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What's in a Slogan?

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Proletarians of all countries, unite! All power to the Soviets! Let 100 flowers bloom! If the Marxist tradition has unquestionably produced its share of memorable slogans, their significance for revolutionary theory has not always been appreciated. In *History and Class Consciousness*, György Lukács follows V. I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg in giving mottoes and rallying cries a crucial place in his account of the transformative power of the proletariat. For these authors, slogans blur the very distinction between knowledge and action and are regarded as integral to the dynamic of necessity and freedom that is to drive radical praxis. Others have voiced skepticism about such political "one-liners," including Marx himself. In comparison to a manifesto or a treatise, a slogan may appear inconsequential or glib, if not inherently misleading. I will begin this essay by exploring some of Marx's discussions of slogans, particularly his efforts to distinguish between revolutionary and reactionary mottoes. Turning to Lukács's reading of Luxemburg and Lenin, I will demonstrate how aspects of Marx's analysis are extended and reinterpreted in twentieth-century revolutionary theory. In a final section, I will argue that Lukács's broader reflections on Marx's understanding of language offer a new way of conceptualizing the radical potential of these pithy yet volatile statements.

Whether formulated in the service of a political program or a commercial enterprise, a slogan aims to be both an object of fascination and an exhortation, even an imperative. Striving to be infectious, it must put its rhetorical dexterity on display. Unlike an aphorism or a maxim, however, a slogan lays no claim to being a nugget of wisdom, presenting itself not as an adage to be pondered or a puzzle to be solved, but as an incitement to action. Far from asking us to ruminate on its conceptual nuances, it urges us to vote, purchase, or take up arms. At once language as verbal acrobatics and language as blunt instrument, a slogan should occupy us, like a song we can't get out of our heads, but it should also mobilize us as an ally, whether we fall under its spell in the privacy of our own homes or as part of a crowd chanting in unison at a demonstration or sporting event.

In the 1840s and '50s, Marx rarely comments on the events of the day without reflecting on the many mottoes, buzzwords, and slogans in circulation: "From now on the bankers will rule"; "Better an end with terror than a terror without end"; and of course, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," which first achieved notoriety in France in the 1790s, but only acquired quasi-official status in 1848. As Marx takes stock of what he regards as hypocritical or sanctimonious talk, the formulation "empty phrases [*leere Phrasen*]" recurs repeatedly, to the point that it starts to sound a tad empty itself. (The German *Phrase* has the sense of "phrase," but can also mean "buzzword," "catchphrase," or "platitude." Marx also uses the word *Parole*, a "slogan" or "rallying cry.") As strident as Marx's condemnation of the logics of trite sayings may be, it does not lead him to dismiss mottoes and rallying cries *tout court*. Time and again, he intervenes in these discourses by crafting his own — presumably less empty — formulations.

If in Marx's estimation the vast majority of contemporary slogans prove wanting, it is not just because he disagrees with the ideological positions that inform them. The provocation of such utterances lies not only in what they say, but in how they say it, and in what they may trigger in the process of being said. Perched between the constative and the performative, between representing and positing, political one-liners ambiguously testify to what never could be, what inevitably will be, and what will have to be. As speech acts, they either give voice to something that may have had no voice, or they create something that did not previously exist. At the very moment that we feel most confident in dismissing catchphrases as tools of mystification and deception, they may reveal themselves to be essential to shifting the line between the possible and the impossible, and hence essential to change itself.

Does Marx offer us a way to distinguish between revolutionary slogans and their bourgeois or reactionary counterparts, between the *bons mots* of change and the *bons mots* of stasis or reform? A well-known passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* seems to constitute his decisive pronouncement on the topic:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry [*Poesie*] from the past but only from the future... Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to anesthetize themselves to their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the slogan went beyond the content — here the content goes beyond the slogan. [*Dort ging die Phrase über den Inhalt, hier geht der Inhalt über die Phrase hinaus.*]¹

