

*Anachronistic Praise for*  
**DECEIVING THE SKY**

**“Very nearly an adequate idea.”**  
—*Baruch Spinoza*

**“A prince ought to reckon study groups of little account when his people hold him in esteem; but when they are hostile to him, and bear hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody.”**  
—*Niccolò Machiavelli*

**“This book amplifies the reader’s spirit and strength, drains away adversaries, and attracts the uncommitted.”**  
—*John Boyd*

**DECEIVING THE SKY** is a collectively produced book, resource, and study guide on strategic thinking. Emerging from collaborative inquiry, it includes a wide variety of historical and contemporary texts on strategy and strategic thinking. While the word strategy often evokes hierarchy, centralization, and a satellite’s-eye view of the world that conceives of humans as chess pieces, we felt it important to strengthen our own strategic reflexes as radicals. Against the statist conception of strategy, we believe it can be a lens, an orientation to the world that understands existence as a shifting array of forces, capacities and intentions. Strategy can be molecular as much as it can be grand. This book is an attempt to build a new language that we can share, to build our collective capacity for strategic thinking, to become more powerful together.

*Deceiving the Sky* is designed as a tool for use, with original texts, introductory material, discussion notes and questions, and activities for engagement. The point is not to get lost in abstract theory, but to discover what is useful, and to discard the rest. This book can be used to organize a study group, to reference as a strategic playbook, or if nothing else, to roll up and use as a bludgeon.

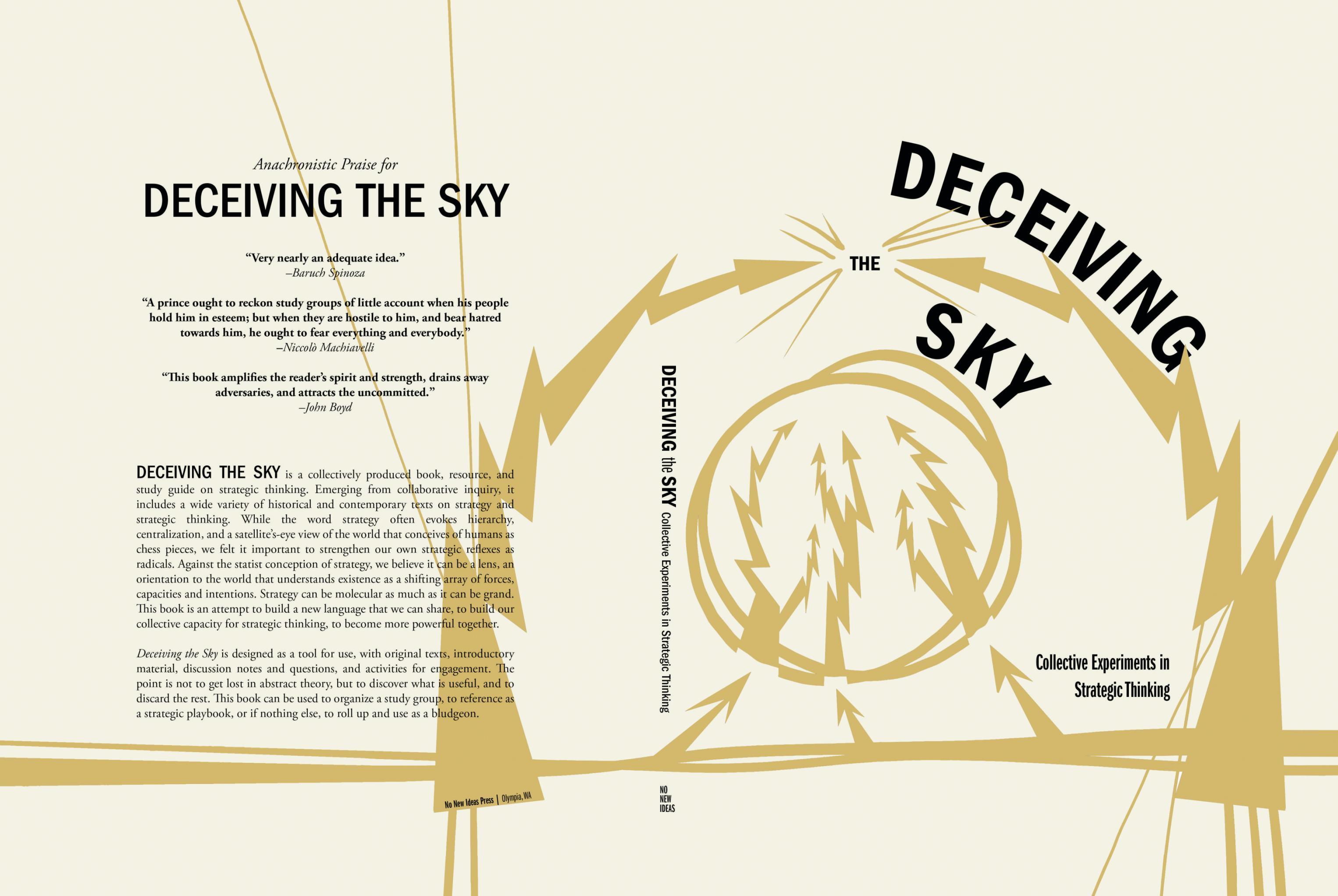
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**DECEIVING the SKY** Collective Experiments in Strategic Thinking

**DECEIVING  
THE  
SKY**

**Collective Experiments in  
Strategic Thinking**



# DECEIVING the SKY

Collective Experiments in Strategic Thinking

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This book owes its existence to all of the participants in the *Notes on Strategy* study group in the autumn of 2018. Without the collective wisdom, rigor, engagement, tea, bubbly water, and snacks, this book would be stale regurgitation.

This book also owes its existence to our shared struggles over the past many years. Without days in the streets, nights on the barricades, arguments in good faith and bad, shared food, and desires for a different world, there would be nothing to say about strategy.

This book also owes its existence to the humans who have fled from and struggled against accumulations of wealth and power for thousands of years, and to the dense mesh of human and non-human lifeforms that sustain lives worth living. Without them, there wouldn't be saying at all.

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## Why Strategy?

THE WORD “STRATEGY” CONJURES IMAGES OF board games, military campaigns, and important leaders. We hear about Napoleon, or Sun Tzu, or Clausewitz, and we envision a framework in which one or a few thinkers execute plans using the bodies of thousands of soldiers. Or we think of business strategy, again where a single leader or a small committee charts out a plan using the resources and bodies of workers. Or we think of revolutionary strategy, which too often mimics the former examples: a cunning strategist like Lenin instructs revolutionary subjects how to act, implementing a revolutionary discipline that sacrifices people in the present for an imagined victory over the horizon. We hear self-appointed leaders and movement managers using “strategy” as an excuse for passivity, telling angry protesters to “be strategic”, which is code for following orders. It’s no surprise that strategy has a bad rap among radicals and anarchists. It evokes hierarchy and centralization, a satellite’s-eye view of the world that conceives of humans as chess pieces, and it depends on a Western ontological framework that separates thought from action.

So, why study strategy? Because we too often throw ourselves headlong into struggle without a common language to discuss how to engage with our enemies and our situation. Certainly our enemies have strategies. If we cannot understand how they think and how to disrupt them, we are condemned to being predictable, reactive, and to ceding initiative to our adversaries. Strategy doesn’t have to be hierarchical or centralized; it can also be a lens, an orientation to the world that understands existence as a shifting array of forces,

capacities and intentions. Strategy can be molecular as much as it can be grand; and molecular strategy can perhaps be more resilient, less predictable and more adaptable than a grand unified strategy. The military has learned this lesson. Capitalists and tech entrepreneurs have learned this lesson. But as much as we talk about decentralization, swarms, rhizomes, and lines of flight, radicals tend to have difficulty translating our ideas into strategies. We don’t know how to speak to one another. We lack a strategic language.

This study guide is a proposal to build collective capacity for strategic thinking. This is different from proposing a particular collective strategy. This is not a suggestion of “what is to be done” in the abstract—it is movement toward building the capacity to have those discussions in the future, when concrete situations demand collective, situated action. The question, instead, is “what is possible?”

We would like to point to a distinction between critical thinking and strategic thinking. Radicals are expert critical thinkers. We maintain constant critical observation and understanding of the contours of this hell-world. It is important work: critical thinking allows for nuanced conversations, and it keeps us from getting swept along by politics or movements that might actually be our enemies. But critical thinking also tends towards purity, towards excoriating ourselves and each other if we don’t say the “right” things, haven’t read the “right” things, or don’t have a good enough analysis. We mistake having the right opinion or saying the right thing for acting in and affecting the world.

Strategic thinking, by contrast, is embedded in specific situations. It is amoral (though morality can certainly be deployed strategically). Strategy is unconcerned with who is right or wrong, but with evaluating the distribution of power in a certain

## *The Study Group*

situation: Who has the ability to act? And what are the limits to their action? How do we evaluate a terrain (physical, ideological, or metaphysical)? How do we understand where there are openings for intervention in a given terrain? How do we accurately assess our own capacity? And how can we act to increase that capacity?

One of the included texts is titled *The Master's Tools*, and that could easily be the title of this book as well. We want to know if we can add more tools to our toolbox for revolt and rebellion. We want to build a reflex for strategic thinking that allows us to act on our politics and ethics more effectively. We read our enemies in this group, and our inquiry is concerned less with whether we agree with the politics of all of the authors and more with whether we can learn practical or conceptual skills from them.

It is important to note that many of the texts in this study curriculum are authored by white men. While there are useful and brilliant works on strategic thinking that come from other cultural traditions (think Mao, the Black Panthers, adrienne maree brown's recent and excellent book *Emergent Strategy*, and many more), the texts in this book were chosen so that we can read into and exploit the intelligence of our enemies. It is unsurprising that many of our enemies are white men. This is not to say that this collection is complete. We also ask you to consider the people who are present in the content, yet unnamed: Who are the people who were so strategically resisting that Machiavelli was pressed upon to develop his colonial strategies? Who are the people that John Boyd's counter-insurgency guide is so concerned with repressing? Who are the insurgent networks that RAND Corporation policy wonks are trying to understand through their study of netwar? Please invite those rebels into your conversations as you study.

In the winter of 2018-2019 in a town in the Pacific Northwest, a group of us met weekly to study the following curriculum on strategy. The study group was a public event, open invitation, though the group who became dedicated to the texts was not strange—a familiar collection of radical, left, anarchist and communist organizers. The group represented both strained and intimate relations. Some participants were students, people for whom reading and seminar are part of everyday life. Many participants had built blockades together, people for whom the study of strategy in theory would have obvious practical applications. Some of us had known each other for decades, and there were at least a few who had only just recently walked in the door.

It is important to know that the strategy study group met at a collectively run event space downtown that had only been open for a couple of months. The space was in the early stages of getting to know itself, and the strategy group contributed to its feeling. One hope of the organizers of the space was to curate an environment that could not be dominated by any particular ideology or subcultural rule, so as to facilitate encounters on more earnest terms. The study group also hoped to achieve this feeling. With some hesitation, and some fear, the study group did generate a supportive and critical space to think through ideas together. A large part of the experience of the study group was filling the new space with that particular and cultivated energy.

