

Resistance : Under what Grace

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There is an apparently paradoxical nature to resistance. Resistance is resistance against something, towards which it appears inimical. This resisted thing, however, requires such resistance in order to define itself and keep itself safe. Should it fail to do so, that which succeeds it will require resistance in turn. This paradox – a prevailing order requires that which is opposed to it, and that which overcomes is resisted in turn – occurs within time thought as a successive order of past, present and future moments. Two temporal displacements (those of simultaneity and reversal) are evoked, not in order to resolve the paradox but to displace it and hint at an other strategy of resistance.

...the very possibility of resistance: that which comes before. Within a common – that is to say philosophical – concept of time as a series of successive moments, resistance will be regulated (given its order and its orders) – even in its aspirations for the future (itself conceived as a series of moments beyond the present) – by its reaction against the pre-existing and its order. Resistance and counter-resistance, resistance and counter-move, resistance and incorporation are the means by which this pre-existing order will maintain itself and neutralise that which opposes it. It will maintain

itself, more or less successfully, and will neutralise resistance, more or less successfully, but will never, for strategic reasons, do so too well.

Either that prevailing order which is resisted needs the resistance, maintains the resistance in its position, desires and needs the risk of resistance to prevent complacency, stimulates risk or leaves itself vulnerable at a critical moment in order to provoke resistance, provokes risk up to a limit of imagination and sometimes beyond it, has to have a force against which it can act in order to justify its existence, retains and maintains such a force in order to itself be a force, an energy, the disposal of this order not that.

Or else the prevailing order fails and falls, resistance triumphs, prevails²², and in that moment – or perhaps the one after – becomes itself a prevailing order itself requiring the resistance of the other, the poignancy of this implacable logic outdone in turn by the cunning of a schema whereby only that which no longer requires to be resisted, which no longer poses a “true” threat, remains successfully resisted; thus consigning resistance to impotency, or rather to a potency regulated by the orders which were to be called into question.

These political strategies of and against resistance are deployed – we do not say necessarily intentionally - today to extreme extents. We may recall that a limit of imagination was reached at 9/11 when the invulnerability of the world’s most sublime (that is, absolutely large, *schlechthin gross*²³) and provocative war machine was nonetheless left vulnerable. This vulnerability consisted in, amongst other things, the non-existence of effective air defences for the country’s very body; and resulted in an arguably sublime – absolutely large – event, directed at sublime constructions. Yet this act of counter-provocation, in the murderous effectiveness of its resistance, bolstered the political order it wished to destroy. More generally, we can say that the framing and staging of the resister - the enemy within or without – by an existing political order is an ancient strategy constantly and effectively reused in order to cement political power; and that this staging is effected both by the resister and the resisted power.

22 We posit here no agency or criteria of failure (or success); we point rather to the necessary structure of resistance.

23 See section 25 of Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* – explication of the term “sublime” (Kant, I. (1963) “*Kritik der Urteilskraft*”, Stuttgart: Reclam)

It is against the logic of this structural cunning that resistance would have to work. Resistance beyond resistance, resistance without work, since these terms receive their authority within such a structure. Yet we have no choice but to use such old words, and find ourselves needing to resist at each step their re-absorption.

The operations within which a resistance beyond resistance might occur will happen without the prevailing order. The cunning structure itself will need to be solicited, and since it is a question of order, this solicitation will extend to the philosophical structure of time thought conventionally as the line of past, present and future²⁴. This will not be work or resistance by means of philosophy; more a working on philosophy itself. To resist a political order calls for a resistance to philosophical-temporal order, which implies that the task is at least one of thought beyond philosophy, since philosophy posits time in this manner and calling this definition of time into question means, of necessity, going beyond or before philosophy and those those discourses dependent on it.

