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Anti-Technologies of Resistance

Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz

2000

In the beginning of 1999 we published a little book called *What to do? 54 Technologies of Resistance Against Power Relations in Late-Capitalism* (in Vienna, and before that in Moscow.) This book is a collection of a number of semi-anecdotes and semi-reflections about the possibilities of political and cultural resistance under the condition of a globalized market and multiculturalism. The centre of our examination were so-called technologies of resistance: familiar and traditional methods of political struggle and cultural resistance, as well as individual 'transgressive' techniques. On the one hand we tried to analyze critically technologies such as demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes; on the other hand we discussed the effectiveness of showing your ass in front of your enemy, throwing eggs and spitting on your opponent's dress. Resistance must take into consideration concrete circumstances of place and time and must act from very precise strategies and tactics of local struggle, if it wants to be effective. Borrowing from Foucault, who spoke about the 'specific intellectual' we suggested the term 'local and specific resistor.' Such a resistor doesn't act

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from universal concepts or out of the doctrines of parties or groups, but struggles against these very doctrines and keeps moving endlessly, not knowing what he or she will do tomorrow. In combating the current art-system, local scandals, interventions, leaflets, graffiti etc. may be effective at a certain moment but useless in another context. Soft subversion, a heritage inherited from the 1980s, is no longer adequate, and the hidden undermining of the political context of the enemy is obsolete and has finally degenerated either into cynicism or into conformism and strategies of success and survival within the system. 'War is necessary!' was our answer to the question 'What to do?'

However, the term 'technologies of resistance,' which we have used until now, no longer satisfies us. From now on we want to talk not about technologies but about anti-technologies of resistance. After the works by Artaud, Bataille and Foucault, Lacoue-Labarthe, it becomes clear that the Greek term 'techné,' which denotes a mimetic ideal in the sphere of art and is directly connected with the art of politics, still subordinates itself to political and aesthetic activities in modern society. Techné implies a model of society that is based on the hegemony of certain technologies of power and on the subjection of the will of individuals in a direction favorable to the elite. Technologies are the skills and abilities which guarantee the functioning of knowledge and power in very different fields — from a shoemaker's business to the construction of intercontinental ballistic missiles, from artistic collages to espionage satellites. Power relations produce technologies and distribute them partly through dictatorship, partly through seduction, but always in the interest of the ruling order. Even if one or another technology is employed in the service of resistance, at a certain moment it inevitably turns out to be the hostage of power and, deriving from power relations, it permanently return us to them. Technologies serve the oldest and most productive game of power, where its myths get the 'final'

and 'competent' confirmation from experts. Nowadays techno-myths serve the neo-liberal elites, repressive tolerance, and the new Right. We no longer want to speak about 'technologies of resistance' because we associate the term 'technologies' with 'power' rather than 'resistance.' Anti-technologies of resistance are necessary!

In 1959 Gustav Metzger presented his concept of 'auto-destructive art.' ("Destructive of what? Destructive of the peace of mind, the pleasure in the arts, the moral integrity of people directly or indirectly supporting the violence of the state, structural social discriminations, different forms of oppression...") Metzger's concept was directed against an understanding of art as a stable and completed technology that has a fixed aesthetic and market value. At that time, Metzger's political views were close to anarchism, and he thought that 'auto-destructive art' would enact the destruction of capitalist economy and imperialistic politics. Metzger discovered and articulated the connection between aesthetic technologies of the production of art and political technologies of the reproduction of the hegemonic concept of cultural memory, tradition, and the 'history of the winner' Unless an artwork destroys itself, it is at the service of capital. Metzger was the first to question how technologies (of art and power) can turn into their opposite, destroy themselves and become something else.

Anti-technologies of resistance entail the destruction of the cultural and scientific technologies which are at the service of power, and, secondly, the creation of 'unpleasant,' 'dissatisfying,' dubious, and crazy practices that cannot be included in the toolbox of the technologies of power. We would like to stress the importance of the terms 'dissatisfying' and 'unpleasant.' Dissatisfaction is the only real product of anti-technologies of resistance. Deep, restless, and exciting dissatisfaction should be felt not just by the power structures, against which resistance is realized, but also by the resisters themselves and by the 'uninvolved' observing audience. To cultivate anti-technologies of

resistance means to create an atmosphere of unpleasantness, defeat, disappointment and indignation in today's world of successful 'humanitarian interventions' (for example, in Iraq and Yugoslavia) and festive representations of triumphing cultural imperialism. Anti-technologies of resistance are like a fart at a cocktail party with guests dressed in evening attire. This fart must be really unbearable and instill consternation and dissatisfaction into the souls of those present. It should not have anything in common with Christof Schlingensief's theater or Roman Singer's performances. This fart must be really anti-artistic, but not like punk or J.J. Allin, because these are also technologies. Anti-technologies are not art, but at the same time they are art because nobody knows what art is although everybody can do it. Anti-technologies are the striving for the impossible, and in no case just another aesthetic phenomenon which decorates the pages of art magazines. Art magazines are shit!

Anti-technologies of resistance are atmospheric appearances, because they are principally indescribable and non-reproducible. It is impossible to repeat an anti-technology (otherwise it becomes a technology.) Anti-technologies are anti-systematic. At the same time some more or less constant characteristics of anti-technologies can be named.