Marx maintains that past revolutionaries have mobilized the culture and battle cries (*Schlachtparole*) of previous political formations, borrowing from these historic discourses in order to glorify their struggles and deceive themselves about their

own agendas. For the events of 1848, the most relevant example is naturally the adoption of Imperial Roman mythopoetics by the revolutionaries who deposed the French monarchy at the end of the eighteenth century, although Marx also mentions Cromwell and his allies, who embraced Old Testament motifs and adages. In these two cases, however, the languages of the past were appropriated only on a short-term basis. In due course, the revolutionary movements fashioned new idioms of their own, no longer feeling a need to rely on the older phraseology. In contrast, 1848 — the infamous “farce” — witnesses not another effort to use historical models as a springboard from which to engage with the “spirit of revolution,” but the resurrection of a past language with no indication that a new one will ever emerge to take its place.² Eschewing the violence and sacrifice that changing the world requires, the would-be radicals of 1848 parody past re-appropriations of the past, in the process obscuring the very distinction between phrase and content.

If the revolutionaries of the nineteenth century are to answer Marx's call and not avail themselves of past political languages, they must fashion a discourse that is not defined by dynamics of citation in which parody and pastiche are always close at hand. Marx's own remarks do not suggest that this will be an easy thing to do. In the passage just quoted, Marx's disparagement of the language of catchphrases is eminently catchy, complete with a slick chiasmus and a memorable quote from the New Testament about letting the dead bury their dead, a line flashy enough that a number of his contemporaries, most notably Mikhail Bakunin, also made use of it. When Marx does make an effort to put content ahead of slogan, he proposes that nineteenth-century revolutionaries must be relentlessly self-critical; their poetry is to be a discourse of indefatigable introspection and self-refashioning. A slogan's place in such a project is not immediately obvious. Its exhortative, directive tone would presumably be out of step with a radically self-doubting posture. If anything, what Marx is describing sounds more like Hegel's speculative sentence, in which the substance of what is articulated is less the identity of a particular figure or relationship than a movement of interruptions, repetitions, and reversals as an initial proposition is inexorably transformed into a statement or statements with which it is at odds. In showing that any sentence gives rise to inferences that contradict it, Hegelian thought ruthlessly exposes the constitutive incompleteness and instability of any individual instance of predication. Axioms, first principles, and foundational definitions all lose pride of place because no solo utterance can lay claim to independent authority, becoming significant only insofar as it serves as the impetus for further statements with which it will not accord. From this perspective, investing in one-off catchphrases, maxims, or buzzwords looks ill advised in the extreme.

Marx's own slogans may turn out to be powerful precisely because they too are speculative formulations that call their own capacities into question. One of his best-known attempts at a rallying-cry comes from *The Class Struggles in France*: “The revolution is dead! — Long live the revolution!”³ This is a rewriting of the speech act

that traditionally heralded the transfer of sovereignty in the French monarchy: “The king is dead, long live the king!” Initially, Marx’s slogan may seem to be the farce to the earlier version’s tragedy, an exercise in empty phraseology. Far from effecting a radical break with the languages of the past, it appears to be slavishly subservient to them. *The original terms of the catchy phrase are dead! Long live the catchy phrase!*

Precisely what this catchphrase is about, however, is the relationship between iteration and transformation. The French monarchist pronouncement aimed to express continuity as a coordination of particulars — one king is dead, and a new one is ready to replace him — and the general: the system of royal succession is not reducible to any individual member of the line, nor is it finite; if it is dependent on the continued existence of an indefinite number of kings, it is indifferent to the fate of any one of them. Marx’s rewriting of the slogan seems to do something similar, but the relationship between the two parts of his proclamation is uncertain: “The revolution is dead! — Long live the revolution!” In passing from the first half to the second, we do not witness an inversion or the coupling of a thesis and its negation, but rather a shift in mood from the indicative to the formulaic subjunctive. Although the two statements are balanced elegantly such that the two instances of “the revolution” frame a life-death dichotomy, the sentences remain curiously independent of one another. Neither is the premise of the other; neither can be inferred from the other. At the same time, the order in which the two sentences appear ensures that the second will be interpreted as a reaction to or comment on the first, perhaps even as a kind of boast in the face of the first, as if it read: *Nonetheless, long live the revolution!* Alternatively, we could say that the second sentence insinuates that if we had had a sharper eye, we would have seen that the particular and the general were at work in the word “revolution” in the first sentence, that is, we would have realized that what was being said about the revolution being dead was not a general truth, or at least not the whole truth, and therefore we would have known that the first proposition would require further elaboration in a subsequent remark.

