

# NOTES TOWARDS AN ANALYTICS OF RESISTANCE

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**Abstract** New forms, subjects and strategies of resistance have emerged in recent mass protests and insurrections, from the Arab Spring to Spain, Greece, Turkey and Brazil. Insurrections, exodus and democratic experimentation respond to the economic and social landscape of neoliberal capitalism and the biopolitical operation of power. Using historical and recent examples, this essay proposes seven theses on the philosophy of resistance. We have entered a new age of resistance and potentially radical change after fifty years of failures and defeats of the left.

**Keywords** resistance, Greece, Spain, Turkey, biopolitics, neoliberalism, left politics

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On 17 June 2011 I was invited to address a thematic assembly on direct democracy at the Syntagma square occupation by the *aganaktismenoi* (indignados) in central Athens. After the talks and following usual procedure, members of the occupation who had had their number drawn came to the front to speak to the 10,000 crowd. One man in the queue was shaking and trembling with evident symptoms of stage fright before his address. He then proceeded to give an elegant talk in perfectly formed sentences and paragraphs, presenting a complete and persuasive plan for the future of the movement. ‘How did you do it?’ I asked him later. ‘I thought you were going to collapse.’ ‘This is what I feared too’, he replied nonchalantly. ‘When I started speaking I was mouthing the words but someone else was speaking. A stranger inside me was dictating what to say.’ Many participants in the recent protests and uprisings make similar statements. Sarah, an Egyptian, tells her mother after spending time in Tahrir Square: ‘I am not myself. I am somebody new that was born today’.<sup>1</sup> A youth in the Athens December 2008 insurrection adds: ‘I had been in demos before but never participated in a riot. It was something like an initiation for me and I have to admit I felt liberated. It made me feel like a regained control of myself’.<sup>2</sup> This essay is a commentary on this ‘stranger in me’ (a usual description of the unconscious), a miraculous transubstantiation shared by people in different parts of the world, which has changed them from obedient subjects of law to resisting subjectivities.

The essay forms part of a wider project which, starting from recent events, attempts to develop a radical politics for the age of resistance.<sup>3</sup> The first part discusses Alain Badiou’s reaction as a typical case of radical pessimism. The second examines briefly some of the common characteristics of globalised neoliberal capitalism. This rather sketchy account helps situate the final part,

1. Paul Mason, *Why it's Kicking Everywhere* Verso, London 2012, p14.

2. Quoted in Yannis Kallianos, ‘December as an event in Greek radical politics’ in Antonis Vradis and Dimitris Dalakoglou, *Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Still to Come* AK Press, Edinburgh 2011, p155.

3. Costas Douzinas, *Philosophy and Resistance in the Crisis*, Polity 2013.

which develops seven theses towards a philosophy of resistance.

## ON LEFT MELANCHOLY

The 'new world order' announced in 1989 was the shortest in history, coming to an abrupt end in 2011. Protests, riots and uprisings have erupted all over the world. Neither the mainstream nor the radicals had predicted the wave, and this led to a search for historical precedents. A former director of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service thought that 'it's a revolutionary wave, like 1848'. The commentator Paul Mason agrees: 'There are strong parallels – above all with 1848, and with the wave of discontent that preceded 1914' (p14). On the left, the philosopher Alain Badiou suspects a possible 'rebirth of history' in a new age of 'riots and uprisings' that brings to an end a long interval after the last revolutionary upheaval. But the optimistic opening soon comes to an end.<sup>4</sup> Against substantial evidence of a worldwide wave of uprisings, not unlike Badiou's favourite instances of 1848 and 1968, the philosopher adopts the most pessimistic reading of Foucault's theory claiming that resistance is generated and used by power. He dismisses social movements, anti-globalisation campaigns and radical parties, lamenting the 'impotence' of the left. History's rebirth ends up a stillbirth.

Many radical philosophers share Badiou's pessimism. There is general agreement that recent events brought to a temporary end a long period of defeat and retreat of the left. This welcome development is accompanied however by a sense of embarrassment and disbelief in the emancipatory potential of resistance. It is as if the lull that followed the emptying of the squares came as a relief, allowing the theorists to return to well-known reservations about the crowd or the left more generally. Slavoj Žižek wrote in 2012 that 2011 was 'the year of *dreaming* dangerously'. 'Now, a year later', he adds, 'every day brings new evidence of how fragile and inconsistent that awakening [of radical emancipatory politics all around the world] was...'<sup>5</sup> Jacques Rancière's theory, according to which politics is the emergence of the excluded part, the part that has 'no part', is perhaps closest to recent resistances. Rancière himself however admitted that 'I have nothing in particular to say about Greece, or about the revolutionary strategy that should be adopted so that Greece triumphs and Europe goes on to become communist'.<sup>6</sup> Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, the theorists of multitude, conclude in their *Declaration* that 'we need to empty the churches of the Left even more, and bar their doors, and burn them down!'<sup>7</sup> From a different perspective, Howard Caygill's excellent recent book *On Resistance* shares the pessimism. Its concluding sentences refer to contemporary rebellions without much hope: 'Resistance is engaged in defiant delegitimization of existing and potential domination but without any prospect of a final outcome in the guise of a revolutionary or reformist result or solution ... The politics of resistance is disillusioned and without end.'<sup>8</sup>

4. Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, Verso 2012, p38.

5. Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* Verso, 2012), 127. Žižek moved to a more positive assessment of the prospects of a left victory after the Turkish uprising in 2013 and the rise of the Greek Syriza party. See 'Trouble in Paradise', Vol. 35, No 14, *London Review of Books*, 18 July 2013, pp11-12.

6. Maria Kakogianni and Jacques Rancière, 'A precarious dialogue', 181 *Radical Philosophy*, September-October 2013, p18.

7. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (ebook, 2012), p78.

8. Howard Caygill, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance*, Bloomsbury 2013, p208. Caygill's book offers a history and classification of types of resistance but does not discuss or analyse recent events.