1. Connection with specific and local context. Only these specific connections can determine the effectiveness of resistance. However (we can say parenthetically) no one has ever practiced such a deepening of context—from court organs to artists. Without this deepening, there is no understanding.
2. The body as the opposite of a machine. Bodies do not organize or create anti-technologies, but appear as anti-technologies—it is through bodies that anti-technologies become visible and perceptible. Bodies are not machines:

of an ornament... Rather, it is an effective and necessary means of transforming discursive practice.” (What is an Author?)

A ‘basic and constructive’ institutional omission of resistance-culture (the culture of Mary Richardson, Arthur Cravan, Antonin Artaud, Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Gustav Metzger, Jack Smith...) has already taken place. About a return, so far, we don’t have to speak.

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neither machines of desire, nor war machines, nor machines of power. Bodies destroy their function, come out of their frames, get into contradiction with themselves. Bodies show their discrete anti-machinery. Bodies carry the truth of anti-technologies, which can be defined through the interrupted pulsing of 4 elements: body-thinking-happiness-suffering. Happiness is not a technology; neither is suffering. Suffering and happiness live at a high-speed detached from technologies, like death is a high-speed detached from life. (If you don’t understand this, try drowning in a bathtub.) Thinking is not a technology because it can exist only in desperate disagreement (with the primate of technologies.)

3. ‘Wild’ and ‘antisocial’ activities. These do not have anything in common with all sorts of expressionism, or, moreover, with a frustrated iconoclasm. (Expressionism is just another mercantile technology.) Wild activity means introducing chance elements into the order of technology, thereby demolishing this very order. Chance elements are bodies, chairs, water, night, dirt, hunger, flowers-in a word, everything available right at the moment.
4. Striving for decomposition and unproductivity. Decomposition is an attempt to hinder the repressive order, which in hegemonic culture is perceived as the main source of productivity. The normative product in today’s understanding is repressive consensus in a certain packaging. Exactly this consensus must be subjected to the procedure of decomposition. Decomposition and disintegration are the weapons of a minority, calling into question the consensus of a moral majority.
5. Striving for discontinuity. Discontinuity is a risky leap out of the body of cultural history, which Benjamin

called a 'history of winners.' (The 'history of winners' is the history of the fat giggling of patriarchal owners who stage celebrations on the bodies of poverty.) Leap into what? Into dissatisfaction, risk, pain. Into the void... But more than anything, a leap into thinking, into producing resistance.

6. Refusal of any aesthetic and ethic satisfaction. No satisfaction, not for yourself, not for others. No consumption and pleasure of success. We confess that this idea is not clear in the end even to ourselves: What does no satisfaction mean? No laughing, no enthusiasm? Rather not that: laughing and enthusiasm, but with the disgusting feeling of shit coming out of your neck. (And immediately a shout and attack.) This feeling was described by Bataille in *Literature and Evil*. The political equivalent of this feeling: *Contra-Attack* against your own post-bourgeois fatness. Anti-technologies are convulsive contra-attacks against the fascism of your own machine-body.
7. Refusal of normative documentation. A typical means to collect fat around your hips is to document your own 'works.' Anti-technologies entail refusing the principle of documentation. Documentation is the main way to archive hegemonic cultural memory. Documentation is the liberal form of social consensus, ironically making fun of the conservative term 'masterpiece.' Documentation is today's whiny form of recognition, begging for critical revisionism. Don't document and exchange information but think! And every thought must find its own specific and mortal (political) form.
8. Non-originality. Originality is the crumpled, rotting intellectual fruit of old shit-preservers like Jürgen Harten and Kasper König. Puffed up 'experts' talk about originality, while they are disgusting non-original functionaries.

Originality is the commercial success and mass-medial triumph of some obedient bodies over others-nothing more. In a political field, efforts are the only reality of resistance-culture! Non-originality means adopting radical-democratic principles in a cultural, social and political realm.

Our short theses about anti-technologies of resistance are connected with the actual political situation in the modern age of globalized capitalism. The noticeable repoliticization of social groups (youth, immigrant, trade-unions, different social movements) in many parts of the world raises the specter of local and specific struggle against various enemies: neo-liberalism, conservatism, the new rights, racism, cultural populism, subtle sexism, various 'progressive' institutions, serving the interest of political and social elites. 'Micro' resistance is necessary to combat the expansion of capitalist instincts and orders in every direction, every place, all bodies, all discourses, all objects. Struggle at the level of elementary particles of thoughts and activities. Start with yourself, with your own context, your professional field. Re-view theoretical approaches; give up using current discourses, contemporary formulas, fashionable technologies. Speed, imposed by modern culture, is just the speed of capital. It is necessary to brake sharply, to stop and slow down. It is necessary to carry out what Foucault called a return to: "If we return, it is because of a basic and constructive omission, an omission that is not the result of accident or incomprehension... This non-accidental omission must be regulated by precise operations that can be situated, analyzed, and reduced in a return to the act of initiation. Both the cause of the barrier and the means for its removal, this omission — also responsible for the obstacles that prevent returning to the act of initiation — can only be resolved by return... It follows naturally that this return... is not a historical supplement that would come to fix itself upon the primary discursivity and redouble it in the form