Ultimately, the provocation of “The revolution is dead! — Long live the revolution!” may lie in its simultaneous conjoining and disjoining of the indicative and subjunctive moods. The dash between the two sentences highlights the precarious non-relational relationship that obtains between the statement of fact and the expression of a wish or fantasy, between a discourse of reference and a discourse that does not acknowledge a distinction between the factual and the counterfactual, between a discourse bound to the ordering authority of past, present, and future and a discourse utterly indifferent to such a periodizing schema. As a consequence, it is hard to know whether one should treat this slogan as two propositions that unfold in a sequence or as two halves of a larger form that cannot simply be read linearly and that may not even be governed by sentential syntax at all.

Although questions of grammar and syntax may seem somewhat remote from the dynamics of material praxis, a key passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* leaves

no doubt that the transformative capacities of the masses are intimately bound up with phraseological formulations that are as precarious as they are powerful. As Marx describes it, the merciless self-critique and self-refashioning of proletarian revolutionaries will continue “until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: ‘Hic Rhodus, hic salta! / Here is the rose, here dance!’”⁴ Having presented us with this Latin quotation and its German “translation,” Marx simply begins a new paragraph without further comment.⁵ As it happens, the line comes from Erasmus’ translation of Aesop’s fable about a braggart who claims to have excelled in the long jump at Rhodes and is being challenged to “put up or shut up” and demonstrate his abilities here and now.

Erasmus’ Latin version of the Greek original is “Hic Rhodus, hic saltus” (“Here [is your] Rhodes, here [is your] jump”), whereas the “salta” with which Marx ends his version is the singular imperative of the Latin verb *saltare*, which can mean “to dance” or “to jump.” Had Marx translated his Latin for us, then, it would have read: “Here [is your] Rhodes, jump/dance here!” That he instead gives “the rose” (*die Rose*) for “Rhodus” is an indication that he is citing — or rather, nearly citing — Hegel’s near-citation of Erasmus in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. At first glance, Hegel appears to be faithfully quoting the line from Aesop in the original Greek and in Erasmus’ Latin — “Hic Rhodus, hic saltus” — although notably without offering a German translation.⁶ We begin to get a sense that more is afoot a few sentences later when he observes: “With a little alteration, the saying just quoted would read: ‘Here is the rose, here dance.’”⁷ In contrast to Marx, Hegel gives us some indication of why he presents the citation in the first place, declaring that the task of philosophy is “to comprehend *what is*,” and adding: “It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his own time or leap over Rhodes.”⁸ This comment about leaping over the island has prompted some scholars to suggest that Hegel may not have been terribly familiar with the fable from which he took the line or at least did not fully understand it. Complicating matters further, the Greek “original” Hegel provides is actually a hybrid of the two existing Greek versions of Aesop’s fable, the one translated by Erasmus and a second, in which the relevant line reads: “Look — Rhodes, and leap off from (it)!” In other words, in creating his own Greek version of Aesop and then “complementing” it with Erasmus’s translation of one of the actual versions of Aesop, Hegel juxtaposes two lines from two foreign languages as if the one were a translation of the other when in fact it is not. We are thus back to the conjunction of juncture and disjuncture that we encountered in “The Revolution is dead! — Long live the Revolution!” Hegel’s alignment of the two sentences/languages serves only to highlight how little their co-appearance may reveal about either one of them or about any supposed relationship between them.

By the time we get to Hegel’s rewriting of the Latin line in German as “Here is the rose, here dance,” it is virtually impossible to determine what is motivating his individual “emendations.” He may be relying on etymology, that is, he may think, as

some scholars of the period did, that the name Rhodes came from the Greek word for rose, *rhodon*, or he may simply be fashioning a pun based on the first syllable of Rhodus.⁹ In either case, the rose may be a symbol of Rosicrucianism and therefore perhaps a figure for reason. Hegel's proposed shift from *saltus* (the noun "jump") to *salta* as "Dance!" raises similar questions.¹⁰ Suffice it to say that no two accounts of this passage in the *Philosophy of Right* or of Marx's quasi-citation of it agree on what is word play, what is systematic scholarly intervention, and what is an outright mistake.¹¹