It is Alain Badiou who formulated the reservations about recent resistances most consistently. Badiou is the last representative of the French philosophical renaissance of the 1960s. His theory of the event has been particularly influential amongst young radicals, who have used it to analyse the recent uprisings. This is not the case, however, with the master himself. At a conference about the ‘greek symptom’ in January 2013, this author shared a panel with Badiou. After my upbeat presentation of resistances in the Mediterranean, Badiou responded: ‘I certainly admire the eloquence of my friend and comrade Costas Douzinas, who has buttressed his avowed optimism with precise references to what he takes to be the political novelties of the people’s resistance in Greece, where he has even discerned the emergence of a new political subject.’ When I heard the next sentence I thought I had misunderstood: ‘while the courage and inventiveness of the resistance is a cause of enthusiasm, it is neither novel nor effective. The same things happened in May 68, in Tahrir Square and even “in the times of Spartacus or Thomas Munzer”’.<sup>9</sup>

Badiou returns to his analysis in a recent newspaper interview. The ‘left’ is part of a ‘structural imposture’ he claims. The left, an idea created in and by the state, has made an agreement with the oligarchy with whom it wants to alternate in power. It has abandoned its commitment to radical change and promotes the myth that parliamentary elections can be used for ‘revolutionary’ purposes. The interview was taken a few days before the crucial 2014 European elections, which the Greek Syriza party was hoping to win - as it did. The leftist interviewer tried to distinguish therefore between social democracy and the radical left. Badiou would have none of it. The radical left differs only in ‘nuance and detail, a minimal further redistribution without any foundational changes in the dominant capitalist logic’. The present author is a ‘useful enemy’ because, despite his links with emancipatory movements, he offers a ‘beautified and limited’ picture of the situation, and does not realise that we must begin from scratch, following the example of the 1840 revolutionaries in ‘ideology, political criticism, types of mass action, organization. We must rethink everything and experiment’.<sup>10</sup>

Over the years, the left has collected a long list of prophets, parties and groups promising the re-foundation of the one or the ‘correct’ communist organisation. In earlier interventions, Badiou explained that the ‘resistance’ (in ironic quotation marks) of the anti-globalisation movement was equally a creation of power. The movement is ‘a wild operator’ of globalisation and ‘seeks to sketch out, for the imminent future, the forms of comfort to be enjoyed by our planet’s idle petite bourgeoisie’.<sup>11</sup> He called the multitude a ‘dreamy hallucination’, which claims the right for our ‘planet’s idle ... to enjoy without doing anything, while taking special care to avoid any form of discipline, whereas we know that discipline, in all fields, is the key to truths’. Finally, he dismissed the category of the ‘movement’ because it is ‘coupled to the logic of the state’. Politics should stay away or ‘subtract’ from the state, remain largely indifferent to economic issues, adopt the ‘idea of communism’

9. Alain Badiou, ‘Our Contemporary Impotence’, *Radical Philosophy*, September-October 2013, p43.

10. Alain Badiou interview with Maria Kakogianni, ‘On the occasion of the publication of *The Greek Symptom*’, 27/4 2014, Avgi (in Greek, my translation) at: [www.avgi.gr/article/2414442/alain-mpantiou-me-tin-eukairia-tis-kukloforias-toutomou-to-elliniko-sumptomata](http://www.avgi.gr/article/2414442/alain-mpantiou-me-tin-eukairia-tis-kukloforias-toutomou-to-elliniko-sumptomata).

11. Alain Badiou, ‘Beyond Formalisation’, An Interview conducted by Pater Hallward and Bruno Bosteels, Paris, 2 July 2002, in Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, Duke University Press, Durham 2011, pp318-350.

and create a highly disciplined organisation, which acts towards the people in a directive manner. This is the type of organisation that recent resistances rejected and with good cause: both because of the history of the left and, more importantly, because the socio-economic changes of late capitalism have made the concept of a highly disciplined organisation not just obsolete but undesirable and counterproductive.

What causes this endless melancholia? It looks as if Hegel's 'owl of Minerva' has not yet left its nest. Is this because we are not at 'dusk' yet? In other words, philosophers cannot respond to the political and social upheaval because the epoch of resistance is still too new for theory to catch up. Or, is this enduring melancholy the result of a certain theoretical and political sclerosis of theoretical radicals? Failure, defeat, persecution and the accompanying paranoia have marked the left. It is true that the left has lost a lot: a unified theory, the working class as political subject, the promised inexorable forward movement of history, planned economy as alternative to capitalism. The falling masonry of the Berlin wall hit western socialists more than old Stalinists, who relatively easily morphed into post-soviet oligarchs.

In psychoanalytical theory, mourning a love object is necessary and liberating, while melancholy is the result of a failed and incomplete period of grief. In mourning, the libido withdraws from the lost object and is displaced onto another. In melancholy, it withdraws into the ego. This withdrawal serves to 'establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object'.<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin wrote of 'left melancholy', the attitude of the militant who is attached more to a particular political analysis or ideal - and to the failure of that ideal - than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present.<sup>13</sup> Benjamin called on the left to grasp the 'time of the now'; whereas for the melancholic, history is the 'empty time' of repetition.<sup>14</sup> Part of the left is narcissistically fixated on its lost object with no obvious desire to abandon it. Left melancholy leads inexorably to the 'fetishism of small differences' interminable conflicts, splits and vituperation amongst erstwhile comrades. Attacks on the closest ally, seen as a threatening double, are more vicious than those on the enemy. Left melancholy betrays the world for the sake of old certainties.

Radical philosophy has returned to a particular type of 'grand narrative', which combines an obsession with the explanation of life, the universe and everything with the 'anxiety of influence' created by the previous generation of greats - Sartre, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida. There is much to learn from radical theory. However contemporary philosophers differ from their Marxist predecessors in two ways. First, in a reaction to the earlier economism and statism of the left, they steer clear of socio-economic analysis and, with a few exceptions, despise the state advocating, in Badiou's term, a 'subtraction' from state politics. Secondly, they have little participation in left politics, preferring the lecture hall to the street and the party. There is nothing inherently wrong with grand theory, except when it paraphrases Brecht's dictum that if the people

12. Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in Vol. 14, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Hogarth 1957, p249.

13. Walter Benjamin, 'Left-Wing Melancholy', in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, University of California Press 1994, p305. See Wendy Brown, 'Resisting Left Melancholy', *Boundary 2* 26.3.99, pp19-27, for a brilliant use of the Benjamin essay.

14. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Harvard University Press 1999, pp462-3.

have chosen wrongly we should elect another people: if the facts disprove the theory, so much the worse for the facts. Cases that cannot be seamlessly inserted into the theoretical edifice - Greece, Spain, the youth insurrections are downplayed or rejected. It is no surprise that many European radicals are happy to celebrate the late Chavez, Morales or Correa and to carry out politics by proxy, while dismissing the European left as irrelevant or misguided.