The study group as a form—bodies in a circle with an eagerness for questions—necessitates an opening of access to texts that may otherwise feel challenging, awkward or obscure. We used a system of rotating facilitation, in which a different

person would commit to a closer reading of the text every week, presenting some background information on the author or concepts. In this way, we grayed the area between learning and teaching, and drew in the distance between those participants who were more or less confident as “thinkers.” There was a lot of thinking while talking while thinking and then “oh, I see.” There was a rickety loveseat that could sometimes fit three but the tea was always spilling. The group would try out ideas and interpretations, make drawings, interrupt each other and sit in silence. It felt vital to have three hours set aside every week to sparkle on the edge of a challenging idea.

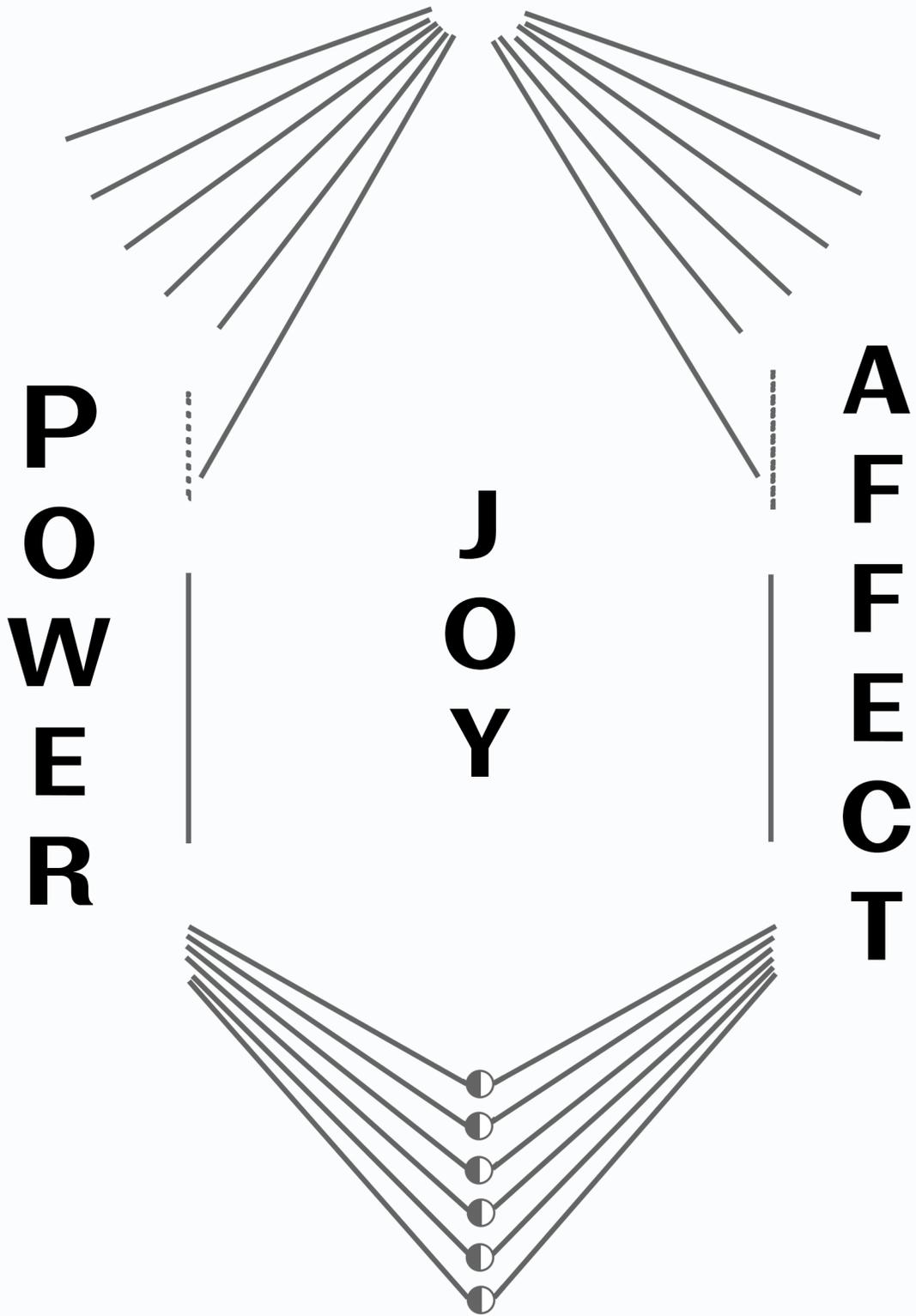
We are interested in cultivating spaces and conducting energies, and want to learn more about systems, patterns, habits, activities and games that continue in the vein of collective inquiry and informal intellectualism. We imagine spaces where there is a palpable investment in one another’s development that is not legible in the metrics of the university or the market. We hope that the strategy study group was able to contribute to collective development, intelligence, and trust.

### *How to use this Book*

This book is organized as an annotated anthology, but with less consistency in form between chapters. Each section begins with an introduction to the text, then the main text of texts of that topic, and then a set of discussion notes, questions, and activities to engage with the ideas encountered. As each text is different and as our study group sessions evolved, sharing teaching roles and changing moods, each section of the book relays some of that difference. We experimented with a more structured study group than many of us are used

to, with a different person taking on responsibility for introducing a text and leading discussion around it each week. To us, this felt somewhat more productive than a free-for-all, but there’s no right way to use this book. Like anything else, find what is useful, use it, and move forward.

You may notice that the introductions become shorter throughout the book, or the conversations and reflections vary from precise and thorough to messy and free-floating. This is a reflection of the study group, and not a problem for us to fix. When producing a book, there is a certain pressure to finish, perfect, and polish every element. This tendency towards perfection feels stifling. We would prefer to celebrate the messy, unprofessional, and provisional nature of this study group, the book, and of strategic endeavors generally. We learn together by experimenting and acting together, not by cultivating the perfect theory. Use this book as a guide for your own study group, read it on your own, or create a brand new curriculum for a topic that interests you, and study together with friends. We found it useful to take notes of the discussion and upload them to a shared document for further reflection and use. A riseup pad is easy to use (pad.riseup.net), but many such tools exist.



GILLES DELEUZE ON **SPINOZA'S ETHICS**

## Reading Gilles Deleuze on **Spinoza's Ethics**

THERE ARE SO MANY LEVELS ON WHICH TO ENGAGE with Baruch Spinoza. He was a heretic, a Jew who was excommunicated from his community, a philosopher who refused a position at a university because he believed he would not have been able to think freely. He made his living as a lens-grinder, not a philosopher. He often speaks of God, which is disorienting to those of us in the 21st century for whom atheism is taken for granted. His language is hard to understand, because he wrote in the 17th century, and because he used existing words in new ways. He returned to the geometric method of philosophy, to Euclid, because he was saying something so radically different than other philosophers of the day that he needed to operate on a very basic, logical level. Spinoza makes radical claims in his texts, claims that undermine the foundations of an Abrahamic God as much as they undermine the foundations of tyrants and priests and the mind/body division that we have inherited from Descartes and classical philosophy. But he makes those claims in a strategic way; he doesn't rage against the ignorance or violent power differentials of his time, but attempts to communicate ideas in ways that can be understood in the contemporary parlance. Inasmuch as he is concerned with developing adequate ideas, he is also concerned with making those ideas understandable to those around him. It is not enough, for Spinoza, to be right; he also wants to be understood, and to affect others.

Gilles Deleuze gave a series of lectures on Spinoza from 1978-1981. The following excerpt of one of those lectures is one of the clearest and

most compelling introductions to Spinoza's philosophy that we have encountered. The simple, a-moral framework of Spinoza's philosophy, and his focus on understanding power as a central element of the world, makes him an eminently strategic thinker.

Following the text we have assembled a small glossary of some of the major terms, as well as including some of our reflections and discussions of the text.

## Lecture on Spinoza

Gilles Deleuze

IT MATTERS LITTLE WHETHER YOU'VE READ HIM OR not, for I'm telling a story. I begin with some terminological cautions. In Spinoza's principal book, which is called the *Ethics* and which is written in Latin, one finds two words: *affectio* and *affectus*. Some translators, quite strangely, translate both in the same way. This is a disaster. They translate both terms, *affectio* and *affectus*, by "affection." I call this a disaster because when a philosopher employs two words, it's because in principle he has reason to, especially when French easily gives us two words which correspond rigorously to *affectio* and *affectus*, that is "affection" and "affect" for *affectus*. Some translators translate *affectio* as "affection" and *affectus* as "feeling", which is better than translating both by the same word, but I don't see the necessity of having recourse to the word "feeling" since French offers the word "affect." Thus when I use the word "affect" it refers to Spinoza's *affectus*, and when I say the word "affection," it refers to *affectio*.

First point: what is an idea? What must an idea be, in order for us to comprehend even Spinoza's simplest propositions? On this point Spinoza is not original, he is going to take the word "idea" in the sense in which everyone has always taken it. What is called an idea, in the sense in which everyone has always taken it in the history of philosophy, is a mode of thought which represents something. A representational mode of thought. For example, the idea of a triangle is the mode of thought which represents the triangle. Still from the terminological point of view, it's quite useful to know that since the Middle Ages this aspect of the

idea has been termed its "objective reality." In texts from the 17th century and earlier, when you encounter the objective reality of the idea this always means the idea envisioned as representation of something. The idea, insofar as it represents something, is said to have an objective reality. It is the relation of the idea to the object that it represents.

Thus we start from a quite simple thing: the idea is a mode of thought defined by its representational character. This already gives us a first point of departure for distinguishing idea and affect because we call affect any mode of thought which doesn't represent anything. So what does that mean? Take at random what anybody would call affect or feeling, a hope for example, a pain, a love, this is not representational. There is an idea of the loved thing, to be sure, there is an idea of something hoped for, but hope as such or love as such represents nothing, strictly nothing.

Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect. A volition, a will implies, in all rigor, that I will something, and what I will is an object of representation, what I will is given in an idea, but the fact of willing is not an idea, it is an affect because it is a non-representational mode of thought. That works, it's not complicated.

He thereby immediately infers a primacy of the idea over the affect, and this is common to the whole 17th century, so we have not yet entered into what is specific to Spinoza. There is a primacy of the idea over the affect for the very simple reason that in order to love it's necessary to have an idea, however confused it may be, however indeterminate it may be, of what is loved.

In order to will it's necessary to have an idea, however confused or indeterminate it may be, of what is willed. Even when one says "I don't know what I feel," there is a representation,

confused though it may be, of the object. There is a confused idea. There is thus a primacy, which is chronological and logical at the same time, of the idea over the affect, which is to say a primacy of representational modes of thought over non-representational modes. It would be a completely disastrous reversal of meaning if the reader were to transform this logical primacy through reduction. That the affect presupposes the idea above all does not mean that it is reduced to the idea or to a combination of ideas. We must proceed from the following point, that idea and affect are two kinds of modes of thought which differ in nature, which are irreducible to one another but simply taken up in a relation such that affect presupposes an idea, however confused it may be. This is the first point.