An order is necessary²⁵. There is no necessity without order. Within an order, a proof can be made, an economy can move, authority is disposed, politics occurs. An economy allows authority to be disposed, politics to occur, a proof to be made, philosophical order to be analysed. The disposal of authority is the occurrence of politics, implying a philosophical order, the

24 See, for instance, Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* section 6 "we represent the time-sequence by a line progressing to infinity" ("wir... stellen die Zeitfolge durch eine ins Unendliche fortgehende Linie vor"), (Kant, I. (1933) *Critique of Pure Reason*", London: Macmillan)

25 We take "order" here both as ordering in time and as political order. The dual meaning is bespeaks an intimate relation between them. In relation to the necessity for political order, see, for instance, Jo Freeman's classic pamphlet 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 1970. As Barbara Epstein has pointed out in respect of Freeman's argument, "antileadership ideology weakened the women's movement by permitting crippling attacks on the very activists who had helped the movement find its direction." (*Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, University of California Press (1991) p. 169)

availability of proofs, and the workings of an economy. The founding and refounding of one implies, necessitates and generates the founding and refounding of all. Any attempt at analysis of their interplay, preparatory or not to a resistance against it, faces the force of this order and the cushioning counter-force of its sprung fabric, but also the order of time, the order of the succession of time, which is part of the overall ordering and that which gives it its possibility. It would be wrong to say that the concept of time as succession has been created by this philosophical-political-economic ordering, but if for the sake of simplicity (and acceding momentarily to the logic of the order it would be our desire to question) we were to take it as such, then a sort of logic of types would determine that time as result or a sub-set of the political-philosophical order cannot itself dominate it. Nor could any strategy of resistance which remained held to the ordering of time. Thus the ever-present appeal by that which we are to resist to the concept of nature, an appeal nowhere more powerfully and quietly disposed as in the characterisation of time - commonly thought – as “natural”, not-get-roundable, not questionable except in a thus-neutralised moment of madness, mysticism or myth. Not primarily to give time an unquestioned authority but rather, in positing it as natural, leading that which resists into believing that action within its scope could possibly be effective.

Only a bastard logic could work against this. A logic outside philosophy proper; at least thought rather than metaphysics; the excess of a general economy of thought.

Yet any such general economy will always apparently fall, destroyed by means of proofs brought against it by the restricted economy just described, since it is only within and as a tool of such restriction that a proof can be disposed. There can be no counter-proof for a general economy, since such a counter-move would be counter to the non-structure to which that general economy is appealing. Proofs are not available whilst appealing to or “working” within a general economy; for the a-logic of a general economy does not and is not capable of working with or founding proofs.

*Under what grace are your victims innocent and ours
dust, your blood blood and our blood water?*²⁶

In this question we hear - from the position of those privileged by the current world order and its disposal of energies - the cry of a resistance whose reticence in answering might appear motivated by a strategy of respect for the question as question, the question as opening. In leaving the question hanging, this text destroys the fundament as fundament; any definitive answer would co-posit the authority under which the question has been or should be decided, and the lack of such answer leaves open the possibility that no such authority is acknowledged. The question of the authenticity of this non-fundamentalism is answered not at the level of the text, but at that of the author, bin Laden; there, we intuit an answer, and the question becomes the apparatus of a resistance propagating that archi-authority which in turn is to be resisted.

The logic of question and answer shares the reciprocal structure of resistance and counter-resistance, act and revenge, all again operating within but at the same time positing as a condition of their possibility the order of time, the time of order. By contrast, it is a strategy which posits and gives to itself as its possibility an other time, an other order of time, a time not of order or a time not of time, which could escape this trap of resistance as counter-thrust caught within the prevailing orthodoxy. This would require a thought of the “new” which, in its act, would re-cast time and rethink it otherwise than as the succession of past-present-future.