It may feel better to some people to lose gloriously than to win even with some compromise along the way. But repeated defeats do not help the millions whose lives have been devastated by neoliberal capitalism. What the left needs is not a new model party or an all-encompassing brilliant theory. It needs to learn from the popular resistances that broke out without leaders, parties or common ideology and to build on the energy, imagination and novel institutions created. The historical opportunity has been created not by party or theory but by ordinary people who are well ahead of both.

## THE AGE OF RESISTANCE

Alain Badiou rightly insists that politics is a type of thinking; its 'truth' emerges in political action. Philosophy takes this truth and universalises it. I plead guilty to the indictment of 'avowed optimism'. It is a result of the attempt to draw lessons from the politics of the street of the last few years. We have entered an age of resistance. New forms, strategies and subjects of resistance and insurrection appear regularly without knowledge of or guidance from Badiou, Zizek or Negri. Their timing is unpredictable but their occurrence certain. As resistances spread around the world from austerity ravaged countries to Turkey and Brazil - the former poster boys of neoliberalism - to Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ukraine, philosophy has the responsibility to explore this contemporary return and to develop a philosophy of resistance.

In an interview towards the end of his life, Michel Foucault commented that 'politics has existed since the nineteenth century because of the revolution'. Now that revolution has disappeared, he continues, 'there is a risk that politics will disappear' unless one invents another form or substitute for it'. Against the models of the Greek sage, the Jewish prophet and the Roman legislator, Foucault imagines a type of intellectual who would pose the question 'whether the revolution is worth the trouble, and if so which revolution and what trouble'.<sup>15</sup> If the revolution ended, what is the politics after the revolution?

This essay examines recent forms of resistance, using examples from Greece, the most advanced and successful European case. It should be immediately added that Greece does not have a privileged entry in some celestial book of glorious nations or of resisting peoples. It was chosen by the European powers as a guinea pig to test the conditions for restructuring late capitalism in crisis. Greece has become an unprecedented in the West laboratory for austerity and the accompanying impoverishment and

15. Quoted in Jessica Whyte, 'Michel Foucault on revolution, neoliberalism and rights' in Ben Golder ed., *Re-reading Foucault: On Law, Power and Rights*, Glasshouse, Abington 2013, p208. Whyte and Golder have rescued Foucault's radical theory of law and rights against persistent attempts to present the late Foucault as a liberal supporter of rights.

16. Costas Douzinas, *Resistance and Philosophy in the Crisis: Politics, Ethics and Stasis Syntagma*, Alexandria Press, Athens, December 2011, back cover.

degradation of life. What the European and Greek elites did not expect was that the guinea pig would occupy the lab, kick out the blind scientists and start a new experiment: its own transformation from object to political subject.<sup>16</sup> As a laboratory of resistance, Greece offers a panorama of what is happening elsewhere. Let us start with a brief description of novel or radically renewed methods of insubordination.

### *Forms of resistance*

1. On 6 December 2008, after the police murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos, a 16-year old pupil in central Athens, a massive spontaneous leaderless insurrection by pupils, students and workers brought Greece to a standstill. Rallies and marches to Parliament, Ministries and police stations were accompanied by sit-ins, street happenings, interruption of theatre performances and discussions with the audience, the raising of a banner calling for resistance on the Acropolis, the occupation of a state TV studio during the news broadcast and the iconic burning of the Christmas tree in Syntagma Square. Banks and luxury shops were attacked, some looting was reported and several cars and some buildings were burned, but there were no casualties. The insurrection paved the way for the eventual resignation of the right-wing government and its defeat in November 2009, which gave a huge majority to Papandreou's socialists and led to the ushering of the neoliberal austerity measures. The similarities with the Paris *banlieues* insurrection of 2005 and 2007 and the London August 2012 riots, which also started after the death of young people following police action, were striking.

2. Athens, February 2011. While the Arab spring was in full flow, 300 *sans papiers* immigrants from the Maghreb took refuge in Hypatia, a central Athens building, and staged a hunger strike. They had lived and worked in Greece for up to ten years, doing the jobs the Greeks didn't want to do for a fraction of the minimum wage, and without social security. When the crisis struck, they were unceremoniously kicked out. After forty days, with several strikers in hospital with irreversible organ failure that could cause death, the government accepted the bulk of their demands, and allowed them to stay in the country. A widespread solidarity campaign supported the *sans papiers* strikers. Their victory was seen as the first success of the anti-austerity resistance which was kicking off at the time of the strike.

3. Athens, May 2011. Following a solidarity rally with the Spanish *indignados*, men and women of all ideologies, ages and occupations, including the many unemployed, calling themselves *aganaktismenoi*, occupied the Syntagma square in Athens opposite Parliament and sixty other squares. Political parties and banners were discouraged, no leaders or spokespersons emerged. Daily popular assemblies and thematic meetings discussed all aspects of the

political and economic situation and decided the next actions democratically. A number of working groups covered all major needs of the occupiers - food, health, security, media, entertainment, legal advice, etc. The occupations were peaceful but faced brutal police attacks. When the police finally removed the occupants in late July, the popular assemblies spread to suburbs and towns. In June, Prime Minister Papandreou, unable to deal with the protests, resigned, only changing his mind after party pressure. His fate was sealed however. He departed in early November soon after people occupied the street where a military parade was about to take place and the President of the Republic had to flee. In the 2012 general elections and the 2014 European elections, the multitude of resistances adopted the radical left party Syriza as its parliamentary representation. The journey of Syriza from a small protest party to government in waiting is a political fairy tale. The party polled 4 per cent in 2009, became the main opposition in 2012 and received 27 per cent of the vote in 2014, with the right-wing governing party down to 23 per cent. Syriza will now probably form the next government of Greece.

The multiplication and intensification of resistances can be understood through an exploration of the state of affairs they respond to. Resistances respond to trends of globalised capitalism that have penetrated and shape the whole world. AS it will be argued resistance is always situated, it responds to a specific and historically located balance of forces. This is the reason why a brief exploration of the state we are in follows. It will move from the economic and social landscape late capitalism to its bio-political implications and, finally, the effects of these developments on the politics of law.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF LATE CAPITALISM

### *Postfordist capitalism*

It was Marx who first introduced the concept of the general intellect and immaterial labour, the work and creation of the collective mind, science and technology. In post-industrial capitalism, immaterial production has become the major productive force. Industrial capitalism turned the concrete into abstract, the product into commodity. Post-fordism turns thoughts, ideas and words immediately into material objects and products. The general intellect is no longer incorporated in machines, but in the lives of working people. Three consequences follow.

