



Inscribing Organized Resistance

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That which expresses itself externally, always precedes itself. One action always nudges another ... The great difference between the ground of knowledge and the ground of event ... are connected in ways that are not as certain, but which nevertheless are not uncertain. These series run straight and unbroken, but they do not remain alone or with themselves. (Ernst Bloch, 1974: 96)

Everyday we follow walking before all shadows. (We Ragazzi, 'Walking Before All Shadows', 2003)

Greetings

Thoughts, antagonisms, innovations, demonstrations, elaborations, expectations and refutations. This is all to say, field-notes, from an array of politically engaged, non-objectifying theoretical work projects. Behold, the current issue of *ephemera*! Foolish is s/he who would seek to encapsulate a supposedly complete or somehow representative spectrum of such concerns within this, or indeed any format. Foolish also are those who would hope to find herein a necessary 'image of thought' (Deleuze, 1995). It is its conditions of impossibility that emphasize the necessity of a worthy task. A task guided by a certain futility then. Yet, it is precisely continuation and openness that constitutes the materially valuable. "[T]he hypothesis understood as provocation (knowledge)" (Tronti-Panzieri, 1962), not understood through itself, but as a relation to an other which destabilizes and recomposes and a self which is dispersed and paradoxically reformed. To formulate without hoping to formalize, to formulate the to-be-de-formed. Our task, attempted here through this medium.

The concern(s) at hand are the ways in which social research (re-)creates the distance between the researcher (as subject) and researched (as object), in so doing silencing the voices, needs, concerns, knowledges, and practices of the researched. Consider the number of academic articles and books that acknowledge the author's supporting grant making body, colleagues, mentors, friends, significant others, children, editors, book companies, household pets, et cetera, without ever taking the time to thank those whom were studied. Beyond a simple thanks, consider the number of texts one has read where it appears that the project was formulated without a consideration and working through of how it might impact upon those studied by it. To point this out is not the copyright or

trademark of any particular intellectual field or subject, yet still, such admittance behaviour often passes itself off as 'critical' scholarship by simple virtue of its taking place. A new danger to be considered far beyond the threshold of politeness appears. The existence of the badge of 'critical' scholarship opens up new avenues for the co-optation and recuperation of radical politics. Critical scholarship, by creating fixed and stable positions, becomes complicit within the very practices it seeks to avoid. To point this out is not to say that any critical scholarly endeavor is not worthwhile, destined to failure from the outset. It is to point out that 'critical' endeavors must take the paradox of their existence seriously if the claim towards criticality is not to be sneered at.

Relationships

What we are here approaching is the problem of the constitution of the researcher-researched relationship. How, if at all, can research be a process of co-constitution rather than one of objectification? To consider research as an on-going process of dialogue and engagement, of creation and exploration, as the creation of the common through engaged political action. Antonio Negri argues:

Action is a struggle to constitute the world, to invent it ... To act is at once a form of knowledge and a revolt ... [it] is precisely the search for and the construction of the common, which is to say the affirmation of absolute immanence. (2004: 19/28/27)

The task is not one of the researcher going bravely onwards into the field and through Herculean efforts, coming back with findings. Nor is it to reverse the dynamic in the name of auto-ethnography, a supposedly painful soul-searching that makes a virtue out of narcissism, ironically re-inscribing *authority* with the author, the sovereign and bounded subject (Clough, 2001). The task of creative mutual constitution is to explore the relationship between researcher and researched in a manner that underlines the moments where the assumed division between them collapses, revealing a necessary inability for each to exist in and by itself. To illustrate how apparently natural divisions become disturbed by the very act that *naturalises* them.

The relationship between radical intellectuals and social movements has had a tenuous and not always positive history. Far too often, radical theorists have used their knowledge or ideas to claim leadership roles and positions of power within movements, attempting to control and direct through vanguard structures, leading to many problems despite positive intentions. The practices of the interwoven strands of rhizomatic and networked movements, creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures, demand that radical theorists and academics consider their role within and relation towards them. The materials contained within this issue are but a sampling of the directions such research could take, part of a much larger project under consideration (Shukaitis and Graeber, forthcoming). To take seriously the endeavors of those who organize resistant mobilisations is to appreciate such work as expressions of vital possibility rather than demonstrations of a theoretically defeatist clutching at straws.

It is of course easy to invoke the thoughts and concepts of a few noted radical theorists, publish them in some journal or other, and fall back upon the self-righteous laurels of one's being an ipso facto radical. Contentment in any sort of commitment – doing one's bit. The point for us, however, is to find ways to be subversive in whatever context, to be a Zapatista in one's own community as it has been put. To do this is to always remain focused upon the relations between one's own actions and the larger social fabric. This is not a call to abandon the academic ghetto for the activist one (as both forms of writing often suffer from certain dynamics of self-marginalization that oddly mirror each other), but to develop a polemical call for a consideration on the part of the academy towards the mechanisms of transmission and interrelation that formulate such ghettos; academic, activist, or bastard hybridizations. We are not arguing for a replacement of one kind of ghetto by another, but for a disturbance of the very processes of engagement that imagines and puts them together in the first place.