Now a second, less superficial way of presenting the idea-affect relation. You will recall that we started from a very simple characteristic of the idea. The idea is a thought insofar as it is representational, a mode of thought insofar as it is representational, and in this sense we will speak of the objective reality of an idea. Yet an idea not only has an objective reality but following the hallowed terminology, it also has a formal reality. What is the formal reality of the idea? Once we say that the objective reality is the reality of the idea insofar as it represents something, the formal reality of the idea, shall we say, is—but then in one blow it becomes much more complicated and much more interesting—the reality of the idea insofar as it is itself something.

The objective reality of the idea of the triangle is the idea of the triangle insofar as it represents the triangle as thing, but the idea of the triangle is itself something; moreover, insofar as it is something, I can form an idea of this thing, I can always form an idea of the idea. I would say therefore that not only is every idea something—to say

that every idea is the idea of something is to say that every idea has an objective reality, it represents something—but I would also say that the idea has a formal reality since it is itself something insofar as it is an idea.

What does this mean, the formal reality of the idea? We will not be able to continue very much further at this level, we are going to have to put this aside. It's necessary just to add that this formal reality of the idea will be what Spinoza very often terms a certain degree of reality or of perfection that the idea has as such. As such, every idea has a certain degree of reality or perfection. Undoubtedly this degree of reality or perfection is connected to the object that it represents, but it is not to be confused with the object: that is, the formal reality of the idea, the thing the idea is or the degree of reality or perfection it possesses in itself, is its intrinsic character. The objective reality of the idea, that is the relation of the idea to the object it represents, is its extrinsic character; the extrinsic character and the intrinsic character may be fundamentally connected, but they are not the same thing. The idea of God and the idea of a frog have different objective realities, that is they do not represent the same thing, but at the same time they do not have the same intrinsic reality, they do not have the same formal reality, that is one of them—you sense this quite well—has a degree of reality infinitely greater than the other's. The idea of God has a formal reality, a degree of reality or intrinsic perfection infinitely greater than the idea of a frog, which is the idea of a finite thing.

If you understood that, you've understood almost everything. There is thus a formal reality of the idea, which is to say the idea is something in itself; this formal reality is its intrinsic character and is the degree of reality or perfection that it envelopes in itself.

Just now, when I defined the idea by its objective reality or its representational character, I opposed the idea immediately to the affect by saying that affect is precisely a mode of thought which has no representational character. Now I come to define the idea by the following: every idea is something, not only is it the idea of something but it is something, that is to say it has a degree of reality which is proper to it. Thus at this second level I must discover a fundamental difference between idea and affect. What happens concretely in life? Two things happen... And here, it's curious how Spinoza employs a geometrical method, you know that the *Ethics* is presented in the form of propositions, demonstrations, etc.... and yet at the same time, the more mathematical it is, the more extraordinarily concrete.

Everything I am saying and all these commentaries on the idea and the affect refer to books two and three of the *Ethics*. In books two and three, he makes for us a kind of geometrical portrait of our life which, it seems to me, is very very convincing. This geometrical portrait consists largely in telling us that our ideas succeed each other constantly: one idea chases another, one idea replaces another idea for example, in an instant. A perception is a certain type of idea, we will see why shortly. Just now I had my head turned there, I saw that corner of the room, I turn...it's another idea; I walk down a street where I know people, I say "Hello Pierre" and then I turn and say "Hello Paul." Or else things change: I look at the sun, and the sun little by little disappears and I find myself in the dark of night; it is thus a series of successions, of coexistences of ideas, successions of ideas. But what also happens? Our everyday life is not made up solely of ideas which succeed each other. Spinoza employs the term "automaton": we are, he says, spiritual *automata*, that is to say it is less we

who have the ideas than the ideas which are affirmed in us. What also happens, apart from this succession of ideas? There is something else, that is, something in me never ceases to vary. There is a regime of variation which is not the same thing as the succession of ideas themselves.

"Variations" must serve us for what we want to do, the trouble is that he doesn't employ the word... What is this variation? I take up my example again: in the street I run into Pierre, for whom I feel hostility, I pass by and say hello to Pierre, or perhaps I am afraid of him, and then I suddenly see Paul who is very very charming, and I say hello to Paul reassuredly and contentedly. Well. What is it? In part, succession of two ideas, the idea of Pierre and the idea of Paul; but there is something else: a variation also operates in me—on this point, Spinoza's words are very precise and I cite them: (variation) of my force of existing, or another word he employs as a synonym: *vis existendi*, the force of existing, or *potentia agendi*, the power [*puissance*] of acting, and these variations are perpetual.

I would say that for Spinoza there is a continuous variation— and this is what it means to exist—of the force of existing or of the power of acting.

How is this linked to my stupid example, which comes, however, from Spinoza, "Hello Pierre, hello Paul?" When I see Pierre who displeases me, an idea, the idea of Pierre, is given to me; when I see Paul who pleases me, the idea of Paul is given to me. Each one of these ideas in relation to me has a certain degree of reality or perfection. I would say that the idea of Paul, in relation to me, has more intrinsic perfection than the idea of Pierre since the idea of Paul contents me and the idea of Pierre upsets me. When the idea of Paul succeeds the idea of Pierre, it is agreeable to say that my force of existing or my power of acting is increased

or improved; when, on the contrary, the situation is reversed, when after having seen someone who made me joyful I then see someone who makes me sad, I say that my power of acting is inhibited or obstructed. At this level we don't even know anymore if we are still working within terminological conventions or if we are already moving into something much more concrete.

I would say that, to the extent that ideas succeed each other in us, each one having its own degree of perfection, its degree of reality or intrinsic perfection, the one who has these ideas, in this case me, never stops passing from one degree of perfection to another. In other words there is a continuous variation in the form of an increase-diminution-increase-diminution of the power of acting or the force of existing of someone according to the ideas which s/he has. Feel how beauty shines through this difficult exercise. This representation of existence already isn't bad, it really is existence in the street, it's necessary to imagine Spinoza strolling about, and he truly lives existence as this kind of continuous variation: to the extent that an idea replaces another, I never cease to pass from one degree of perfection to another, however miniscule the difference, and this kind of melodic line of continuous variation will define affect (*affectus*) in its correlation with ideas and at the same time in its difference in nature from ideas. We account for this difference in nature and this correlation. It's up to you to say whether it agrees with you or not. We have got an entirely more solid definition of *affectus*; *affectus* in Spinoza is variation (he is speaking through my mouth; he didn't say it this way because he died too young...), continuous variation of the force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas one has.

Consequently, in a very important text at the end of book three, which bears the title "general

definition of *affectus*," Spinoza tells us: above all do not believe that *affectus* as I conceive it depends upon a comparison of ideas. He means that the idea indeed has to be primary in relation to the affect, the idea and the affect are two things which differ in nature, the affect is not reducible to an intellectual comparison of ideas, affect is constituted by the lived transition or lived passage from one degree of perfection to another, insofar as this passage is determined by ideas; but in itself it does not consist in an idea, but rather constitutes affect. When I pass from the idea of Pierre to the idea of Paul, I say that my power of acting is increased; when I pass from the idea of Paul to the idea of Pierre, I say that my power of acting is diminished. Which comes down to saying that when I see Pierre, I am affected with sadness; when I see Paul, I am affected with joy. And on this melodic line of continuous variation constituted by the affect, Spinoza will assign two poles: joy-sadness, which for him will be the fundamental passions. Sadness will be any passion whatsoever which involves a diminution of my power of acting, and joy will be any passion involving an increase in my power of acting. This conception will allow Spinoza to become aware, for example, of a quite fundamental moral and political problem which will be his way of posing the political problem to himself: how does it happen that people who have power [*pouvoir*], in whatever domain, need to affect us in a sad way? The sad passions as necessary. Inspiring sad passions is necessary for the exercise of power. And Spinoza says, in the Theological-Political Treatise, that this is a profound point of connection between the despot and the priest—they both need the sadness of their subjects. Here you understand well that he does not take sadness in a vague sense, he takes sadness in the rigorous sense he knew to give it: sadness is the affect insofar as

it involves the diminution of my power of acting.

When I said, in my first attempt to differentiate idea and affect, that the affect is the mode of thought which represents nothing, I said in technical terms that this is not only a simple nominal definition, nor, if you prefer, only an external or extrinsic one.

In the second attempt, when I say on the other hand that the idea is that which has in itself an intrinsic reality, and the affect is the continuous variation or passage from one degree of reality to another or from one degree of perfection to another, we are no longer in the domain of so-called nominal definitions, here we already acquire a real definition, that is a definition which, at the same time as it defines the thing, also shows the very possibility of this thing. What is important is that you see how, according to Spinoza, we are fabricated as such spiritual *automata*. As such spiritual *automata*, within us there is the whole time of ideas which succeed one another, and in according with this succession of ideas, our power of acting or force of existing is increased or diminished in a continuous manner, on a continuous line, and this is what we call *affectus*, it's what we call existing.

*Affectus* is thus the continuous variation of someone's force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas that s/he has. But once again, "determined" does not mean that the variation is reducible to the ideas that one has, since the idea that I have does not account for its consequence, that is the fact that it increases my power of acting or on the contrary diminishes it in relation to the idea that I had at the time, and it's not a question of comparison, it's a question of a kind of slide, a fall or rise in the power of acting. No problem, no question.

For Spinoza there will be three sorts of ideas. For the moment, we will no longer speak of *affectus*, of

affect, since in effect the affect is determined by the ideas which one has, it's not reducible to the ideas one has, it is determined by the ideas one has; thus what is essential is to see which ideas are the ones which determine the affects, always keeping in mind the fact that the affect is not reducible to the ideas one has, it's absolutely irreducible. It's of another order. The three kinds of ideas that Spinoza distinguishes are affection (*affectio*) ideas; we'll see that *affectio*, as opposed to *affectus*, is a certain kind of idea. There would thus have been in the first place *affectio* ideas, secondly we arrive at the ideas that Spinoza calls notions, and thirdly, for a small number of us because it's very difficult, we come to have essence ideas. Before everything else there are these three sorts of ideas.

What is an affection (*affectio*)? I see your faces literally fall... yet this is all rather amusing. At first sight, and to stick to the letter of Spinoza's text, this has nothing to do with an idea, but it has nothing to do with an affect either. *Affectus* was determined as the continuous variation of the power of acting. An affection is what? In a first determination, an affection is the following: it's a state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body. What does this mean? "I feel the sun on me," or else "A ray of sunlight falls upon you"; it's an affection of your body. What is an affection of your body? Not the sun, but the action of the sun or the effect of the sun on you. In other words an effect, or the action that one body produces on another, once it's noted that Spinoza, on the basis of reasons from his Physics, does not believe in action at a distance, action always implies a contact, and is even a mixture of bodies. *Affectio* is a mixture of two bodies, one body which is said to act on another, and the other receives the trace of the first. Every mixture of bodies will be termed an affection. Spinoza infers from this that *affectio*, being

defined as a mixture of bodies, indicates the nature of the modified body, the nature of the affectionate or affected body, the affection indicates the nature of the affected body much more than it does the nature of the affecting body. He analyses his famous example, “I see the sun as a flat disk situated at a distance of three hundred feet.” That’s an *affectio*, or at very least the perception of an *affectio*. It’s clear that my perception of the sun indicates much more fully the constitution of my body, the way in which my body is constituted, than it does the way in which the sun is constituted. I perceive the sun in this fashion by virtue of the state of my visual perceptions. A fly will perceive the sun in another fashion.