In Hegel and Marx's texts, Aesop's line — if it is still "his" line — never has the privilege of being taken seriously. Having called on the revolutionaries of the nineteenth century to go beyond the traditional play of living and dead languages, Marx punctuates his account of the radical mobilization of the proletariat by nearly quoting Hegel's near quotation, or misquotation, an exercise in misprision that spans three languages, living and dead. Although Hegel and Marx are both ostensibly trying to craft a discourse of the here and now, their use of these citations confounds the relationship between the putative proximity and contemporaneity of their German and the putative there and then of the Latin and Greek. If Hegel "quotes" Aesop, or some fabular hybrid version of Aesop, in order to emphasize the importance of philosophy not trying to overleap its own time, Marx's mobilization of Aesop, Erasmus, and Hegel reveals Hegel's citational practice to be a challenge to the possibility of ever knowing if one's own language is of the past, present, or future.

Hic Rhodus, hic saltus/salta is a slogan for proletarian revolutionaries. In proclaiming it, one follows Aesop's athlete and makes a daring leap, springing forth from one language without necessarily being able to return to it or land safely in a new one, much less coordinate one's old language with a new one. Moreover, having jumped one cannot be sure that what one was jumping from was in fact one's own language in the first place. In this respect, *hic Rhodus, hic saltus/salta* is what Marx in various texts terms a *salto mortale*.¹² Such an instance of linguistic praxis becomes truly revolutionary by freeing itself of any claim to be "of" a particular language, old or new. Its power stems from the fact that it never becomes a model for any other linguistic act, even another slogan. In flight from its own status as paradigmatic or exemplary, Marx's formulation leaps, in pure speculation, exposing itself to possible ignominy or oblivion without any promise of a reward. As we will see, it is this capacity of a slogan to operate outside a bourgeois discourse of investment and return or equivalence and exchange that will intrigue Marx's inheritors.

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Bread, peace and land! Dare to think, dare to act! ¡No pasarán! ¡Pasaremos! Each of these rallying cries has a unique history and could be studied in its own right as a distinctive socio-political gesture. It is less certain whether the rich tradition of Marxist slogans is complemented by a comparably rich theoretical discourse about them. One place

in which the subject does come to the fore is in Lukács's reading of Rosa Luxemburg in *History and Class Consciousness*. The significance of this 1923 book for twentieth- and twenty-first-century cultural criticism cannot be overstated. Lukács's claim that proletarian consciousness can be a radically transformative force continues to serve as a benchmark for any model of material praxis. To observe that Lukács's detractors are as legion as his defenders is simply to acknowledge that anyone who has followed him in the Marxist tradition has had to take a position on his account of how reification structures all social dynamics.¹³

One of the distinctive things about *History and Class Consciousness* is that it offers multiple interpretive forays into various subjects, ostensibly allowing the reader to see changes in Lukács's thinking over a relatively short period of time. Prominent in this regard is the contrast between the first chapter on Luxemburg, an almost entirely laudatory discussion written in 1921, and a second chapter on her work, written a year later, in which Lukács, evidently following Lenin's lead, appears to part ways with her on several critical issues. Although Luxemburg only occasionally mentions slogans explicitly, they make an appearance in one of the best-known passages from *The Mass Strike*, where she is describing the same decisive mobilization of revolutionary forces that concerned Marx in the passage from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* we just considered. As Lukács characterizes it, this is the point at which the masses will "spontaneously and instinctively press forward with all their energies towards the party and towards their own class consciousness."¹⁴ Here, writes Luxemburg, the most important task of the group that is assuming a provisional leadership role will be "to give the slogan [*Parole*] — the direction — to the struggle; to establish the *tactics* of the political struggle such that in every phase and at every moment the entire sum of the available power of the proletariat... will find expression in the fighting posture of the party."¹⁵

