

‘Where there is power, there is resistance...’

- Matt Sang (Theory and Criticism, University of Western Ontario)

In Volume 1 of “The History of Sexuality”, in defining what he means by “power” as clearly as possible, Foucault provides the following maxim: “where there is power, there is resistance”. The next page of the book offers an explanation of that claim, and this paper will offer an exegesis of that page. How are we to read Foucault’s declaration concerning the relationship of power and resistance? Insofar as power exists, resistance exists? Can we make the syllogistic deduction: 1) Where there is power, there is resistance; 2) power is everywhere; therefore, resistance is everywhere? If power and resistance occupy the same place, are we to conclude that they are inseparable, if not indistinguishable? Is resistance, are resistances, merely a moment in the system Foucault calls ‘power’?

Foucault’s concise discussion of resistance unfolds through a series of characteristic determinations of resistances: they are not exterior to power, they are multiple, heterogeneous, nonsubjective, and codifiable. In this last characteristic, Foucault claims, lies the potential of revolution. But such Revolution is the spectre that haunts his analysis of resistance. The question of revolution occurs three times: first, Foucault insists that there is “no soul of revolt”, second, that, in fact, “great radical ruptures” do “occasionally” occur, and, third, that the possibility of revolution would lie in the “strategic codification” of resistances. In the difference between the discourse of power and its practice, and between the idea of Revolution and its event, lies the difficulty of resistance, a difficulty one would want to overcome through so-called “tactics” and “strategies”. But does Foucault’s analysis of resistance suggest the possibility of producing revolution? Or does it insist that, though resistance lies within our grasp, revolution is necessarily ‘out of our hands’?

Social Movements and Their Situated Power Relations

- Jeff Pastorius (International and Comparative Studies and Philosophy, Huron University College)

Social movements, in a broad sense, are pervasive in contemporary society. Often these movements unfold in the interstices of society, hidden from public view, and lacking attention from large ‘mainstream’ media. Such movements generally become visible only when they erupt into large scale confrontational forms in which dispersed practices of resistance converge. Social relations within and around these movements often involve power struggles between relatively empowered groups in conflict with relatively disempowered groups. But this kind of power relationship is too often interpreted as a simple dyadic social structure, in which a dominant set of agents is opposed by a dominated set of agents in a sort of face-to-face confrontation between

paired adversaries. In this paper, I will critically examine this "dyadic" way of conceptualizing power in the context of social movements and contrast it with an alternative, "situated" conception of social power, a conception derived partly from Foucault's work, as extended and elaborated upon in the work of Thomas E. Wartenberg on the notion of "alignments of power." Using Wartenberg's analysis as a starting-point, I will argue that power relations, within and around social movements, cannot be reduced simply to power binaries between dominant and subordinate agents, because power is actually formed and reproduced through a de-centred multiplicity of social relations, extending far beyond the direct participants in any given power relationship.

Some Preliminary Techniques of Symbolic Warfare

- Christopher M. Drohan (PhD, European Graduate School of Media and Communications)

In the last century, resistance was generally overt and dialectical. A line of protesters/ strikers/ students would face off against a line of cops/ strike breakers/ administrators in a conflict where the boundaries between them were clearly demarcated. Globalization however, has tended to change the dynamics of these conflicts. First because it decentralizes them, outsourcing them to underdeveloped countries, dividing them into closed and striated networks, and masking them in bureaucracy. Overall this tends to localize political hotbeds, scaling them down to a more manageable and less conspicuous size.

At the same time, globalization acquaints us with a wider range of cultures and identities. In this "global village", the poli-social becomes miniaturized, as a city, town, or even an institution can become a microcosm of global affairs. Whereas the last century began with a focus on national and international identities, this century is more concerned with personal and group dynamics, which in turn changes the nature of resistance altogether. Now, more than ever, resistance must take place on a micro-scale: office politics, consumer ethics, cooperative communities, blogs, etc.

Similarly, at the economic level, business has been equally globalized, disembodied, particularized, and subjectivized. The labour movement gives way to anti-corporatism and anti-globalization, which themselves call for subversive guerrilla tactics, instead of the outright conflicts of old. In an age where revolution has become a predominantly commercial concept and resistance a form of competition between brands, those that want to fight against oppression are forced to advertise and market it as an attractive and viable alternative to the status quo. In a sense, revolution and social change have become entirely symbolic, competing in the media against prevailing brands and icons. Techniques like that of 'adbusting' arise when politics, consumption, and social trends flow powerfully from spectacular advertising. And the more that all media become harmonized in a single, global, and electronic medium, the more those that wish to resist must rise up to its challenge, democratizing this new medium now before it can oppress us later.

This brings us to a new set of questions about resistance, and new tactics of resisting. For instance, what do we do when the machines we use to resist are very often

made by those that support the very same regimes that we are trying to resist? When the language of resistance is the same language of our oppression? This paper aims to address these concerns while at the same time identifying the new fronts and techniques of the symbolic war we are now engaged in.

Logistics or Resistance

- Brenden Murphy (Philosophy, Carleton University)

In this paper, I hope to provoke discussion by examining why 'resistance' tends to fail strategically. I will extend the military metaphor of the "Call for Papers" and examine the relationship between tactics, strategy and logistics, in order to discuss some problems for practical revolutionary politics which attempts to operate through tactical resistance. In an accessible way, I will use Deleuze and Guattari's tactics-logistics-strategy to see how it might be used to re-orient (post) Left politics. I read tactics as the application of force to a point, strategy as the selection of points and the holding of space and logistics as the capacity to project and maintain force to these points.

It is my contention that 'resistance' is an occasionally viable type of tactic, is strategically unwise, and is logistically suicidal. It routinely fails because it is very often incompatible with the preservation and expansion of the power and numbers of those who practice it. Rather, successful resisters act as brake-pads, slowing or stopping the undesirable process resisted, but wearing themselves out as well. This has a negative feedback or vicious cycle effect in that it reduces the organising capacity of the resisters and their capacity to persist and dissuades others from joining in.

Following this logistical line, I propose that more focus shift towards a class of tactics that still fits with the strategic goals of undermining the target system of domination, but which supports and encourages those struggling in form of struggle itself and cultivates a desire among non-participants to become participants.

Finally, I propose that a politics of creating spaces of relative autonomy can accomplish these goals by creating a concrete and desirable example, nourishing participants and holding space. Under ideal circumstances, the net effect is positive feedback or a virtuous circle.