In order to preserve the rigor of his terminology, Spinoza will say that an *affectio* indicates the nature of the modified body rather than the nature of the modifying body, and it envelopes the nature of the modifying body. I would say that the first sort of ideas for Spinoza is every mode of thought which represents an affection of the body... which is to say the mixture of one body with another body, or the trace of another body on my body will be termed an idea of affection. It’s in this sense that one could say that it is an affection-idea, the first type of ideas. And this first type of ideas answers to what Spinoza terms the first kind of knowledge [*connaissance*], the lowest.

Why is it the lowest? It’s obvious that it’s the lowest because these ideas of affection know [*connaissent*] things only by their effects: I feel the affection of the sun on me, the trace of the sun on me. It’s the effect of the sun on my body. But the causes, that is, that which is my body, that which is the body of the sun, and the relation between these two bodies such that the one produces a particular effect on the other rather than something else, of these things I know [*sais*] absolutely nothing.

Let’s take another example: “The sun melts wax and hardens clay.” These points are not nothing. They’re ideas of *affectio*. I see the wax which flows, and right beside it I see the clay which hardens; this is an affection of the wax and an affection of the clay, and I have an idea of these affections, I perceive effects. By virtue of what corporeal constitution does the clay harden under the sun’s action? As long as I remain in the perception of affection, I know nothing of it. One could say that affection-ideas are representations of effects without their causes, and it’s precisely these that Spinoza calls inadequate ideas. These are ideas of mixture separated from the causes of the mixture.

And in effect, the fact that, at the level of affection-ideas, we have only inadequate and confused ideas is well understood for what are affection-ideas in the order of life? And doubtless, alas, many among us who have not done enough philosophy live only like that. Once, only once, Spinoza employs a Latin word which is quite strange but very important: *occurus*. Literally this is the encounter. To the extent that I have affection-ideas I live chance encounters: I walk in the street, I see Pierre who does not please me, it’s the function of the constitution of his body and his soul and the constitution of my body and my soul. Someone who displeases me, body and soul, what does that mean? I would like to make you understand why Spinoza has had such a strong reputation for materialism even though he never ceases to speak of the mind and the soul, a reputation for atheism even though he never ceases to speak of God, it’s quite curious. One sees quite well why people have said that this is purely materialist. When I say “This one does not please me,” that means, literally, that the effect of his body on mine, the effect of his soul on mine affects me disagreeably, it is the mixture of bodies or mixture of souls. There is a noxious

mixture or a good mixture, as much at the level of the body as at that of the soul.

It's exactly like this: "I don't like cheese." What does that mean, "I don't like cheese"? That means that it mixes with my body in a manner by which I am modified disagreeably, it cannot mean anything else. Thus there isn't any reason to make up differences between spiritual sympathies and bodily relations. In "I don't like cheese" there is also an affair of the soul, but in "Pierre or Paul does not please me" there is also an affair of the body, all this is tantamount to the same thing. To put it simply, why is this a confused idea, this affection-idea, this mixture—it is inevitably confused and inadequate since I don't know absolutely, at this level, by virtue of what and how the body or the soul of Pierre is constituted, in what way it does not agree with mine, or in what way his body does not agree with mine. I can merely say that it does not agree with me, but by virtue of what constitution of the two bodies, of the affecting body and the affected body, of the body which acts and the body which is subjected, I can at this level know nothing. As Spinoza says, these are consequences separated from their premises or, if you prefer, it is a knowledge [*connaissance*] of effects independent of the knowledge of causes. Thus they are chance encounters. What can happen in chance encounters?

But what is a body? I'm not going to develop that, that may be the object of a special course. The theory of what a body or even a soul is, which comes down to the same thing, is found in book two of the *Ethics*. For Spinoza, the individuality of a body is defined by the following: it's when a certain composite or complex relation (I insist on that point, quite composite, very complex) of movement and rest is preserved through all the changes which affect the parts of the body. It's the permanence of a relation of movement and rest

through all the changes which affect all the parts, taken to infinity, of the body under consideration. You understand that a body is necessarily composite to infinity. My eye, for example, my eye and the relative constancy of my eye are defined by a certain relation of movement and rest through all the modifications of the diverse parts of my eye; but my eye itself, which already has an infinity of parts, is one part among the parts of my body, the eye in its turn is a part of the face and the face, in its turn, is a part of my body, etc....thus you have all sorts of relations which will be combined with one another to form an individuality of such and such degree. But at each one of these levels or degrees, individuality will be defined by a certain relation composed of movement and rest.

What can happen if my body is made this way, a certain relation of movement and rest which subsumes an infinity of parts? Two things can happen: I eat something that I like, or else another example, I eat something and collapse, poisoned. Literally speaking, in the one case I had a good encounter and in the other I had a bad one. All this is in the category of *occurus*. When I have a bad encounter, this means that the body which is mixed with mine destroys my constituent relation, or tends to destroy one of my subordinate relations. For example, I eat something and get a stomach ache which does not kill me; this has destroyed or inhibited, compromised one of my sub-relations, one of the relations that compose me. Then I eat something and I die. This has decomposed my composite relation, it has decomposed the complex relation which defined my individuality. It hasn't simply destroyed one of my subordinate relations which composed one of my sub-individualities, it has destroyed the characteristic relation of my body. And the opposite happens when I eat something that agrees with me.

Spinoza asks, what is evil? We find this in his correspondence, in the letters he sent to a young Dutchman who was as evil as can be. This Dutchman didn't like Spinoza and attacked him constantly, demanding of him, "Tell me what you think evil is." You know that at that time, letters were very important and philosophers sent many of them. Spinoza, who is very very good-natured, believes at first that this is a young man who wants to be taught and, little by little, he comes to understand that this is not the case at all, that the Dutchman wants his skin. From letter to letter, the good Christian Blyenberg's anger swells and he ends by saying to Spinoza, "But you are the devil!" Spinoza says that evil is not difficult, evil is a bad encounter. Encountering a body which mixes badly with your own. Mixing badly means mixing in conditions such that one of your subordinate or constituent relations is either threatened, compromised or even destroyed.

More and more gay, wanting to show that he is right, Spinoza analyzes the example of Adam in his own way. In the conditions in which we live, we seem absolutely condemned to have only one sort of idea, affection-ideas. By means of what miracle could one move away from these actions of bodies that do not wait for us in order to exist, how could one rise to a knowledge [*connaissance*] of causes? For the moment we see clearly that all that is given to us is ideas of affection, ideas of mixture. For the moment we see clearly that since birth we have been condemned to chance encounters, so things aren't going well. What does this imply? It already implies a fanatical reaction against Descartes since Spinoza will affirm strongly, in book two, that we can only know [*connaître*] ourselves and we can only know external bodies by the affections that the external bodies produce on our own. For those who can recall a little Descartes, this is the basic

anti-cartesian proposition since it excludes every apprehension of the thinking thing by itself, that is it excludes all possibility of the cogito. I only ever know the mixtures of bodies and I only know myself by way of the action of other bodies on me and by way of mixtures.

This is not only anti-cartesianism but also anti-Christianity, and why? Because one of the fundamental points of theology is the immediate perfection of the first created man, which is what's called in theology the theory of Adamic perfection. Before he sinned, Adam was created as perfect as he could be, so then the story of his sin is precisely the story of the Fall, but the Fall presupposes an Adam who is perfect insofar as he is a created thing. Spinoza finds this idea very amusing. His idea is that this isn't possible; supposing that one is given the idea of a first man, one can only be given this idea as that of the most powerless being, the most imperfect there could be since the first man can only exist in chance encounters and in the action of other bodies on his own. Thus, in supposing that Adam exists, he exists in a mode of absolute imperfection and inadequacy, he exists in the mode of a little baby who is given over to chance encounters, unless he is in a protected milieu—but I've said too much. What would that be, a protected milieu?

Evil is a bad encounter, which means what? Spinoza, in his correspondence with the Dutchman, tells him, "You always relate to me the example of God who forbade Adam from eating the apple, and you cite this as the example of a moral law. The first prohibition." Spinoza tells him, "But this is not at all what happens," and then Spinoza relates the entire story of Adam in the form of a poisoning and an intoxication. What happened in reality? God never forbade whatever it might be to Adam, He granted him a revelation.

Adam foresaw the noxious effect that the body of the apple would have on the constitution of his own body. In other words the apple is a poison for Adam. The body of the apple exists under such a characteristic relation, such is its constitution, that it can only act on Adam's body by decomposing the relation of Adam's body. And if he was wrong not to listen to God, this is not in the sense that he disobeyed in this matter, but that he didn't comprehend anything. This situation also exists among animals, certain of which have an instinct that turns them away from what is poisonous to them, but there are others which don't have this instinct. When I have an encounter such that the relation of the body which modifies me, which acts on me, is combined with my own relation, with the characteristic relation of my own body, what happens? I would say that my power of acting is increased; at least it is increased with regard to this particular relation. When on the contrary I have an encounter such that the characteristic relation of the body which modifies me compromises or destroys one of my relations, or my characteristic relation, I would say that my power of acting is diminished or even destroyed. We rediscover here our two fundamental affects or *affectus*: sadness and joy. To recapitulate everything at this level, as a function of ideas of affection which I have, there are two sorts of ideas of affection: the idea of an effect which benefits or favors my own characteristic relation, and second, the idea of an effect which compromises or destroys my own characteristic relation. To these two types of ideas of affection will correspond the two movements of variation in the *affectus*, the two poles of variation: in one case my power of acting is increased and I undergo an *affectus* of joy, and in the other case my power of acting is diminished and I undergo an *affectus* of sadness.

Spinoza will engender all the passions, in their

details, on the basis of these two fundamental affects: joy as an increase in the power of acting, sadness as a diminution or destruction of the power of acting. This comes down to saying that each thing, body or soul, is defined by a certain characteristic, complex relation, but I would also say that each thing, body or soul, is defined by a certain power [*pouvoir*] of being affected. Everything happens as if each one of us had a certain power of being affected. If you consider beasts, Spinoza will be firm in telling us that what counts among animals is not at all the genera or species; genera and species are absolutely confused notions, abstract ideas. What counts is the question, of what is a body capable? And thereby he sets out one of the most fundamental questions in his whole philosophy (before him there had been Hobbes and others) by saying that the only question is that we don't even know [*savoirs*] what a body is capable of, we prattle on about the soul and the mind and we don't know what a body can do. But a body must be defined by the ensemble of relations which compose it, or, what amounts to exactly the same thing, by its power of being affected. As long as you don't know what power a body has to be affected, as long as you learn like that, in chance encounters, you will not have the wise life, you will not have wisdom.

Knowing what you are capable of. This is not at all a moral question, but above all a physical question, as a question to the body and to the soul. A body has something fundamentally hidden: we could speak of the human species, the human genera, but this won't tell us what is capable of affecting our body, what is capable of destroying it. The only question is the power of being affected. What distinguishes a frog from an ape? It's not the specific or generic characteristics, Spinoza says, rather it's the fact that they are not capable of the same affections. Thus it will be necessary to make, for

each animal, veritable charts of affects, the affects of which a beast is capable. And likewise for men: the affects of which man is capable. We should notice at this moment that, depending on the culture, depending on the society, men are not all capable of the same affects.