First, the nature of work has changed radically. Permanent work is on the way out. Work is increasingly part-time, flexible, temporary, and based on piecework: long periods of unemployment following short periods of work are now the rule. We must be flexible, adjustable, willing to learn and to continuously improve our skills, knowledge and aptitudes. In the past, a 'reserve army' of unemployed was used to push wages down. Technology, automation and the transfer of industry to the newly industrialising countries



have made a large number of people superfluous. They are the unemployed and unemployable, young and old, immigrants and refugees, those called 'human debris' or 'no use humans'.

The second change is the extensive and violent privatisation of the remaining commons. The three commons of social life and culture, external nature and our own biological nature are being systematically sold off. We must rent back from capital our common substance and our collective achievement. Everything that can be sold will be sold and then hired back to us.

Finally, profit takes two new forms: rent for services and interest for capital. Late capitalism increasingly works through consumption funded by debt. People, companies and states must borrow to spend. Student loans and loans for personal consumption, enterprise loans and mortgages make most of us permanently indebted. Debt has become integral to life. It is not - as it is often presented - the great enemy: it is the necessary lubricant in the economy of services. Debt as a social relation and moral concept has additional benefits for capital.<sup>17</sup> The debtor is infused with guilt and forbearance; the creditor controls her conduct much more than the employer does the employee. The debtor is formally free but only if she commits her life to the mission of repayment and (moral and financial) redemption. Debt ensures the obedient conduct of the debtor, closing off possibilities of resistance. In this sense, our current predicament is not a debt crisis, but capital's desire of debt.

17. Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Semiotext(e) 2011.

### *Biopolitical capitalism*

These socio-economic changes are accompanied by a new arrangement of power. Biopolitics is the exercise of power on bios, life. It extends from the depths of consciousness to the bodies and souls of the population. Population control is supplemented by technologies of the self that discipline and control individual behaviour. Biopolitical capitalism does not only produce commodities for subjects: it also creates subjects. The last thirty years have given us a clear picture of the complementary processes of population and individual control.

Material, social, affective, ethical and cognitive strategies are involved in this process. During periods of economic growth, working people were inserted directly into the economy through private and public debt and consumption. The indebted worker accepts that freedom of consumer choice and personal responsibility are the main criteria of success. Proliferating individual rights support this socio-economic integration. Every desire could become an entitlement; every 'I want X' a 'I have a right to X'. But this atomisation of the population is also the achilles heel of late capitalism. The worker can withdraw abruptly and even violently from participating in the escalating spiral of desire, satisfaction and frustration. If one of the links in the integration chain breaks, the overall psychological and ideological architecture collapses. This can happen through the sudden loss of a job, a



major deterioration in conditions of life or expectations, an attack on personal or national dignity, or frustration of desires or promises. It may erupt after an accumulation of humiliations, or in response to an event that condenses a plethora of grievances.

Southern Europe is a textbook case of debt's desire. After entry to the euro, the modernising governments promoted consumption and hedonism as the main way of linking private interests with the common good. People were treated as desiring and consuming machines. Easy and cheap loans, bribes to get people to transfer their savings into stocks and shares, and an artificial increase in real estate values, became the main instruments of economic growth, as well as the criteria for individual happiness and social mobility. The 'obscene' father of psychoanalysis kept telling the Greeks borrow, 'enjoy', 'buy', live as if this is your last day. This consumer paradise of desire-satisfaction-frustration is pure nihilism.

Austerity violently reversed priorities in order to achieve the same objective of controlling populations through indebtedness and guilt. The banks bailout and the increasing cost of servicing an increasingly unemployed and aging population added a huge sovereign debt to personal indebtedness. The population is now divided according to age, occupation, gender and race, and radical behavioural change is imposed for the sake of 'national salvation'. The politics of personal desire and pleasure is transformed and becomes a new strategy for saving the nation, through the abandonment of its individual members to the rigors of sin, guilt and punishment. This atomisation of the population was pursued first by the modernising policies of supposed freedom of choice and personal responsibility through debt and consumption. Punitive austerity completes the project by turning aggressive into defensive individualism, the contemporary culmination of nominalism: only individuals and the Sovereign exist, confronting each other in an almost permanent state of exception. The victims of austerity are asked to adjust their behaviour to the 'needs' of the nation and to be subjected to extensive controls, which aim at recovering social health. Austerity is an aggressive biopolitical correction. It covers every aspect of life from the basics like food, electricity and clothing to health, education, social security and leisure.<sup>18</sup>

Austerity is providing the cover for a top-down re-arrangement of capitalism. Austerity has been used to reduce workers' salaries, rights and benefits, while at the same time ensuring the continuing profitability of capital. The European elites had already decided on these reforms; the debt (public in the case of Greece, private in Spain and Ireland) offered a convenient pretext for their fast and brutal imposition and moralisation. The message is that people sinned in falling for the sirens of consumerism and must be punished. In the case of Greece, Angela Merkel acts like Freud's cruel superego: the more you obey the more you get punished. 'What does Angela Merkel want?' ask the Greek elites. But the lady keeps changing her tune. On some occasions, she wants Greece expelled from the euro, on others she wants to keep the

18. Athena Athanassiou, *The Crisis as a 'State of Exception'*, Savalas, Athens 2012.

country in the Eurozone. Most often she doesn't tell. But, as psychoanalysis teaches us, the continuous questioning keeps desire going. The desperate attempt to divine the desires and please Angela Merkel, the 'ego ideal' of Greek elites, keeps piling new austerity on low-income and unemployed Greeks, the only people who had no part in the creation of public debt.

### *Biopolitical law*

The legal system of late capitalism has changed in two complementary ways: most areas of private activity are becoming legalised, while public services and utilities are being released from their re-distributive aims and given over to the disciplines of the market. Laws are no longer the democratic expression of sovereignty or the liberal formalisation of morality; they are the purely utilitarian instruments of governance, frameworks for organising private activities, reducing market uncertainties and lowering transaction costs. This is a sad remnant of the honourable tradition of the rule of law. The law is expanding but at the price of assuming the characteristics of contemporary society, becoming open, decentred, fragmented and nebulous.