This recasting might operate with respect to the “at the same time”. The possibility of the wholly new can only be thought at the moment where the successive order of the concept of time is arrested, whence two things which are inextricable and which co-posit themselves – such as something “new” and the “at the same time” – occur, precisely, at the same time; not one and then the other, but both hyper-simultaneously so as to be outside the order of successive time as that event occurs. It is the new, that which is created in an event entirely separated from what went before and thus wedded to a simultaneity of actuality and potentiality – giving it its potential at the

26 Osama bin Laden, April 2004, tape released to Arabic speaking television networks. For a full transcript see www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1118204/posts. Refer to Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:14 “you are not under law, but under grace”

moment that it gives itself its actuality – it is in this event of creation that a resistance beyond resistance could act, unwarned, against a prevailing order.

This recasting might operate by means of a kind of reversal of the order of time. If representational politics collapses into a strategy of the prevailing order, a strategy intended at heart (thus quietly, cunningly) to disrespect and control those who could resist, then this operates within a structure where that which does the representing comes after that which it represents. It not only operates within it; the privilege and the power of this democratic structure (guaranteed by its supposed natural quality as the end point of political evolution) also co-posit and mutually legitimises the order of successive time which gives it its possibility. The effect of this, constructed and deployed within our tradition, is to fix that which is prior – those who are represented – in position as political subjects, subject to the taming of a representational structure. It would be by means of a warping or distortion of this order – an order where the subject as political participant comes first, followed by her democratic representation - that a voice which escapes the counter-resistance of the existing order might have a chance to be heard. Democracy gives us first the people, clear in their supposed identity, then the representation of them. By contrast, we ask for no pre-positing people, multitude or subject to be represented. Instead, such representation would be understood as that which enables and requires the defined political subject to exist – an effect both benign and malicious, a gift and a poison - an understanding which, at the same time and as condition and result of this understanding, sees that that which is represented is not to be fixed in its nature by a disrespectful order.

These two strategies, of hyper-simultaneity and apparent reversal, cannot operate without the event they give possibility to.

Unless the thought of the simultaneous or reverse-action effect occurs at the same time as that to which it gives its possibility – namely, the irruption of the new, the unwarned impact against the existing order, the destruction of the pre-determined subject of representation – it will not be what it is since it will immediately itself be respecting order, sequence, the “this then that”. This event does not act once within the “at the same time”. The possibility

of the “at the same time” allows the new to irrupt²⁷ and it does this – in a peculiar folding-back-upon-its-own-idea – at the same time or it will not be what it is; and it is only by means of this potentiality for the “at the same time” that this whole irruption can event itself. This event occurs in multiple fashion – hence its given name of “hyper-simultaneity” – or it happens not at all. Likewise the reverse-action effect on a representational order is given its possibility by a distortion of time’s order, but the thought of time’s reversal by and of itself would remain ineffective unless that to which it gives possibility occurs at that moment of apparent reversal.

These abysmal logics give the possibility of a strategy outside that of resistance and counter-resistance, outside the representational structures they use. It is by the deployment of something like an en abyme rule that this could occur. Nonetheless, we have seen that the pre-existing order has been constituted or has constituted itself with similar cunning, and if an effective resistance-beyond-resistance and the pre-existing order both deploy, necessarily, the cunning strategy of a *mise en abyme*²⁸, of the simultaneity of the potential and its corresponding occurrences, by what grace could we separate them?

This question cannot be answered directly, and there is no time now for even an oblique approach to it. It has become not so much a question of what a text could say on the issue, but rather of the effect it would have. This effect will not be that of a faith this way or that, a hope (or non-hope) for the future, a pledge one way or the other for the sake of good conscience or bad, a wager one way or the other. Rather, it will hinge on the awareness of what is occurring, an awareness which in the context of this cunning and its simultaneity becomes the act of a being which, in its difference, makes that difference an issue for it; this folded characteristic being the very possibility of resistance....

27 Conventional time, as past-present-future, is not merely a container within which causality can be thought, but implies causality (be that divine or, latterly intramundanelly thought, mechanically) from the outset. Causality - the connection of this with that across past-present-future – precludes the utterly new. Hence any thought of the new must call “time” into question. We desire, indeed, “a new refutation of time” (in the words of Borges).

28 “Placing into infinity”, “placing into the abyss”