Thinking Change

Raoul Vaneigem, responding to what he saw as the barriers to radical political activity created by the French Communist Party argued:

[R]adical criticism has merely analyzed the old world and its negation. It must now either realize itself in the practical activity of the revolutionary masses or betray itself by becoming a barrier to that activity. (2003: 275)

What we see here is the distinction between theory and praxis, a distinction that can no longer be approached as if it were a watertight binary, Monsieur Vaneigem. Considering Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach (1978: 143-145), Gayatri Spivak argues that the difference between 'interpreting' and 'changing' the world is inherently more complex than the manner in which it is popularly conveyed. Spivak, reading the text in its native tongue, illustrates that the word translated to mean 'change' (*verändern*), refers to an open-ended making other of the self-identical rather than the oft-pandered about notion of complete transformation (1996: 217-218). *Verändern* consists of a twin process of a making other of the self-identical and of a drawing forth of the liberatory possibilities of the present developed through organized resistance. To see value in what exists, to tease out the underlying concepts and their connections, and to create them (Shukaitis, 2004: 17). David Graeber argues that what is needed is low theory, or "a way of grappling with those real, immediate questions that emerge from a transformative project" which is distinct from the manner in which the social sciences generally tackle this realm (as a policy issue). The distinction to be found in Graeber's 'policy' is not based on a notion of a governing apparatus or a core of experts who will develop forms of knowledge to be imposed upon others (2004: 9). He instead suggests that a radical formulation of social theory would rest upon the assumption that the construction of better possible worlds necessitates a rejection of vanguardism.

To look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities – as gifts. (Graeber, 2004: 12)

So what is the relation of this rejection of vanguardism to the university occupant? Bousquet and Terranova (2004: 72-81) argue that the institutional setting of the university is not a location outside the workings of the economy (i.e. it is *not* a bubble), but is very much a part of it, existing within the social factory and producing multifarious forms of value (human capital, ability to brandish forth credentials to obtain employment, practices of knowledge, information, and organization that are used throughout the entire social field). This makes the position of the subversive intellectual in the academy quite odd, precisely because the finding of space might be the very act of delivering capital its future. As argued by Harney and Moten, the role of the subversive intellectual in, but not of, the university, is like a thief who steals what she can from it, using the space to form a “collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project” (2004: 102). This would be to utilize the space provided by the university, not as a goal in itself, nor to assert one’s right to such a space, but to accomplish something within this space. This is a form of knowledge production not seeking to form itself as a fixed object and space, but one that constantly moves and morphs across disciplines, frontiers, ideas, and spaces. It is a form of knowledge production that comes not from a perspective of separation but rather one appreciating that

visionary dreams of a new society don’t come from little think tanks of smart people or out of the atomized individualistic world of consumer capitalism where raging against the status quo is simply the hip thing to do. Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement: collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge. (Kelley 2002: 8)

Rather than necessarily assert and affirm an identity or space, these forms of knowledge develop in exodus, in the maroons and hidden alcoves of the university, in the constantly moving spaces that James Scott calls the hidden transcript (1990: 4-5). This hidden social transcript encompasses not just speech but also an array of practices bound to the particular location – which is both mediated and created by those practices – and so is marked between such and the public transcript often through an ongoing struggle and contestation. Between the hidden and public transcripts exists a third realm of politics, what Scott calls the infrapolitics of subordinate groups, or “a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actor” (1990: 19). It would be arguable that in a sense the overlooking of this space in many ways suits the needs of the social actors who articulate their freedom dreams by constantly reinventing and reinterpreting their cultural practices as a part of this third realm of politics, of the infrapolitics of resistance that creates a space for dreams of transcendence and autonomy to exist in a seen, but unseen manner. Radical academics, when they find a space in the workings of the academy can use their position to create room and possibilities for organizers to use it for their ends, to orient their work towards the needs and desires of organizing, rather than fixing them as objects of study.

All of this leads almost inevitably to the question of science. Is what is being described here science? Not quite, perhaps it approaches something closer to what is described by erstwhile CrimeThinc miscreant Frederick Markatos Dixon (2001) as folk science, that is, the elaboration of invention as free play, breaking with the tradition of linear progress and dynamics of research that have made discovery into the horded treasures

of a priestly caste of shrouded experts speaking in secret languages. As described by Dixon:

[O]ur critique of 'The Scientific Method' skips 'Science' ... skips 'Method' ... but finds 'The' guilty of a crime. The tyranny of 'The' is a part of language that attempts to unify the menagerie of human curiosity and struggle into just one investigative technique and in doing so fails both science and humanity. (2001: 231)

The concerns of a folk science are not directed by some quest for universal knowledge nor to fill the ever-revered gap in the literature but to explore problems and curiosities as they arise, to find new hidden passageways and lines of flight. It becomes a question of inheritance and transformation, of repetition, resistance, and creation. Inheriting the forms of knowledge and practices developed by current organizing efforts along with the historical experiences and concepts of movements and struggles. Inheriting by continuing *and* discontinuing, disrupting. Disrupting by continuing. Continuing by not merely repeating. Continuing and transforming. It becomes the task of continuing in the tradition of nomadic thought, of embodying and working with philosophy as described by Deleuze and Guattari, which is to say in the creation of concepts that through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Calling forth "not the one who claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race ... it is this double becoming that constitutes the people to come and the new earth" (1994: 109).

Foucault once commented that philosophy no longer exists, "not that it has disappeared, but it has been disseminated into a great number of diverse activities ... today philosophy is every activity that makes a new object appear for knowledge or practice" (Foucault, 1996: 29). In an age where the dividing lines between labor, action, and intellect are collapsing into one another (Virno, 2004), one finds the creation of concepts and wealths of knowledges of resistance dispersed throughout the social factory. The task of developing an approach to theoretical production is to work with these forms of resistance-creation rather than acting from a distance, a removed position, a position that is the first moment in the recreation of vanguardism.

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