of time, and that alter the very background against which people justify their actions. This is why in *On Critique* (2011), Boltanski argues that sociology should also develop a “sense of totality,” that is a perspective from which the background, within which acts of critique are situated, can be questioned and criticized:

From the overarching programme [of critical sociology] this framework would take the possibility, obtained by the stance of *exteriority*, of challenging reality, of providing the dominated with tools for resisting fragmentation [...]. But from the pragmatic programme such a framework should pay attention to the activities and critical competences of actors and acknowledgement of the pluralistic expectations which, in contemporary democratic-capitalist societies, seem to occupy a central position in the critical sense of actors, including the most dominated among them. (Boltanski 2011: 48)

According to Boltanski, this combination of critical sociology and the sociology of critique draws special attention to the role of institutions. Social life is characterized by a constant uncertainty about what ‘really’ is the case. Or in Boltanski’s terms: There is a constant gap between reality as “the whatness of what is” and the world as “everything that happens.” Critique and institutions can be considered as two distinct ways of responding to this gap: While critique is pointing to it and takes it as a source for indignation, institutions seek to repair the gap, or in some cases obscure it. Hence, institutions and critique are inextricably bound together: While institutions are meant to eliminate the object of critique, critique can take institutions as its addressee. While there is a contradictory logic at work in critique and institutions, in that institutions (sometimes violently) have to circumvent the unmasking work of critique, and in that critique questions the confirmation of reality that is the work of institutions, one can also imagine situations in which the goals of institutions and critique are aligned. These are predominantly situations of crisis, in which the status of ‘reality’ be-

comes radically uncertain, and new forms of collective life emerge. As Boltanski writes:

By recognizing that their fate is bound up with that of critique, institutions would even be consolidated in a sense. It is in fact only through the intermediary of (reformist) critique [...] that institutions can hope to engage with something real, and through that of (radical) forms of existential critique that they can hope to retain contact with the world. (Boltanski 2011: 157)

This brings us, finally, to the question of how the relation between critique and the common might be politicized. Although the politicization of critique has been on the agenda at least since Marx, a good point of departure would be Antonio Gramsci, and his notion of ‘common sense,’ which he defines as “the diffuse, uncoordinated features of a generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment” (Gramsci 1971: 330). While Marx argued that the ideological “superstructure” emerges naturally from the class that ruled over the means of production, for Gramsci it was less one-dimensional than that. Common sense, for Gramsci, is rather an arena of continuously contested and contesting ideas about what the world is like, and what is considered possible, necessary, realistic, etc. Ideological rule does not follow automatically from economic rule but is rather the outcome of a struggle in which the ruling classes eventually gain hegemony over the definition of reality. Thus, for Gramsci it will not suffice for the suppressed classes to cease the economic means of production; the struggle to create a different hegemonic order, that is, to define what is ‘common sense,’ is also fought through cultural, educational, and media institutions. Each political struggle, then, has to start with challenging and altering common sense. The way to do this, Gramsci argues, is not to start from scratch, but rather exists in “making ‘critical’ an already existing activity” (Gramsci 1971: 331). This implies that one starts from values and beliefs already acknowledged by a collective (such as ‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ or even ‘the common’ itself), only to slightly shift them into a different direction. Following Gramsci, Christian Höller thus talked about “un-common sense,” and considered the task of critique two-fold: “to acknowledge the un-common element in the common, and to start building a new common on the basis of such un-common elements” (Höller 2015: 107).

Following Haraway, Foucault, Boltanski, and Gramsci, one might say that critique both originates and results in a “common” – “origin is the goal,” to quote Karl Kraus. A common critique, then, acknowledges that it has no ‘God eye’s view’ but is principally situated, while at the same time sticking to the promise of critique to de-naturalize what ‘is the case,’ thus laying the groundwork for a critical common.

4 Conclusion

An image has emerged of a dialectics of the common and of critique. To summarize, the first part of this dialectic is the idea that the common is dependent on critique to prevent it from relapsing in identitarian and potentially oppressive forms of community. As, among others, Nancy and Adorno have shown, the ‘common’ is not necessarily progressive – taken as a homogeneous or homogenizing entity, it will pose a threat to both outsiders, and according to a self-defeating logic, eventually also to those inside. In other words: The common depends on open-endedness, porosity, multiplicity, and dissent, and thus on critique.

The flip side of the dialectic, so to say, implies that critique should be situated, institutionalized, and politicized, that is, infused, informed, and operationalized by the common. Critique does not and cannot exist on its own but emerges from the common, not only in form of learning and education, but also as the expression of actually existing forms of indignation and suffering. However, as both Boltanski and Gramsci show us, this cannot mean that critique depends solely on the community’s self-understanding (‘common sense’), neither should critique put itself entirely in the service of it. After all, that would be precisely the unjustified romanticizing of the ‘wisdom of crowds,’ while the very purpose of critique is to acknowledge the un-common in ‘common sense,’ and to build further on it. Furthermore, critical theory can contribute to the self-understanding of mass movements, and I would say that the conceptualization of the commons is itself a perfect example of that, as it allows us to see all kinds of contemporary struggles (e.g., against gentrification, copyrights laws, the influence of big tech, and the climate catastrophe) as inherently connected, namely as struggles for, and in name of, the common.

To conclude, let us once more return to Benjamin’s quote on critique. After determining that the time of critique has long past, he goes on like this:

Today the most real, mercantile gaze into the heart of things is the advertisement. It tears down the stage upon which contemplation moved, and all but hits us between the eyes with things as a car, growing to gigantic proportions, careens at us out of a film screen. [...] What, in the end, makes advertisements so superior to [critique]? Not what the moving red neon sign says-but the fiery pool reflecting it in the asphalt. (Benjamin 1996: 476)

An enigmatic statement, to say the least, especially coming from an author who once voiced the ambition to become the foremost critic of German letters, and by many is indeed considered as such. What I think Benjamin is hinting at, most notably with the “reflection in the asphalt,” is that critique is only worthwhile

if it somehow resonates with ‘the street.’ In other words: if critique as a theoretical and academic enterprise is connected to critique as part of a collective movement.

This should be our concern today. But for that, it will not help to throw out the baby with the bathwater as the anticritical or postcritical discourse seems to do. In all the accusations on the address of critique (i.e., that it is merely negative, detached, or a mere passive bystander) it is easily forgotten that the one who criticizes often does not have the immediate power to alter the status quo. Thus, such accusations threaten to relapse in what Adorno called “an untuuous sermon admonishing the underlying to keep still” (Adorno 2005: 283). Even in Kant, as Hannah Arendt shows, the *raison d’être* of critique was to think publicly, to connect theory and practice, but also to judge to what extent social movements had genuine emancipatory force. This has been the purpose of critical theory ever since, from Marx via the Frankfurt School to Nancy Fraser. So rather than shooting messengers, or choosing action over words, we should reconnect the two, by finding ways for critique to be common or communal, and the common to be critical. In Karl Marx’s words: “The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses.” (Marx 1843)

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