While Luxemburg's reference to "the slogan" ("die Parole") is so fleeting that the English translation renders it as "to give the cue for," Lukács makes the term central to his explanation of how the unity of theory and practice will effect a transformation of "the economic necessity of the struggle for liberation" into "freedom."¹⁶ In his account of Luxemburg's argument: "Knowledge becomes action, theory becomes slogan [*Parole*], the masses act in accordance with the slogans and join the ranks of the organized vanguard more consciously, more steadfastly and in greater numbers."¹⁷ Far from simply offering direction as a preparatory step toward the establishment of the tactics of the struggle, "the correct slogans," Lukács argues, "give rise organically to the premises and possibilities of even the technical organization of the fighting proletariat."¹⁸ Throughout *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács never gives up on this idea. Much later in the book, he identifies the Russian Revolution of 1917 as an empirical example of

a crucial moment [when] the slogans of peace, self-determination, and the radical solution to the agrarian problem welded together an army

that could be deployed for revolution while completely disorganizing the whole power apparatus of counter-revolution and rendering it impotent.¹⁹

Nonetheless, having declared the slogan to be central to the revolutionary interplay of spontaneity and organization, Lukács immediately betrays some ambivalence about what he has termed its “organic” authority. The party, he maintains, is the “historical embodiment and the active incarnation of class consciousness, ... the incarnation of the ethics of the fighting proletariat,” *but* “its politics may not always accord with the empirical reality of the moment; at such time its slogans may be ignored.”²⁰ Although Lukács stresses that such discord will only be temporary, the qualification clearly compromises the status of the slogan as a decisive feature of proletarian struggle. No longer simply shaping reality, slogans must now partly be measured by their fidelity to a world they do not determine. As their meaning is no longer self-evident, they have to be treated as texts to be read and interpreted. In his second chapter on Luxemburg, Lukács will follow Lenin in charging that she overestimates “the organic character of the course of history” and “the spontaneous, element forces of the Revolution.”²¹ In this first consideration of her work, however, he has already reproached himself for making the same mistake.

To be sure, Lukács is nothing if not inconsistent on this point. Later in the book, he pushes back against those who would doubt the self-evidence of slogans, as he himself has done. He insists that “the fear that the party might sacrifice its communist character because of too close a familiarity with the seemingly ‘reformist’ slogans of the day” bespeaks “insufficient trust in correct theory,” adding that “when [slogans] are seen from a true revolutionary point of view,” the “final goal” of proletarian struggle is “present dialectically in every slogan from the day.”²² On this account, the rallying cries in circulation cannot be essentially off message, and they cannot help but drive the forces of the proletarian struggle: “every slogan leads to deeds in which the individual members risk their whole physical and moral existence.”²³

Lukács’s discussion of Luxemburg touches on some of the key concerns of a short pamphlet that Lenin wrote in July 1917 entitled “On Slogans.” Here Lenin sharply distinguishes between two types of political discourse: idle talk or “phrase-mongering,” for example, casual boasting about one’s revolutionary ambitions (if not also about one’s talents as a long jumper), and slogans, which encapsulate the “totality of specific features of a definite political situation.”²⁴ According to Lenin, a slogan creates the conditions of possibility for the very forces that give it its meaning, which primarily means a mobilized proletariat.²⁵ Despite his well-known efforts to distinguish himself from Luxemburg’s positions on spontaneity and party organization, it would appear that he accords slogans as formative a role in revolutionary praxis as she does.

Given Lukács’s concern that slogans may be misaligned with their situation — out of step, that is, with the situation that they themselves create — Lenin may seem

overconfident when he claims that one can systematically distinguish true rallying cries from phrase-mongering, just as Lukács himself may sound overconfident in averring that it is always possible to see slogans “from a true revolutionary point of view” and thereby find the kernel of proletarian struggle in each and every one. Precisely what, however, is a “true revolutionary point of view”? While Lukács says little about this, an intriguing footnote in *History and Class Consciousness* may prove illuminating. At this juncture, Lukács is stressing that the commodity character “conceals above all the immediate — qualitative and material — character of things as things,” citing Marx’s statement in *The German Ideology* that “private property alienates not only the individuality of men, but also of things.”²⁶ In a footnote, Lukács comments: “This refers above all to capitalist private property. Marx goes on to make a number of very fine observations about the effects of reification upon language. A philological study from the standpoint of historical materialism could profitably begin here.”²⁷