It's well known that one method by which certain governments exterminated the Indians of South America was to have left, on trails the Indians traveled, clothing from influenza victims, clothing gathered in the infirmaries, because the Indians couldn't stand the affect influenza. No need even of machine guns, they dropped like flies. It's the same with us, in the conditions of forest life we risk not living very long. Thus the human genera, species or even race hasn't any importance, Spinoza will say, as long as you haven't made the list of affects of which someone is capable, in the strongest sense of the word "capable," comprising the maladies of which s/he is capable as well. It's obvious that the racehorse and the draft horse are the same species, two varieties of the same species, yet their affects are very different, their maladies are absolutely different, their capacities of being affected are completely different and, from this point of view, we must say that a draft horse is closer to an ox than to a racehorse. Thus an ethological chart of affects is quite different from a generic or specific determination of animals.

You see that the power of being affected can be fulfilled in two ways. When I am poisoned, my power of being affected is absolutely fulfilled, but it's fulfilled in such a way that my power of acting tends toward zero, which is to say it's inhibited. Inversely, when I undergo joy, that is to say when I encounter a body which combines its relation with my own, my power of being affected is equally fulfilled and my power of acting increases and tends toward...what?

In the case of a bad encounter, all my force of existing (*vis existendi*) is concentrated, tending toward the following goal: to invest the trace of the body which affected me in order to reject the effect of this body, so much so that my power of acting is diminished accordingly. These are very concrete things: you have a headache and you say, "I can't even read anymore"; this means that your force of existing invests the trace of the migraine so fully, it implies changes in one of your subordinate relations, it invests the trace of your migraine so fully that your power of acting is diminished accordingly. On the contrary, when you say, "I feel really good," and you are content, you are also content because bodies are mixed with you in proportions and under conditions which are favorable to your relation; at that moment the power of the body which affects you is combined with your own in such a way that your power of acting is increased. So although in the two cases your power of being affected will be completely actualized [*effectué*], it can be actualized in such a way that the power of acting diminishes to infinity or alternatively the power of acting increases to infinity.

To infinity? Is this true? Evidently not, since at our level the forces of existing, the powers [*pouvoirs*] of being affected and the powers [*puissances*] of acting are inevitably finite. Only God has an absolutely infinite power [*puissance*]. Right, but within certain limits I will not cease to pass via these variations of the power of acting as a function of the ideas I have, I will not cease to follow the line of continuous variation of the *affectus* as a function of affection-ideas that I have and the encounters that I have, in such a way that, at each instant, my power of being affected is completely actualized, completely fulfilled. Fulfilled, simply, in the mode of sadness or the mode of joy. Of course also both at once, since it's well understood that,

in the sub-relations which compose us, a part of ourselves can be composed of sadness and another part of ourselves can be composed of joy. There are local sadnesses and local joys. For example, Spinoza gives the following definition of tickling: a local joy; this does not mean that everything is joy in the tickling, it can be a joy of a nature that implies a coexistent irritation of another nature, an irritation which is sadness: my power of being affected tends to be exceeded. Nothing that exceeds his/her power of being affected is good for a person. A power of being affected is really an intensity or threshold of intensity.

What Spinoza really wants to do is to define the essence of someone in an intensive fashion as an intensive quantity. As long as you don't know your intensities you risk the bad encounter and you will have to say, it's beautiful, both the excess and the immoderation... no immoderation at all, there's only failure, nothing other than failure. Advice for overdoses. This is precisely the phenomenon of the power of being affected which is exceeded in a total destruction.

Certainly in my generation, on average, we were much more cultured or trained in philosophy, when we used to do it, and on the other hand we had a very striking kind of lack of culture in other domains, in music, painting, cinema.

I have the impression that for many among you the relation has changed, that is to say that you know absolutely nothing, nothing in philosophy and you know, or rather you have a concrete grasp of things like a color, you know what a sound is or what an image is. A philosophy is a kind of synthesizer of concepts, creating a concept is not at all ideological. A concept is a created thing.

What I've defined up to now is solely the increase and diminution of the power of acting, and whether the power of acting increases or

diminishes, the corresponding affect (*affectus*) is always a passion. Whether it be a joy which increases my power of acting or a sadness which diminishes my power of acting, in both cases these are passions: joyful passions or sad passions. Yet again Spinoza denounces a plot in the universe of those who are interested in affecting us with sad passions. The priest has need of the sadness of his subjects, he needs these subjects to feel themselves guilty. The auto-affects or active affects assume that we possess our power of acting and that, on such and such a point, we have left the domain of the passions in order to enter the domain of actions. This is what remains for us to see.

How could we leave behind affection-ideas, how could we leave behind the passive affects which consist in increase or diminution of our power of acting, how could we leave behind the world of inadequate ideas once we're told that our condition seems to condemn us strictly to this world. On that score we must read the *Ethics* as preparing a kind of dramatic turn. It's going to speak to us of active affects where there are no longer passions, where the power of acting is conquered instead of passing by all these continuous variations. Here, there's a very strict point. There's a fundamental difference between Ethics and Morality. Spinoza doesn't make up a morality, for a very simple reason: he never asks what we must do, he always asks what we are capable of, what's in our power, ethics is a problem of power, never a problem of duty. In this sense Spinoza is profoundly immoral. Regarding the moral problem, good and evil, he has a happy nature because he doesn't even comprehend what this means. What he comprehends are good encounters, bad encounters, increases and diminutions of power. Thus he makes an ethics and not at all a morality. This is why he so struck Nietzsche.

We are completely enclosed in this world of affection-ideas and these affective continuous variations of joy and sadness, so sometimes my power of acting increases, okay, sometimes it diminishes; but whether it increases or diminishes I remain within passion because, in both cases, I do not possess it: I'm still separated from my power of acting. So when my power of acting increases, it means that I am then relatively less separated, and inversely, but I am still formally separated from my power of acting, I do not possess it. In other words, I am not the cause of my own affects, and since I'm not the cause of my own affects, they are produced in me by something else: I am therefore passive, I'm in the world of passion.

But there are notion-ideas and essence-ideas. Already at the level of notion-ideas a kind of escape from this world is going to appear. One is completely smothered, enclosed in a world of absolute impotence, even when my power of acting increases it's on a segment of variation, nothing guarantees me that, at the street corner, I'm not going to receive a great blow to the head and that my power of acting is going to fall again.

You recall that an affection-idea is a mixture, that is to say the idea of an effect of a body on mine. A notion-idea no longer concerns the effect of another body on mine, it's an idea which concerns and which has for its object the agreement or disagreement of the characteristic relations between two bodies. If there is such an idea—we don't know yet if there is one, but we can always define something even if it means concluding that it can't exist—it's what we will call a nominal definition. I would say that the nominal definition of the notion is that it's an idea which, instead of representing the effect of a body on another, that is to say the mixture of two bodies, represents the internal agreement or disagreement of the characteristic

relations of the two bodies.

An example: if I knew enough about the characteristic relation of the body named arsenic and the characteristic relation of the human body, I could form a notion of the disagreement of these two relations to the point that the arsenic, under its characteristic relation, destroys the characteristic relation of my body. I am poisoned, I die.

You see that the notion, differing from the idea of affection, instead of being the seizure of the extrinsic relation of one body with another or the effect of one body on another, the notion is raised to the comprehension of the cause, that is if the mixture has such and such effect, this is by virtue of the nature of the relation of the two bodies considered and of the manner in which the relation of one of the bodies is combined with the relation of the other body. There is always a composition of relations. When I am poisoned, the body of arsenic has induced the parts of my body to enter into a relation other than the one which characterizes me. At that moment, the parts of my body enter into a new relation induced by the arsenic, which is perfectly combined with the arsenic; the arsenic is happy since it feeds on me. The arsenic undergoes a joyful passion because, as Spinoza says so well, each body has a soul. Thus the arsenic is joyful, but me, evidently I'm not. It has induced the parts of my body to enter into a relation which is combined with its own, the arsenic's. Me, I'm sad, I'm heading toward death. You see that the notion, if one can reach it, is a formidable thing.

We are not far from an analytical geometry. A notion is not at all abstract, it's quite concrete: this body here, that body there. If I had the characteristic relation of the soul and of the body of that which I say displeases me, in relation to my characteristic relation in myself, I would comprehend everything, I would know by causes instead

of knowing only by effects separated from their causes. At that moment I would have an adequate idea. Just as if I understood why someone pleases me. I took as an example digestive relations, but we wouldn't have to change a line for amorous relations. It's not at all that Spinoza conceived love like he conceived digestion, he conceived digestion like love as well. Take a couple à la Strindberg, this kind of decomposition of relations and then they are recombined in order to begin again. What is this continuous variation of the *affectus*, and how does a certain disagreement agree with certain people? Why can certain people live only in a certain indefinitely repeated domestic quarrel? They emerge from it as if it had been a bath of cool water for them.

You understand the difference between a notion-idea and an affection-idea. A notion-idea is inevitably adequate since it's a knowledge [*connaissance*] by causes. Spinoza not only uses the term notion here to qualify this second sort of idea, but he also uses the term common notion. The word is quite ambiguous: does it mean common to all minds? Yes and no, it's very meticulous in Spinoza. In any case, don't ever confuse a common notion and an abstraction. He always defines a common notion like this: it's the idea of something which is common to all bodies or to several bodies—at least two—and which is common to the whole and to the part. Therefore there surely are common notions which are common to all minds, but they're common to all minds only to the extent that they are first the idea of something which is common to all bodies. Therefore these are not at all abstract notions. What is common to all bodies? For example, being in movement or at rest. Movement and rest will be objects of notions said to be common to all bodies. Therefore there are common notions which designate something common to all bodies.

There are also common notions which designate something common to two bodies or to two souls, for example, someone I love. Once again the common notion is not abstract, it has nothing to do with species or genera, it's actually the statement of what is common to several bodies or to all bodies; or, since there's no single body which is not itself made up of several, one can say that there are common things or common notions in each body. Hence we fall back upon the question: how can one leave this situation which condemned us to mixtures?

Here Spinoza's texts are very complicated. One can only conceive this departure in the following manner: broadly speaking, when I am affected in chance encounters, either I am affected with sadness or with joy. When I am affected with sadness, my power of acting diminishes, which is to say that I am further separated from this power. When I am affected with joy, it increases, which is to say that I am less separated from this power. Good. If you consider yourself as affected with sadness, I believe that everything is wretched, there is no longer an exit for one simple reason: nothing in sadness, which diminishes your power of acting, can induce you from within sadness to form a notion common to something which would be common to the bodies which affect you with sadness and to your own. For one very simple reason, that the body which affects you with sadness only affects you with sadness to the extent that it affects you in a relation which does not agree with your own. Spinoza means something very simple, that sadness makes no one intelligent. In sadness one is wretched. It's for this reason that the powers-that-be [*pouvoirs*] need subjects to be sad. Agony has never been a cultural game of intelligence or vivacity. As long as you have a sad affect, a body acts on yours, a soul acts on yours in conditions

and in a relation which do not agree with yours. At that point, nothing in sadness can induce you to form the common notion, that is to say the idea of a something in common between two bodies and two souls. What he's saying is full of wisdom. This is why thinking of death is the most base thing. He is opposed to the whole philosophical tradition which is a meditation on death. His formula is that philosophy is a meditation on life and not on death. Obviously, because death is always a bad encounter.