The dynamic of modern law - and of the metaphysics of modernity - was to open a distance, occasionally minimal, between law and the order of the world, the *ought* as correction of the *is*. Law was one form of the ideal, next to the other great normative horizons, religion, nation, socialism. Now, however, law's distance from the social order is fast disappearing in the vast expanse of law-life. In Borges's story of the cartographers of empire, the mythical cartographers asked to produce the most accurate possible map, ended with one the same size as the territory it mapped. Similarly, the law is well on the way to replicating life in its annals. This is a law with force but without normative weight, beyond the ideological preferences of ruling elites masquerading as scientific policies.

The dynamics of biopolitical governance determine legal strategies. In periods of economic growth, the detailed and suffocating regulation of life is accompanied by an apotheosis of individual desire expressed in the proliferation of rights. When the priorities are reversed, the superficial freedom of the previous period becomes counter-productive. Police repression, extensive surveillance and the criminalisation of resistance accompany an intensive effort to re-channel conduct. The repressive laws of the war of terror that are now used against political dissent and the invasive regulation of biopolitics do not contradict, but rather accompany and complement, rights. Freedom and security, instead of being opposed, are the two sides of biopolitical neoliberalism.<sup>19</sup>

### A PHILOSOPHY OF RESISTANCE

How can we generalise these new forms of resistance? When does resistance

19. Costas Douzinas, 'The poverty of (rights) jurisprudence' in Conor Gearty and Costas Douzinas, *The Cambridge Companion to Human Rights Law*, Cambridge University Press 2013, pp56-78.

arise, how does it work, can it ever succeed? Michel Foucault started the analytics of power. Françoise Proust, following Foucault's seminal work, continued with an analytics of resistance.<sup>20</sup> This essay follows and seeks to update Proust's project. We will proceed gradually, offering seven theses, building on the work of Foucault and Proust and relating them to contemporary instances of disobedience, insubordination and resistance.

20. Françoise Proust, *De la Résistance*, Cerf, Paris 1997). Penelope Deutscher has translated into English Proust's Introduction and 'The Line of Resistance', both in Vol.15 No 4 *Hypatia* 2000, pp18-37.

*Thesis 1. Resistance is a physical law of being, affecting every relationship*

Resistance is physical: every force affected by another provokes a resistance, which thwarts the first without stopping it. Wherever there is power, in an intimate relationship or collectivity, in a university, company, political party or state, there is resistance. 'This would be the transcendental of every resistance, whatever kind it be: resistance to power, to the state of things, to history; resistance to destruction, to death, to war; resistance to stupidity, to peace, to bare life' (Proust, pp1-2). The resisting force accompanies the force it resists, but also confronts, destabilises and redirects it. Resistance is therefore inescapable, immanent to every relation. From the moment being takes form and figure or a balance of forces stabilises itself, it encounters resistances, which irreversibly turn, twist and fissure it. As the mirror of power, resistance is a relationship, a series of interactions amongst people and things. It keeps changing the balance of forces, and disturbing power asymmetries, continuously redefining and amending the position of the participants.

Resistance is therefore the condition of existence of every power relationship and not a transcendent force or violence that befalls its site of intervention from outside. From the moment power appears, resistance accompanies it and marks the beginning of a new and specific history. It is in this sense that Gilles Deleuze, commenting on Foucault, writes 'the final word on power is that *resistance comes first*'.<sup>21</sup>

21. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, University of Minnesota Press 1988, p89.

*Thesis 2. Resistances are situated, local, concrete and multiform*

Resistance emerges in a concrete situation and reacts against a unique balance of forces. Resistance is local, arising on a specific site and a singular conjuncture. It is therefore difficult to develop universal principles of resistance, even though common trends in different sites of power may lead to similar reactions. Every situation and age creates new forms, strategies and subjects. Resistance reacts to the concrete circumstances it finds itself in; it breaks down the basic constituents of the power constellation, analyses them, and puts them together again in a different new edifice that opposes or reroutes the earlier combination. This process feeds into power too. The new dissident configurations may be taken on by the counter-resisting dominant force and transfer from resistant to ruling positions.

This parochial operation is evident in most cases of political resistance.

In early modernity, the breaking of machines and sabotage by Luddites and Diggers, amongst others, responded to the capitalist destruction of traditional skills and crafts. Today the huge movement of populations in and across continents leads to demands for free travel and a guaranteed minimum income. Excessive indebtedness of individuals, companies and states leads to repayment strikes and calls for debt haircuts. The same dependence on the operations of power is evident in the recent cases of resistance. The new forms of resistance emerge within and against the circuits of power, reacting and rearranging its operations. As we will argue below, they react to postfordist capitalism, the operation of power on life, the decay of parliamentary democracy and the effects of these developments on law. This is the reason that a presentation of the state we are in must necessarily precede any attempt to understand the specificities of forms of resistance.

*Thesis 3. Resistance is a mixture of reaction and action, negation and affirmation*

Resistance is local and situated; it responds to a situation or reacts to an event. Reaction may turn into action, reply, retort, renewal. Reactive resistance conserves or restores a state of things power has disturbed. Active resistance deconstructs the adversary's arms, and borrows, mimics or subverts their components. Using the enemy's rules, it invents new rules and institutions, and occupies the space reactive resistance has cleared. When power promotes privatisation of public assets, resistance deconstructs the private/public dichotomy and promotes new forms of property, such as the commons. When power creates unemployment, resistance constructs new cooperative, self-ruling forms of work and social activity.

Let us move to the current forms and strategies of resistance, and the ways in which they re-direct the balance of forces. The emerging forms react to the dominant modes of capitalist subjection. We look first at the resistance of the expendable human or *homo sacer*; secondly, that of the biopolitically excluded; finally, that of the democratically disenfranchised.

The resistance of the contemporary *homines sacri* takes the form of exodus or martyrdom. Suicide, self-mutilation, hunger strikes, boarding the floating coffins that daily sink in the Mediterranean - all these are characteristic responses of those treated as expendable, redundant, economically useless. The Arab spring started with the self-immolation of Muhammad Boazizzi in Tunisia. The Athens hunger strikers, on the other hand, are the only immigrants who, against legal orthodoxy, have achieved through their collective action a political resolution of their abject condition. In a biopolitical world, life exists as registered life; undocumented life without birth certificates and IDs, visas and work permits is not recognised. Minimum humanity is created through what the immigrants lacked: *papiers*, documents, files. To retrieve their life from this administrative void, they had to come to the threshold of death. The migrants reversed the plot of Hegel's master and

slave dialectic: by resisting their dehumanisation they became human and free. In this sense, the *sans papiers* became martyrs, both witnesses and sacrificial victims. They confirmed something that Rousseau as much as Freud and Sartre knew: humankind is free to die of freedom, but only collective political action can lead to emancipation.