The observations in *The German Ideology* to which he refers are part of a critique of the philosopher Max Stirner, a discussion whose length and vituperative tone suggest that Marx considers Stirner an adversary to be reckoned with. In the sections that interest Lukács, Marx is attacking his foe for his constant recourse to what Marx calls “synonymy.” This is Stirner’s tendency to ground relationships between different concepts or epistemic registers in connections between verbal elements. In this context, finding connections means a range of different things, including highlighting etymological links between words, identifying the multiple meanings of a single word, or taking the similarities between the sounds of words as evidence of a more fundamental rapport between them. As one might anticipate from an author most famous for a book known in English as *The Ego and His Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, literally *The Singular One and His Property*), one of Stirner’s major affronts in Marx’s eyes is that he sees the communist ambition to abolish private property as nonsensical since it will prove impossible to dispel the abstract sense of something belonging to someone. Stirner argues that to truly do away with *Eigentum* (“property,” “possession”), it would be necessary to abandon the very notion of anything — a thought, an ailment — being *eigen* (“one’s own”). The concept of a trait or attribute (that is, a “property,” in German *Eigenschaft*) might have to be banished as well, at which point identity of any kind would effectively cease to exist. In the same vein, Stirner argues that it is impossible to do away with the notion of *mein* (“my”), because people will always have *Meinungen* (“opinions”), *ihre eigenen Meinungen* (“their own opinions”). In a cheeky moment, Marx responds that by Stirner’s reasoning, doing away with *Wechsel* (“bills of exchange”) would mean doing away with change (*Wechsel*) as such.

Marx does not think that the relationships between words and ideas that Stirner claims to elucidate are simply a product of coincidence, or of an overly active imagination. Such connections are easy to make, because in the language of the

bourgeois, whether German, French, or English, “the relations of buying and selling have been made the basis of all others.”²⁸ This is what Lukács refers to as the reification of language, and in Marx’s eyes, it renders Stirner’s demonstrations trivial. To the extent that the same terms are used to describe commercial relations, the features of individuals, and the relationships between individuals, a bourgeois thinker like Stirner has little trouble recasting any critique of social dynamics as an attack on selfhood.

Stirner treats everything actual (*wirklich*) as an abstract concept, and he reduces conceptual dynamics to resemblances between words. In response, Marx does not seek to reassert rigid distinctions between the abstract and the actual or between the language of thought and “the language of everyday life.”²⁹ The goal of the revolutionary is rather to fashion a poetry of the future in which such dichotomies could never emerge. This would be a language free of the reification endemic to the discourses of Marx’s day, as well as of Lukács’s day, and presumably our own. With *hic Rhodus, hic salta*, we saw a slogan striving to escape the clutches of phraseology. In Marx’s critique of Stirner, we get a glimpse of a language in flight from the bourgeois paradigms of equivalence and exchange, a language of radical anti-synonymy in which resemblances between words, connections of words based on their common etymons, and the polysemia of individual terms have no authority. At its limit, this is a discourse in which meaning is no longer organized by relations of similitude, patterns of repetition, or figures of substitution in which one element can stand in for or take the place of another. In contrast to Hegel’s Greek or Marx’s Latin, this poetry of the future’s very status as a language will not be predicated on its capacity to translate other tongues or to be translated by them.