Another case. You are affected with joy. Your power of acting is increased, this doesn't mean that you possess it yet, but the fact that you are affected with joy signifies and indicates that the body or soul which affects you thus affects you in a relation which is combined with your own and which is combined with your own, and that goes for the formula of love and the digestive formula. In an affect of joy, therefore, the body which affects you is indicated as combining its relation with your own and not as its relation decomposing your own. At that point, something induces you to form a notion of what is common to the body which affects you and to your own body, to the soul which affects you and to your own soul. In this sense joy makes one intelligent. There we feel that it's a curious thing, because, geometrical method or not, we grant him everything, he can demonstrate it; but there is an obvious appeal to a kind of lived experience. There's an obvious appeal to way of perceiving, and even more, to a way of living. It's necessary to already have such a hatred of sad passions, the list of sad passions in Spinoza is infinite, he goes so far as to say that every idea of reward envelopes a sad passion, every idea of security envelopes a sad passion, every idea of pride, guilt. It's one of the most marvelous moments in the *Ethics*. The affects of joy are like a springboard,

they make us pass through something that we would never have been able to pass if there had only been sadnesses. He solicits us to form the idea of what is common to the affecting body and the affected body. This can fail, but it can also succeed and I become intelligent.

Someone who becomes good in Latin at the same time that he becomes a lover ... this is seen in the classroom. What's it connected to? How does someone make progress? One never makes progress on a homogeneous line, something here makes us make progress down there, as if a small joy here had released a trigger. Anew, the necessity of a map: what happened there that unblocked this here? A small joy precipitates us into a world of concrete ideas which sweeps out the sad affects or which is in the process of struggling, all of this makes up part of the continuous variation. But at the same time, this joy propels us somehow beyond the continuous variation, it makes us acquire at least the potentiality of a common notion. It's necessary to conceive this very concretely, these are quite local things. If you succeed in forming a common notion, at whatever point you yourself have a relation with such a person or such an animal, you say: I've finally understood something, I am less stupid than yesterday. The "I've understood" that one says is sometimes the moment in which you formed a common notion. You formed it quite locally, it didn't give you all the common notions. Spinoza doesn't think at all like a rationalist, among the rationalists there is the world of reason and there are the ideas. If you have one, obviously you have all of them: you are reasonable. Spinoza thinks that being reasonable, or being wise, is a problem of becoming, which changes in a singular fashion the contents of the concept of reason. It's necessary to know the encounters which agree with you. No one could ever say that it's good for her/him when

something exceeds her/his power of being affected. The most beautiful thing is to live on the edges, at the limit of her/ his own power of being affected, on the condition that this be the joyful limit since there is the limit of joy and the limit of sadness; but everything which exceeds your power of being affected is ugly. Relatively ugly: what's good for flies is not inevitably good for you... There is no longer any abstract notion, there isn't any formula which is good for man in general. What counts is what your power is for you. Lawrence said a directly Spinozist thing: an intensity which exceeds your power of being affected is bad (posthumous writings). It's inevitable: a blue that is too intense for my eyes will not make me say it's beautiful, it will perhaps be beautiful for someone else. There's good for all, you tell me...Yes, because the powers of being affected are combined.

To assume that there was a power of being affected which defined the power of being affected of the whole universe is quite possible since all relations are combined to infinity, but not in just any order. My relation doesn't combine with that of arsenic, but what can this do? Obviously it does a lot to me, but at this moment the parts of my body enter again into a new relation which is combined with that of the arsenic. It's necessary to know in what order the relations are combined. But if we knew in what order the relations of the whole universe are combined, we could define a power of being affected of the whole universe, which would be the cosmos, the world insofar as it's a body or a soul. At this moment the whole world is only one single body following the order of relations which are combined. At this moment you have, to speak precisely, a universal power of being affected: God, who is the whole universe insofar as He is its cause, has by nature a universal power of being affected. It's useless to say that he's in the process of using

the idea of God in a strange manner.

You undergo a joy, you feel that this joy concerns you, that it concerns something important regarding your principal relations, your characteristic relations. Here then it must serve you as a springboard, you form the notion-idea: in what do the body which affects me and my own body agree? In what do the soul which affects me and my own soul agree, from the point of view of the composition of their relations, and no longer from the point of view of their chance encounters. You do the opposite operation from what is generally done. Generally people tend to summarize their unhappinesses, this is where neurosis or depression begins, when we set out to figure the totals; oh shit, there's this and there's that. Spinoza proposes the opposite: instead of summarizing of our sadnesses, taking a local point of departure on a joy on the condition that we feel that it truly concerns us. On that point one forms the common notion, on that point one tries to win locally, to open up this joy. It's the labor of life. One tries to diminish the respective share of sadnesses in relation to the respective share of a joy, and one attempts the following tremendous coup: one is sufficiently assured of common notions which refer to relations of agreement between such and such body and my own, one will attempt then to apply the same method to sadness, but one cannot do it on the basis of sadness, that is to say one will attempt to form common notions by which one will arrive at a comprehension of the vital manner in which such and such body disagrees and no longer agrees. That becomes, no longer a continuous variation, that becomes a bell curve.

You leave joyful passions, the increase in the power of acting; you make use of them to form common notions of a first type, the notion of what there was in common between the body which

affected me with joy and my own body, you open up to a maximum your living common notions and you descend once again toward sadness, this time with common notions that you form in order to comprehend in what way such a body disagrees with your own, such a soul disagrees with your own.

At this moment you can already say that you are within the adequate idea since, in effect, you have passed into the knowledge of causes. You can already say that you are within philosophy. One single thing counts, the way of living. One single thing counts, the meditation on life, and far from being a meditation on death it's rather the operation which consists in making death only finally affect the proportion that is relatively the smallest in me, that is, living it as a bad encounter. It's simply well known that, to the extent that a body is tired, the probabilities of bad encounters increase. It's a common notion, a common notion of disagreement. As long as I'm young, death is truly something which comes from outside, it's truly an extrinsic accident, except in the case of an internal malady. There is no common notion, on the other hand it's true that when a body ages, its power of acting diminishes: I can no longer do what I could still do yesterday; this, this fascinates me in aging, this kind of diminution of the power of acting. What is a clown, vitally speaking? It's precisely the type that does not accept aging, he doesn't know how to age quickly enough. It's not necessary to age too quickly because there's also another way of being a clown: acting the old man. The more one ages the less one wants to have bad encounters, but when one is young one leaps into the risk of the bad encounter. The type which, to the extent that his power of acting diminishes as a function of aging, his power of being affected varies, doesn't do it, continues to act the young man, is fascinating.

It's very sad. There's a fascinating passage in one of Fitzgerald's novels (the water-ski episode [in *Tender is the Night*]), there are ten pages of total beauty on not knowing how to age...You know the spectacles which are not uncomfortable for the spectators themselves.

Knowing how to age is arriving at the moment when the common notions must make you comprehend in what way things and other bodies disagree with your own. Then inevitably it will be necessary to find a new grace which will be that of your age, above all not clinging to youth. It's a kind of wisdom. It's not the good health which makes one say "Live life as you please," it's no longer the will to cling to life. Spinoza knew admirably well how to die, but he knew very well what he was capable of, he knew how to say "Piss off" [*merde*] to the other philosophers. Leibniz came to him to steal bits of manuscript in order to say afterward that they were his own. There are very curious stories about this, he was a dangerous man, Leibniz. I end by saying that at this second level, one attains the notion-idea where relations are combined, and once again this is not abstract since I've tried to say that it's an extraordinarily vital enterprise. One has left the passions behind. One has acquired formal possession of the power of acting. The formation of notions, which are not abstract ideas, which are literally rules of life, gives me possession of the power of acting. The common notions are the second kind of knowledge [*connaissance*]. In order to understand the third it's necessary already to understand the second. Only Spinoza has entered into the third kind. Above the common notions... You've noticed that while the common notions are not abstract, they are collective, they always refer to a multiplicity, but they're no less individual for that. They are the ways in which such and such bodies agree, at the limit they are the ways in

which all bodies agree, but at that moment it's the whole world which is an individuality. Thus the common notions are always individual.

Beyond even the compositions of relations, beyond the internal agreements which define the common notions, there are the singular essences. What's the difference? It would be necessary to say that, at the limit, the relation and relations which characterize me express my singular essence, but nevertheless it's not the same thing. Why? Because the relation which characterizes me...what I'm saying here is not entirely in the text, but it's practically there... The common notions or the relations which characterize me still concern the extensive parts of my body. My body is composed of an infinity of parts extended to the infinite, and these parts enter into such and such relations which correspond to my essence but are not confused with my essence, for the relations which characterize me are still rules under which are associated, in movement and at rest, the extended parts of my body. Whereas the singular essence is a degree of power [*puissance*], that is to say these are my thresholds of intensity.

Between the lowest and the highest, between my birth and my death, these are my intensive thresholds. What Spinoza calls singular essence, it seems to me, is an intensive quality, as if each one of us were defined by a kind of complex of intensities which refers to her/his essence, and also of relations which regulate the extended parts, the extensive parts. So that, when I have knowledge [*connaissance*] of notions, that is to say of relations of movement and rest which regulate the agreement or disagreement of bodies from the point of view of their extended parts, from the point of view of their extension, I don't yet have full possession of my essence to the extent that it is intensity. And God, what's that? When Spinoza defines God

as absolutely infinite power [*puissance*], he expresses himself well. All the terms that he explicitly employs: degree, which in Latin is *gradus*, refers to a long tradition in medieval philosophy. *Gradus* is the intensive quantity, in opposition to or differing from the extensive parts. Thus it would be necessary to conceive the singular essence of each one as this kind of intensity, or limit of intensity. It's singular because, whether it be our community of genera or species, we are all human for example, yet none of us has the same threshold.

...

On the project of a pure ontology, how is it that Spinoza calls this pure ontology an Ethics? It would be by an accumulation of traits that we realize that it was [a pure ontology], although he calls it an Ethics. We saw the general atmosphere of this link between an Ontology and an Ethics with the suspicion that an ethics is something that has nothing to do with morality. And why do we have a suspicion of the link that makes this pure Ontology take the name of Ethics? We have seen it. Spinoza's pure Ontology is presented as the absolutely infinite single position. Consequently, the beings (*étants*), this absolutely infinite single substance, is being. Being (*être*) as being. Consequently, the beings (*étants*) will not be Beings (*êtres*), they will be what Spinoza calls modes, the modes of absolutely infinite substance. And a mode is what? It is a manner of being. The beings (*étants*) or what exists (*existants*) are not Beings (*êtres*), there is Being only in the form of absolutely infinite substance. Consequently, we who are beings (*étants*), we who are what exists (*existants*), we will not be Beings (*êtres*), we will be manners of Being (*être*) of this substance. And if I ask myself what is the most immediate sense of the word ethics, in what way is

it already other than morality, well, ethics is better known to us today under another name, the word ethology.