The uprisings of pupils, students and marginalised youth in Paris 2005, Athens 2008 and London 2012 reacted to the biopolitical combination of the injunction to consumer satisfaction and police repression. Here the form is the spontaneous insurrection and riot, which often involves violence against property and looting. It arises after a violent event such as the killing of Alexis Grigoropoulos or Mark Duggan, or after a long series of humiliations that exhausts moral patience, as in the case of Boazzizi's self-immolation. In Greece, no party planned or led the insurrections, no specific demands were put forward, no single ideology dominated. Politicians and commentators dismissed them as non-political criminality and blind violence. Alain Badiou, copying inadvertently Greek Premier Karamanlis in 2008 and British Cameron in 2012, wrote that the subject of riots is not political: it is 'composed solely of rebellion, and dominated by negation and destruction, it does not make it possible clearly to distinguish between what pertains to a partially universalizable intention and what remains confined to a rage with no purpose'.<sup>22</sup> But this is only partly true. The insurgents were people who exist socially but not politically. As their interests are rarely heard, accounted or represented, they must perform their existence, through the absolute negation of what exists. They did not demand anything specific, instead using Roman Jakobson's 'phatic expression': they simply said 'enough is enough, 'here we stand against'. Not we claim this or that right, but we proclaim the 'right to have rights', the right to resistance.<sup>23</sup> This is politics at degree zero, a first but inadequate political baptism in the emergence of political subjectivity. Caught between the demands of insatiable desire and brutal repression, they performed the absolute freedom of acting out. When negation and affirmation, reaction and action, cannot be synthesised, they remain opposed, with violence the link.

Finally, the democratically disenfranchised have carried out democratic experimentation in occupations and encampments as well as in other forms of direct democracy. Citizens have been disenfranchised by the decay of parliamentary democracy and the disappearance of serious alternatives, in the rush of right-wing and social-democratic parties to the mythical centre. The principle of popular sovereignty that forms the foundation of many constitutions has turned into a legitimation myth, as democratic government increasingly mutates into technocratic governance. Occupations and encampments reject corrupt politics and post-democratic governance, abandon representation and the mandating of parliamentary politics, and experiment with new arrangements of political space and time. The localisation in a square creates a new fluid and open spacing of political power, while the intensity of bodily and emotional proximity, created by a common

22. Badiou, *Rebirth*, p25.

23. Douzinas, *Philosophy and Resistance*, Chapter 6.

political desire, acquires the characteristics of an emergent constituent power. The Syntagma multitude was the material coming together of people in public with a common political desire: radical political change. The demos returned to its original meaning as the *plethos* (the multitude) in assembly.

The first Syntagma resolution pronounced that 'We are not leaving the squares before government, troika, banks, memoranda and those who exploit us have left'. This 'we' contrasted to the 'they' of the combined elites, and acted as a constitutional performative. It spoke for the whole population, which had rejected austerity but been betrayed by mainstream politicians. The productive energy of the multitude became temporarily a constituent assembly. It both mimicked and subverted the principle of representation and state organisation. Direct democracy characterised all aspects of the occupation. An elaborate network of working groups offered a microcosm of the services of a democratic state operating under a strict axiom of equality. The Syntagma occupiers were not the suffering and victimised population of media coverage. They were a resisting and active people, who put into practice direct democracy and prefigured the necessary institutional reforms of a democracy to come.

*Thesis 4. Resistance changes subjectivities and constructs new identities*

Individual and collective subjectivities emerge in the interstices of relations of power. Subjects are always subjected, subjugated to the dominant forces, before they become free.<sup>24</sup> Resistances unpick and redirect the subject. At the individual level, revolt lies at the foundation of self. For Freud, happiness exists at the price of revolt. There is no pleasure without obstacles, prohibitions and interdictions, without law, injunctions and sanctions. The pleasure principle calls on the self to conform, to obey the law, to fit in the social order. But this accommodation to the world is accompanied, like day by night, by the transgression of prohibitions, the Oedipal revolt against the principle of power symbolised by father, sovereign and law. The autonomy of the individual emerges at the price of revolt. Legal and social prohibitions and injunctions open the route of revolt, allowing the self to reach autonomous maturity. Revolt forms an integral part of the pleasure principle. But it is also part of the darker timeless drive beyond the pleasure principle. The return of the repressed trauma forms part of the repertory of resistance.

Individual and collective dissident identities emerge out of acts of resistance. The tension between, on the one hand, symbolic differentiations and hierarchies, and, on the other, imaginary idealisations disarticulates the psychic sense of normality. We become new subjects; the 'stranger in me' emerges because my existence has misfired. When an unemployed youth realises that his condition is a symptom of the disease of the socio-economic system and not his own failure; when a *sans papiers* immigrant realises that her predicament is the symptom of a political and juridical system that divides

24. Costas Douzinas, *The End of Human Rights*, Hart, Oxford 2000), Chapters 8 and 9.

and excludes; when a lesbian realises that the suppression of her sexuality is a symptom of a system of disciplining and controlling bodies; at that point, subjects of resistance emerge. The negation following the failure of routine identities opens the road to the universality of resistance. It involves risk and perseverance: resistance is the courage of freedom.

This means, however, that one cannot become a subject of resistance simply through education or ideological training. Love and revolution come unannounced, like a miracle or an earthquake. One is hit on the head, like the blow of a *coup de foudre*; after that nothing remains the same. Joining the uprising or the occupation, irrespective of ideological commitment, is more important than ideological pedagogy or indoctrination. A Turkish protester told me that the first time she found herself, with her little daughter, in Gezi Park during a riot police attack with tear gas, she was paralysed with fear. Then people pulled both mother and child back and gave them water and protective masks. Her first reaction was to push them away, unused as she was to the caring touch of strangers. But once she realised that people were trying to help and felt the force of solidarity, the fear left her; she came back to the occupation every evening.