In an oft-cited formulation that is arguably a slogan in its own right, Marx declares: “A radical revolution can only be a revolution of radical needs, for which the conditions and breeding ground appear to be lacking.”³⁰ The poetry of the future will have to be a revolution in our ideas about what slogans are, what they need to be, and why we feel a need to distinguish them from everything else. From the perspective of our customary conceptions of representation and performance, this will be a language of empty phrases. From Lukács’s “true revolutionary point of view,” it will be a language of *salti mortali*, a proletarian praxis of relentless self-criticism.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11 (New York: International Publishers, 1975) 106 (translation modified).
2. Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire* 105.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Class Struggles in France*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10 (New York: International Publishers, 1975) 70.
4. *Eighteenth Brumaire* 107.
5. This same Latin quotation appears at the end of Chapter 5 of the first volume of *Capital*, where it is also cited without any comment, as if its significance were self-evident.
6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991) 21 (italics original).
7. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* 22 (italics original).
8. *Philosophy of Right* 21-22 (italics original).
9. For a review of nineteenth-century speculations about the etymology of this place name, see F. G. Tomlins, *A Universal History of the Nations of Antiquity: Comprising a Complete History of the Jews, From the Creation to the Present Time: Likewise an Account of Ancient Syria, Grecian Islands, Persian Empire, Armenia, Numidia, Ethiopia, Arabia, Scythia, the Celtes, &c. &c. &c.: to Which Are Prefixed the Various Theories of Creation, According to the Most Esteemed Ancient And Modern Writers* (Halifax: W. Milner, 1844) 625.
10. See *Philosophy of Right*, 391n26. Some of Hegel's immediate predecessors also quoted the Erasmus line as "hic Rhodus, hic salta," possibly because they wanted a more directive version of the formulation, possibly because they were working with the other version of Aesop's text. In these cases, it is not always clear whether *salta* was intended to be read as "Jump!" or "Dance!"
11. Many scholars, perhaps most notably Isaiah Berlin, have weighed in on these passages and inveighed against the "errors" of others' explications of the inter-linguistic complexities. For help in reflecting on these issues, I am grateful for the assistance of my colleagues Walter Englert and Nigel Nicholson.
12. In an early text on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Marx observes that Germany lags behind other European nations in political emancipation because in Germany theory runs ahead of material exigency. Accordingly, he suggests that Germany must, through a *salto mortale*, surmount the fact that it does not yet experience the same barriers as other European nations, that is, Germany must leap over the absence of what needs to be there to be leaped over. Years later, this *salto mortale* will reappear in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital* to describe the "leap" of value from the body of the commodity to gold, the first step of C-M-C circulation.
13. Lukács's harshest critics, including Louis Althusser and Theodor W. Adorno, owe the most to him. One can debate to what degree the arguments of *History and Class Consciousness* depend on the thought of Max Weber or Georg Simmel, whether the analysis is excessively or insufficiently Hegelian, or if the philosophical dogmatism that will become more prominent in Lukács's later work is already on display. Whatever we decide his ultimate position on the theory of revolution to be, however, it is not utopian. Lukács claims that the dynamic praxis that is proletarian consciousness constantly reshapes both itself and its object, perpetually calling into question the very models that ground its own claim to relate to itself as a form of consciousness. As a consequence, Lukács is the first to allow that the proletariat may transform society for better, or it may adapt itself to the most decadent forms of bourgeois culture —

the point is truly undecidable.

14. György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT P, 1972) 42.
15. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg: Reform or Revolution & The Mass Strike*, ed. Helen Scott (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008) 149 (translation modified, italics original).
16. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* 42.
17. *History and Class Consciousness* 42 (translation modified).
18. *ibid.*
19. *History and Class Consciousness* 311.
20. *History and Class Consciousness* 42.
21. *History and Class Consciousness* 277, 279.
22. *History and Class Consciousness* 328.
23. *History and Class Consciousness* 336.
24. V. I. Lenin, "On Slogans," *Revolution at the Gates: Selected Writings of Lenin from 1917*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2002) 66, 67.
25. Lenin, "On Slogans" 62. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that for Lenin, slogans create a vanguard, the proletarian class, as an "assemblage of enunciation," and they do so before it is possible for the proletarian class to exist as a body. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987) 83.
26. *History and Class Consciousness* 92.
27. *History and Class Consciousness* 209n16.
28. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Collected Works*, Vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1975) 231. See also Marx, *German Ideology* 278.
29. *German Ideology* 26. In a footnote in "The White Mythology," Jacques Derrida hints that Marx is overly reliant on the possibility of sustaining a clear distinction between the conceptual and the material (Jacques Derrida, "The White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982] 216–17n13). In a similar vein, Derrida wonders how Marx can repeatedly charge Stirner with lapsing into Hegelian slogans (*Phrasen*) while apparently taking it for granted that he himself does not, irrespective of how often he has recourse to Hegelian staples such as *Geist*, *Wirklichkeit*, or *Begriff*. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994) esp. 133–135.
30. *German Ideology* 183 (translation modified).