When one speaks of an ethology in connection with animals, or in connection with man, what is it a matter of? Ethology in the most rudimentary sense is a practical science, of what? A practical science of the manners of being. The manner of being is precisely the state of beings (*étants*), of what exists (*existants*), from the point of view of a pure ontology.

In what way is it already different from a morality? We are trying to compose a kind of landscape which would be the landscape of ontology. We are manners of Being in Being, that is the object of an ethics, i.e. an ethology. In a morality, on the contrary, what is it a matter of? There are two things which are fundamentally welded together. It is a matter of essence and values. A morality recalls us to essence, i.e. our essence, and which is recalled to us by values. It is not the point of view of Being. I do not believe that a morality can be made from the point of view of an ontology. Why? Because morality always implies something superior to Being; what is superior to Being is something which plays the role of the One, of the Good, it is the One superior to Being. Indeed, morality is the enterprise of judging not only all that is, but Being itself. Now one can only judge Being in the name of an authority higher than Being.

In what way, in a morality, is it a matter of essence and values? What is in question in a morality is our essence. What is our essence? In a morality it is always a matter of realising the essence. This implies that the essence is in a state where it is not necessarily realised, that implies that we have an essence. It is not obvious that there is an essence of man. But it is quite necessary for morality to speak and to give us orders in the name of an essence.

If we are given orders in the name of an essence, it is because this essence is not realised by itself. It will be said that this essence is in man potentially (*en puissance*). What is the essence of man is potentially in man, from the point of view of a morality? It is well known, the essence of man is to be a reasonable animal. Aristotle: Man is a reasonable animal. The essence is what the thing is, reasonable animal is the essence of man. Even if man is in essence a reasonable animal, he does not cease to behave in an unreasonable way. How does that happen? It is because the essence of man, as such, is not necessarily realised. Why? Because man is not pure reason, and then there are accidents, he doesn't cease being diverted. The whole classical conception of man consists in inviting him to agree with his essence because this essence is like a potentiality, which is not necessarily realised, and morality is the process of the realization of the human essence.

Now, how can this essence which is only potential, be realized? By morality. To say that it is to be realized by morality is to say that it must be taken for an end. The essence of man must be taken for an end by existing man. Therefore, to behave in a reasonable way, i.e. to carry out the essence is the task of morality. Now the essence taken as an end is value. Note that the moral vision of the world is made of essence. The essence is only potential, it is necessary to realise the essence, that will be done insofar as the essence is taken for an end, and the values ensure the realization of the essence. It is this ensemble which I would call morality.

In an ethical world, let us try to switch over, there is no longer any of this. What will they say to us in an Ethics? We will find nothing. It is another landscape. Spinoza very often speaks about essence, but for him, essence is never the essence of man. Essence is always a singular determination.

There is the essence of this man, and of that man, there is no essence of man. He will himself say that the general essences or the abstract essences of the type the essence of man, are confused ideas. There is no general idea in an Ethics. There is you, this one, that one, there are singularities. The word essence is quite likely to change sense. When he speaks about essence, what interests him is not the essence, what interests him is existence and what exists.

In other words, what is can only be put in relation to Being at the level of existence, and not at the level of essence.

At this level, there is already an existentialism in Spinoza. It is thus not a matter of an essence of man, in Spinoza, it is not the question of an essence of man that would only be potential and which morality would be assigned to realise, it is about something altogether different. You recognize an ethics in what he, who speaks to you about ethics, tells you of two things in one. He is interested in existing things (*existants*) in their singularity. Sometimes, he is going to tell you, between what exists there is a distinction, a quantitative difference in existence; what exists can be considered on a kind of quantitative scale according to which they are more or less... More or less what? We are going see. Not at all an essence common to several things, but a quantitative distinction of more and less between existing things, that is Ethics.

In addition, the same discourse of an ethics is pursued by saying that there is also a qualitative opposition between modes of existence. Two criteria of ethics, in other words, the quantitative distinction of existing things, and the qualitative opposition of modes of existence, the qualitative polarization of modes of existence, will be the two ways in which existing things are in being.

These are going to be the links of Ethics with

Ontology. Existing things or the beings are in Being from two simultaneous points of view, from the point of view of a qualitative opposition of the modes of existence, and from the point of view of a quantitative scale of existing things. It is completely the world of immanence. Why?

It is the world of immanence because you see at which point it is different from the world of moral values such as I have just defined them, the moral values being precisely this kind of tension between the essence to be realized and the realization of the essence.

I would say that value is exactly the essence taken as an end.

That is the moral world. The completion of the moral world, one can say that it is indeed in Kant that a supposed human essence is taken for an end, in a kind of pure act.

Ethics is not that at all, they are like two absolutely different worlds. What can Spinoza have to say to the others. Nothing.

It would be a matter of showing all that concretely. In a morality, you always have the following operation: you do something, you say something, you judge it yourself. It is the system of judgement. Morality is the system of judgement. Of double judgement, you judge yourself and you are judged. Those who have the taste for morality are those who have the taste for judgement. Judging always implies an authority superior to Being, it always implies something superior to an ontology. It always implies one more than Being, the Good which makes Being and which makes action, it is the Good superior to Being, it is the One. Value expresses this authority superior to Being. Therefore, values are the fundamental element of the system of judgement. Therefore, you are always referred to this authority superior to Being for judging.

In an ethics, it is completely different, you do not judge. In a certain manner, you say: whatever you do, you will only ever have what you deserve. Somebody says or does something, you do not relate it to values. You ask yourself how is that possible? How is this possible in an internal way? In other words, you relate the thing or the statement to the mode of existence that it implies, that it envelops in itself. How must it be in order to say that? Which manner of Being does this imply? You seek the enveloped modes of existence, and not the transcendent values. It is the operation of immanence.

The point of view of an ethics is: of what are you capable, what can you do? Hence a return to this sort of cry of Spinoza's: what can a body do? We never know in advance what a body can do. We never know how we're organized and how the modes of existence are enveloped in somebody.

Spinoza explains very well such and such a body, it is never whatever body, it is what you can do, you.

My hypothesis is that the discourse of ethics has two characteristics: it tells us that beings (*étants*) have a quantitative distinction of more and less, and in addition, it also tells us that the modes of existence have a qualitative polarity, roughly, there are two great modes of existence. What are they?

When it is suggested to us that, between you and me, between two persons, between a person and an animal, between an animal and a thing, there is ethically, that is ontologically, only a quantitative distinction, what quantity is involved? When it is suggested to us that what makes the most profound of our singularities is something quantitative, what does that really mean? Fichte and Schelling developed a very interesting theory of individuation that we sum up under the name quantitative individuation. If things are

individuated quantitatively, we vaguely understand. What quantity? It is a matter of defining people, things, animals, anything by what each one can do.

People, things, animals distinguish themselves by what they can do (i.e. they can't do the same thing). What is it that I can do? Never would a moralist define man by what he can do, a moralist defines man by what he is, by what he is by right. So, a moralist defines man as a reasonable animal. It is essence. Spinoza never defines man as a reasonable animal, he defines man by what he can do, body and soul. If I say that reasonable, is not the essence of man, but it is something that man can do, it changes so that unreasonable is also something that man can do. To be mad is also a part of the power (*pouvoir*) of man. At the level of an animal, we see the problem clearly. If you take what is called natural history, it has its foundation in Aristotle. It defines the animal by what the animal is. In its fundamental ambition, it is a matter of what the animal is. What is a vertebrate, what is a fish, and Aristotle's natural history is full of this search for the essence. In what is called the animal classifications, one will define the animal above all, whenever possible, by its essence, i.e. by what it is. Imagine these sorts who arrive and who proceed completely otherwise: they are interested in what the thing or the animal can do. They are going to make a kind of register of the powers (*pouvoirs*) of the animal. Those there can fly, this here eats grass, that other eats meat. The alimentary regime, you sense that it is about the modes of existence. An inanimate thing too, what can it do, the diamond, what can it do? That is, of what tests is it capable? What does it support? What does it do? A camel can go without drinking for a long time. It is a passion of the camel. We define things by what they can do, it opens up forms of experimentation.

It is a whole exploration of things, it doesn't have anything to do with essence. It is necessary to see people as small packets of power (*pouvoir*). I am making a kind of description of what people can do.

From the point of view of an ethics, all that exists, all beings (*étants*) are related to a quantitative scale which is that of power (*puissance*). They have more or less power. This differentiable quantity is power. The ethical discourse will not cease to speak to us, not of essences, it doesn't believe in essences, it speaks to us only of power (*puissance*), that is, the actions and passions of which something is capable. Not what the thing is, but what it is capable of supporting and capable of doing. And if there is no general essence, it is because, at this level of power (*puissance*), everything is singular. We don't know in advance even though the essence tells us what a set of things is. Ethics tells us nothing, it cannot know. One fish cannot do what the next fish can. There will thus be an infinite differentiation of the quantity of power (*puissance*) according to what exists. Things receive a quantitative distinction because they are related to the scale of power (*puissance*).

When, well after Spinoza, Nietzsche will launch the concept of will to power (*volonté de puissance*), I am not saying that he intends to say this, but above all, it means this. And we cannot understand anything in Nietzsche if we believe that it is the operation by which each of us would tend towards power (*puissance*). Power is not what I want, by definition, it is what I have. I have this or that power and it is this that situates me in the quantitative scale of Beings. Making power the object of the will is a misunderstanding, it is just the opposite. It is according to power that I have, that I want this or that. The will to power means that you will define things, men, animals according to

the effective power that they have. Once again, it is the question: What can a body do? This is very different from the moral question: What must you do by virtue of your essence? It is: What can you do, you, by virtue of your power (*puissance*)? There you have it, therefore, that power (*puissance*) constitutes the quantitative scale of Beings. It is the quantity of power (*puissance*) which distinguishes one existing thing (*éxistant*) from another existing thing (*éxistant*).

Spinoza very often said that essence is power (*puissance*). Understand the philosophical coup that he is in the process of making.

## Study Guide: **Power, Joy, Sadness**

### *Summary & Reflection*

Even as a reduction, you can apply this thought to anything. The point is that every body is constantly undergoing a shifting state of power, and most of that has to do with external affects. There is nothing good or bad, there is no evil, it is simply the case that there are some bodies that don't mix well, or that affect us with sadness, and some that affect us with joy.

If we can begin to understand this, we can move through many of our sad affects (anger, jealousy, melancholy) without doing the story-telling and meaning-making that so often becomes a negative spiral. We can understand the moment we are in simply as a mixture that reduces our power to act in the world. We can refocus, and ask: what do we have control over? What can we think, or what can we do, that would increase our power? The critical part here is being able to think about it: to take one step back to observe what is happening. to remember our encounters, and to evaluate which ones increase our power.