If - following Louis Althusser - ideology 'interpellates' the obedient subject, in the political baptism of resistance subjectivity is 'interpellated' by the event. The call does not come from Althusser's proverbial policeman, but from what one may call the 'normativity of the real'.<sup>25</sup> Resisting subjectivity emerges when this initial call of refusal perseveres in the care of self with others. It is about behaviour not language, bodies not ideas, courage not theorising. As Foucault puts it, 'there is after all no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself'.<sup>26</sup> Resisting subjectivity results from the change of one's relationship to oneself, from the pleasure principle to the death drive. 'I resist therefore I am', as Daniel Bensaid put it.<sup>27</sup>

Turning to our earlier examples, three forms of dissident subjectivity have emerged. First there is the martyr, someone who in order to exit dehumanisation and redeem existence, risks her life. Second is the rebel, for whom the uprising breaks the short circuit between insatiable desire and state violence and becomes a political baptism. Finally there is the direct democrat, who takes over parts of her life and turns democracy from a system of representative government into a form of life.

*Thesis 5. Resistance is a fact not an obligation, an is not an ought*

Resistance does not simply apply values and principles, and does not have a predictable point of condensation and explosion. We don't just resist in the name of something. It is not the idea of communism or the theory of justice that makes us take to the streets. Resistance is the bodily reaction to an overwhelming sense of injustice, an almost irrepressible response to hurt, hunger and despair. Resistance may involve a vision of justice, but this is not

25. Costas Douzinas, 'Adikia: On communism and Rights', in Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek eds, *The Idea of Communism*, Verso 2010).

26. Michel Foucault, 'Is it Useless to Revolt' in Janet Afay and Kevin Anderson eds., *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Chicago University Press 2005), p266.

27. Daniel Bensaid, 'Je résiste donc je suis' in *Resistances: Essai de taupologie générale*, Fayard 2001, pp29-46.



necessary, certainly not at the beginning.

Ideas are not the cause but the result of resistance. The extent to which ideas of justice, equality or communism are maintained or lost depends on the existence and extent of resistance. Principles and values emerge in specific contexts as part of a resisting response to a particular configuration of power, and only later claim universal validity. For Nietzsche, morality is the absolutisation of a temporary balance of forces. In classical Greece, the *logos* was initially a philosophical weapon against the claims of elders and priests to power and authority. Christ's teachings started as part of the Jewish resistance against the Roman empire. Early Christianity was a small and persecuted sect before it became a global religion assuming the character of empire. Human rights started as the legal claims of Europeans excluded from political rule before they became universal principles of legality and morality. Today, paradoxically, they are both the ideology of late capitalist empire and the cry of the dissident. All normative claims start life as particular strategies of resisting a local configuration of power in a particular place and time. Parochial provenance and local encumbrance are entombed in their foundations and carry the seeds of their dissolution.

Universal values and their expression in rights do not exist in some ethereal normative space of law books and international treaties. It is only when people resist power and defend themselves that a real conception of right comes to existence. It is not the existence of rights and law that makes people stand up. It is when people have stood up to defend their dignity - and when they still do - that rights have been created and power minimally respects them. For the ordinary person, disobedience is the deeply moral decision to break the law. It is a 'dangerous freedom'. In normal circumstances, morality and legality represent two different types of overlapping but not identical duty: the external duty to obey the law (in formal terms a heteronomous duty) and the internal moral responsibility that binds the self to a conception of the good (autonomy). Conflicts are usually solved in favour of law. In disobedience, the duties collide and morality takes over.<sup>28</sup>

If resisting behaviour is not necessarily or automatically linked with moral principles, how can we distinguish between protests that appear intuitively radical and the attacks by wealthy elites against the egalitarian policies of Allende, Chavez or Morales? Can we act morally without and indeed against legal and moral norms which ban disobedience? Simon Critchley has argued that the disobedient subject commits itself ethically in terms of a demand that is received from a situation, for example a situation of political oppression or injustice. The 'demand' arises in specific circumstances (the killing of a young man in Paris, Athens or London, the self-immolation of another in Tunisia, the destruction of a park in Istanbul, the increase in bus fares in Rio de Janeiro), but is addressed in principle to everyone and anyone. The moral force of moral and legal norms derives from their universal form, which allows application in myriad future instances. The moral demand, on the contrary,

28. Costas Douzinas, "The "Right to the Event". The Legality and Morality of Revolution and Resistance', Vol. 2, No 1, *Metodo: International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy*, at: [www.metodo-rivista.eu/index.php/metodo/article/view/65](http://www.metodo-rivista.eu/index.php/metodo/article/view/65)

acquires force from the content of a situation, which acquires universal form. The moral demand's universality makes it formally equivalent to the law but, unlike law, this is a 'situated universality'. It emanates from a unique instance or event that requires a response engaging potentially everyone (the rejection of police brutality, the claim to equality or to the common good). Those who remain true to the demand become disobedient and moral subjects. The event, its demand (the concrete situation) and the moral subject therefore emerge together. It is not previous edification in the good or understanding of radical theory that makes the subject, but the answer to a unique event and its moral 'call'.

*Thesis 6. Resistance and its subject emerge through the exercise of the right to resist*

While resistance is a fact not an obligation, the right to resist is the oldest, indeed the only natural, right. A legal right is justified and enforceable will. Whether private or public, the right to property or to vote, it appears as one, individual, undivided. It claims a single source, the subject's will, a single justification, law's recognition, a single effect, the will's ability to act and shape the world. The modelling of political rights on property, however, contaminated their operation. As Hegel realised and Marx emphasised, a yawning gap separates the normative weight from empirical operation.<sup>29</sup> Formal right, the legal subject's capacity to will, is theoretically limitless. But real people are embedded and embodied in the world of particularity. Property and normalised propriety act as quasi-transcendental preconditions, bridging the divide between formal right (the universal recognition of will) and its effective realisation in the world. We are all legally free and nominally equal, unless of course we are improper men, in other words men of no property, women, colonials, of the wrong colour, religion or sexuality.

At that point, will, the source of right, splits into two between that accepted and justified by law and a second, adopted by the dominated and the oppressed, for whom right is not about law and judges, a game they can scarcely play. It happens when people act against a system that, while claiming to represent the common good, has become an alien essence; or when an inner rebellion reacts to the widening chasm between universal vocation and particular belonging and prepares the resisting subjectivity. The split in will and right is replicated in the resisting subject, who sees their inner rebellion not as a personal inadequacy or failure but as the symptom of the disease of the social order and its law. Right now becomes a battle-cry, the subjective factor in a struggle, which asks to be raised to the level of the universal. It is the claim of the dissident against the abuses of power or the revolutionary against the existing order.

Right has therefore two metaphysical sources. As a claim accepted or seeking admission to the law, right is a publicly recognised will, which finds itself at peace with the world, a world made in its image and for its service. But secondly, right

29. Douzinas, 'Philosophy and the Right to Resistance' in Costas Douzinas and Conor Gearty, *The Meanings of Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press 2013, pp85-105.

is a will that wills what does not exist, a will that finds its force in itself and its effect in a world not yet determined all the way to the end. This second right is founded *contra fatum*, in the perspective of an open cosmos that cannot be fully determined by (financial, political or military) might:

All the forms of freedom that are acquired or demanded, all the rights that are claimed, even concerning the things that seem to be of least importance, probably have a lost point of anchor here ... [in a man who prefers the risk of death over the certainty of having to obey] ... more solid and experiential than 'natural rights'.<sup>30</sup>

30. Foucault, 'Is it useless to revolt?', fn 30, p263.

This drive to resist eventually confronts domination and oppression, including those instituted and tolerated by the first legalised will. These two conceptions of right, or of the universal, manifest the confrontation of the death drive against desire and the pleasure principle. On one side, an acceptance of the order of things, raised to the dignity of general will, dresses the dominant particular with the mantle of the universal. The second universality is founded on a will created by a diagonal division of the social world separating rulers from the ruled and the excluded. It forms an agonistic universality emerging from the struggle of the excluded from social distribution and political representation. The excluded and disenfranchised are the only universal today in a legal and social system that proclaims incessantly its egalitarian credentials.

*Thesis 7. Collective resistance becomes political and may succeed in radically changing the balance of forces when it condenses different causes, a multiplicity of struggles and local and regional complaints, bringing them together into a common place and concurrent time*

Resistance to power exists everywhere and keeps transforming relations of power and subjectivities. Uprisings go beyond their local situated, regional operation and limited effectiveness, however, when they are compressed in their demands and concentrated in their appearance. Take the Taksim square occupation. It started with a few ecologists defending Gezi, the last green space in central Istanbul, from bulldozers and cement. They were soon joined by many other people and groups - secularists protesting the government's religious turn, Alevis rejecting the naming of the third Bosphorus bridge, abandoned lovers, leftists attacking the neoliberal turn, republican supporters of the state, Europeanist modernisers, single mothers, Islamists rejecting state diktat, feminists protesting macho culture, shop assistants sacked for no good reason, gays and lesbians who want to kiss in public, young people who grew up with their parents in prisons, pickpockets, Kurds protesting the state's attacks on language and culture, street kids, football fans, artists, low-paid families, sex workers, the unemployed, those

who came to the square for fun, finally those who cannot be included in any of these categories. They came from different social classes and income groups, various political ideologies and none, some with the most general of grievances others with specific, idiosyncratic complaints. They represented every section of the population; initially they had little in common, except for finding themselves together in the same place at the same time. Being together in a square and a park, sharing food, music and words, they were transformed from a motley crowd with many, sometimes antagonistic, demands into a multitude in the strictest sense of the term: a crowd with a common political desire in assembly. The squares are places of clearing and gathering, where popular will appears, sharing speech and action in a physical not metaphorical public sphere. The empty squares are our monument and the promise of a democracy to come.

When the Besiktas football club fans chanted ‘Erdogan you are the son of a whore’, women asked them to stop because several sex workers were in the square. The fans held a meeting and agreed to stop the chant. The following day a large banner appeared: ‘We, the whores: Erdogan is not our son’. It was the magical moment at which different energies, ideologies and complaints turned into one common demand: ‘Erdogan Go’. At such points, the solidarity of the governed rises from the particularity of the struggles towards a new right that emerges in practice and brings people together into a resisting multitude. Individual disobedience and isolated acts of defiance converge and become collective resistance.

Michel Foucault, commenting on the Iranian revolution, stated that:

... it is a fact that people rise up, and it is through this that a subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of everyone) introduces itself into history and gives it its life ... It is precisely because there are such [uprisings] that human time does not take the form of evolution, but that of ‘history’ (ibid, p266).

As long as the protesters ask for this or that reform, this or that concession, the state can accommodate them. What the state fears is the fundamental challenge to its power by a force that can transform the relations of law and present itself as having a ‘right to law’. In such cases, politics becomes the ‘prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists’ (Badiou, *Metapolitics*, p24). After a long period when markets and pliant governments claimed that smooth uninterrupted evolution was the future of humanity, we have entered again a time of history and of political subjectivity of everyone and anyone.

The role of intellectuals, as of all citizens, is to support politically and morally the uprisings that pass the test of situated morality. In *What is Critique* Foucault suggested that critique is *l’art de n’être pas tellement gouverné*.<sup>31</sup> He associated critique with resistance to governance and with acts of desubjectification. This is how he put it in a late seminar:

31. Michel Foucault, ‘Qu’est-ce que la critique (critique et aufklärung)’, *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, 84<sup>ème</sup> année, n°2, Avril-Juin 1990.

The role of the one who speaks [the intellectual in our context] is not that of legislator or the philosopher between camps, the figure of peace and armistice ... To establish oneself between adversaries at the centre and above them, to impose a general law on each and to found an order that reconciles: this is not what is at issue. At issue is the positing of a right marked by dissymetry, the founding of a truth linked to a relation of force, a weapon truth and a singular right. The subject that speaks is a warring - I won't even say a polemical - subject.<sup>32</sup>

32. Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, M. Bertani and A. Fontana (eds), Seuil/Gallimard, Paris 1997, p46; *Society Must Be Defended*, Penguin 2004, p39.

33. Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual. The 1993 Reith Lectures*, Vintage, London 1996, pp3-24.

Similarly, for Edward Said the intellectual is a present-day Robin Hood who gives voice to those who would not be heard otherwise.<sup>33</sup> This type of intellectual has jettisoned the responsibility of expertise or power for the irresponsibility of struggle. In English or French, 'responsibility' is etymologically linked with 'response'. You are responsible when you respond to a (moral) demand. The demand may come from power or from the other. When responsibility is defined as consent to the commands of power it is not moral; in such cases, the moral attitude is irresponsibility. In periods of intense crisis the pressing need to take sides comes to the surface and trumps neutrality. The claim to objectivity, always a little problematic, can no longer be sustained, and becomes itself a site of confrontation. As the world is moving towards a state of permanent crisis and resistance, the engaged intellectual is returning.