In the realm of radical politics, we often celebrate rage. We imagine that anger at injustice motivates us and gives us strength to confront that injustice. And perhaps it does to a certain extent. I can imagine moments when my rage transforms me. I see the police beating a friend, and I can only scream at them. My vision narrows, I lose sight of what is around me, I feel tears and sweat pouring down my face. I am only capable of screaming; my power of acting has been reduced to a single activity, my power of being affected is likewise reduced. I don't notice the friend tapping me on the

shoulder telling me it's time to go, I don't notice the police line closing in, I don't notice the fascists behind me moving in. And all this rage does nothing; I can't act, I get caught in this cycle. I don't ask myself—what am I capable of in this situation? I don't ask—how can I increase my power to act in this situation? Or, for that matter, how can I affect my enemy sadly? How can I reduce their power to act?

Here is a parallel example. I see the police beating a friend; I am surrounded by friends who affect me joyfully. By this I mean that perhaps I have been in the streets with them before, I trust them, they make me feel powerful. I had an experience in the past that taught me I was capable of more than I knew. Together we assess the situation, we know there are enough of us to wrestle our friend away from the police, we run away, and as we do we feel our power increasing. We are affected joyfully. Perhaps rage played a place in this, but more than rage was the way we affected one another with joy. Crucially, we were able to act because we had acted together in the past, because we already had this joyful affection, this memory. These may be basic examples, but I think that the lesson and the framework holds.

If we try to pull this into the realm of strategy, we can say that all that exists is bodies with different degrees of power to act. And we can say: we want to increase our power to act, and we want to decrease the power of our adversaries to act. It is important here to remember the Spinozan idea of *power to act*—we are not just concerned with acting. We may act when the police murder someone, but if we always act in the same way, we're not necessarily increasing our *power to act*. And likewise, we don't necessarily need to cut off our adversaries' *actions*, but to reduce their *power to act*, or the number of options they have. If we affect

them sadly such that they act without thinking, or such that they can only act in one way, then we have won.

### *Key Concepts & Terms:*

- **Being/existence:** For Spinoza there is only one substance; everything that exists is simply modifications of that substance. This can be engaged with ontologically or practically. On a practical level, we can imagine that there is simply energy (even according to contemporary understandings of physics). Energy behaves in different ways: It becomes matter, combines into different elements, is combined into stars and galaxies and worlds and human bodies. The take-away is that there is no essential difference between different types of things. There is no human-ness that is distinct and separate from fish-ness. Another way to say this would be: There is as much variation within classes or species as between them. *Life is an ongoing procession of ideas that move through us and variations (affects) that change our power of acting. Variations are perpetual!*
- **Power** is also framed as perfection, or force of existing, or power of acting. Every body has a certain power to act and a certain power to be affected. That power is constantly changing. For Spinoza, the degree of power of a thing is measured by how many things it can affect at once, and how many things it can be affected by at once.
- In the text, we find **affection** defined as: “the state of a body insofar as it is subject

to the action of another body”. Consider two bodies mixing at a point of contact. The affection is the change in the body being acted on, which always has more to do with the body being affected than the body acting. In Deleuze’s example (which is also Spinoza’s), I feel the sun shining on me, and it warms my body, but that affection has more to do with me than with the sun. Another example: I see flashing blue and red lights and my heart races, my breathing speeds up, I feel fear and anxiety. That has to do more with me, and with my past experiences, than any quality of blue and red lights. A powerful politician who is used to being escorted by a police caravan might feel a sense of power and pleasure from seeing the same lights.

- **Affect** is the variation of my power of existing, or my power of acting. I can be affected with joy or with sadness. A joyful affect increases my power of acting, of being affected; a sad affect decreases my power of acting, of being affected. We can think about this metaphysically, but it is quite literal. Deleuze gives the example of poison: Arsenic affects us sadly. That doesn’t mean that arsenic is bad, it doesn’t mean anything about arsenic. It just means that if I eat arsenic, my power of acting will diminish (usually fatally). We can apply the same ideas to whatever arsenics are in our everyday lives. If I am affected by melancholy, I am depressed and I can’t imagine getting out of bed. I can’t imagine doing anything. My power of acting is depleted. Say I am also unresponsive: I hear my dog barking and I’m barely affected by it, the

sun rises and I barely notice it. My power of being affected is also depleted. And since Spinoza knows (as does contemporary neuroscience, and somatic therapy, and buddhism) that mind and body are inseparable, something that affects my mind affects my body as well. Or—I am affected joyfully. I mix with other bodies that produce a joyful affect in me. A friend brings me soup, I am reminded that I am loved, the soup affects my body joyfully, I start to feel my power of acting increase, perhaps I get out of bed. Deleuze talks about joyful affects as a springboard—once you start being affected joyfully, it can grow exponentially. It is important to remember, especially in comparison with an idea (see below), that an affect is a non-representational mode of thought. The sun’s rays warm us and our body becomes warmer; we might later form an idea that the sun warmed us, but the affect was simply the change in our bodies.

- An **idea** is a representational mode of thought. We are affected by other bodies, and we form an idea of what another body is based on how it affected us. Ideas have formal reality just as much as bodies do. I can form ideas about bodies and I can form ideas about ideas. Life is a succession of ideas, one after the next. We have an endless chain of encounters, each of which produces an idea within us (a perception). Spinoza points to three kinds of ideas: Affection ideas, notions ideas, and essence ideas.
- First, you experience an **affect**, then you have an **idea** of the affection, then your

**affect** changes (either more toward joy or toward sadness). But actually, it all happens at once.

- **Notion ideas** are ideas which concern the agreement or disagreement between two bodies. It is the knowledge of the causes linked with their effects. I don’t just experience that arsenic weakens me, I know about arsenic and I know about my body and I can anticipate the affection such a mixture would produce in me. That is my notion idea.
- **Affection ideas** are ideas about effects without knowledge of their causes. Spinoza calls this the lowest form of idea. “To the extent that I have affection-ideas I only have chance encounters”. Another way of conceiving this is to say that we flee sadness and we chase joy, but if we only have affection ideas then we are spiritual automata. We can think of it as pure reaction. We don’t know why we do things, we are “slaves to our passions”.
- **Essence ideas** are complete thoughts of what bodies are capable of. Essence ideas allow us to understand our capabilities, the intensive thresholds for each body. Essence is quantitative, not qualitative. It is a measure of power to act and to be affected; measured along a scale from sadness to joy, from birth to death.
- **Common notions** are notions that apply to all bodies. For instance, all bodies are either moving or at rest. You have a common notion arising from sharing something with

other bodies that arsenic will poison your body, without having to take it. Common notions can only emerge from understanding some commonality between bodies that increases joy.

- **A body** is a complex relation of composite bodies in movement. Bodies are defined by the relations of their components, not by any essence. And each component is also composite, all the way down. There is no species, no genera—the only thing that matters for Spinoza is: “What is a body capable of?” Different bodies are capable of different things, and we don’t know what we are capable of. And if we don’t learn about what kinds of things we can be affected by and what kinds of things we can do, we will learn nothing about ourselves.
- There are degrees of **perfection**, or degrees of reality, which correspond to the power a body has to affect and be affected, or to the accuracy with which an idea represents an object. In Spinoza’s framework, a greater degree of perfection simply means that a thing is capable of doing many things at once, or of being acted on in many ways at once. Imagine a human body: We can see a whole, discrete body, and imagine it running, and breathing, and pumping blood, and seeing, and listening, and doing many things at once; but we can also break it down into components and imagine all of the cells acting and being acted on, all of the bacteria digesting and reproducing, all of the atoms vibrating, all of the electrons jumping from one energy level to the next. Clearly, a human body has a high degree

of reality! It can do very many things at once, and it can be acted on in many ways at once. But then imagine existence—the entirety of existence, stretched out in time from the big bang to the inevitable heat death of the universe, with all of the matter and interactions that can possibly happen included in that concept. Existence is infinitely perfect; it can do infinite things at once, and it can be acted on in infinite ways at once. Existence, for Spinoza, is God/Nature. It necessarily incorporates everything and is infinitely more perfect than a discrete object, human, animal, or interaction could be.

### *Strategic Suggestions*

- **We should evaluate each situation based on an as detailed as possible understanding of who all of the actors are.** We should evaluate ourselves and we should evaluate our enemies.
  - What is the actor capable of?
  - What will affect them with joy, or increase their power to act?
  - What will affect them sadly, or reduce their power to act or be affected?
  - We should evaluate our conflicts after the fact. We should be engaging with the results of our actions and their effects on us. We should be conscious of them and make decisions based on them.
  - Did we increase our power of acting? Did we learn something new? Do we feel stronger together?
  - Do we feel demoralized and defeated? Do we feel exhausted and traumatized?

- And what of our adversaries? Were they affected joyfully or sadly?
- **The range of tactics that we consider should be wide open.** We should not be limited to typical street engagement. Perhaps fighting in the streets will decrease the power of our adversaries, will demoralize them, affect them sadly, and they will leave the streets. Sometimes this happens. And sometimes, when our enemies are bloody and bruised and chased out of town, this will create sympathy for them or mobilize their supporters, or give them exposure to the media. Which is to say that the same activity has the possibility of both increasing or decreasing our power to act. What works in some places doesn't work in other places, or moments. We can never predict this, but **we can approach each situation openly, with a sensitivity to its particulars.**
- **There is no "correct" course of action.** No particular activity is "good" or "bad" or "correct" or "incorrect" considered in itself. Spinoza doesn't care about good or evil, simply in discovering about ourselves what we are capable of. Evil is just a bad encounter. We should remember that every situation and every combination of bodies is different. This is an ongoing process of interrogation and experimentation.
- **We should not organize defeats. We should act on the course of joy.** If we act beyond our capacity and all end up in jail or stabbed—we might have acted "morally" but we did not act ethically in the sense

that we did not act in a way that might increase our power.

- This framework provides an interesting way to talk about coalition or cooperation: We don't need to congeal our moral compasses, we just need to be going in the same direction and find power together in ways that make sense.
- **Why call it ethics and not morals?** In morality, there is always a separate essence to measure things against; "human nature", "good", "holiness", etc. There is some idea of what "should" happen, and also, therefore, there must be a judge to determine whether each action or person measures up. Spinoza says that this requires sad passions and it's easy to see why: Acting from a place of guilt or morality always involves reflecting on what one did wrong, which for Spinoza would lead to a downward spiral of sad affects: guilt, self-hate, avoidance, etc. For Spinoza, ethics is simply: What "can" happen. "The only thing that exists is existence". There is no god separate from existence, no neutral platform from which to judge the universe.
  - How can we translate our politics and our desires into a framework without morality?
  - Is it possible to talk about a "value system" without morality?
  - What are ways to avoid moralism when we talk about building a better world via increasing our power (i.e. joyful passions)?

- Spinoza says that sadness makes no one intelligent: we cannot form common notions with it and therefore we learn nothing. It is for this reason that the powers-that-be need subjects to be sad. **Does this feel true?**
- **How does Spinozan affection relate to anarchist affinity?**
- Spinoza is *life-affirming*, he doesn't philosophize death, he is only concerned with how to live. **What may be missing from a discussion of death?**
- Defining things by their powers to act and be affected is a different model than taxonomy/species/genera. Camels can go for a long time without drinking water—that is one of their powers. Cacti can also go a long time without drinking water. And thus camels and cacti might encounter each other in deserts.
- How do our passions/powers bring us together into the streets/these study groups/these political projects?
- Rather than thinking about essence or belief, **can we unearth the powers/potential that brings us together? How can we act from there?**

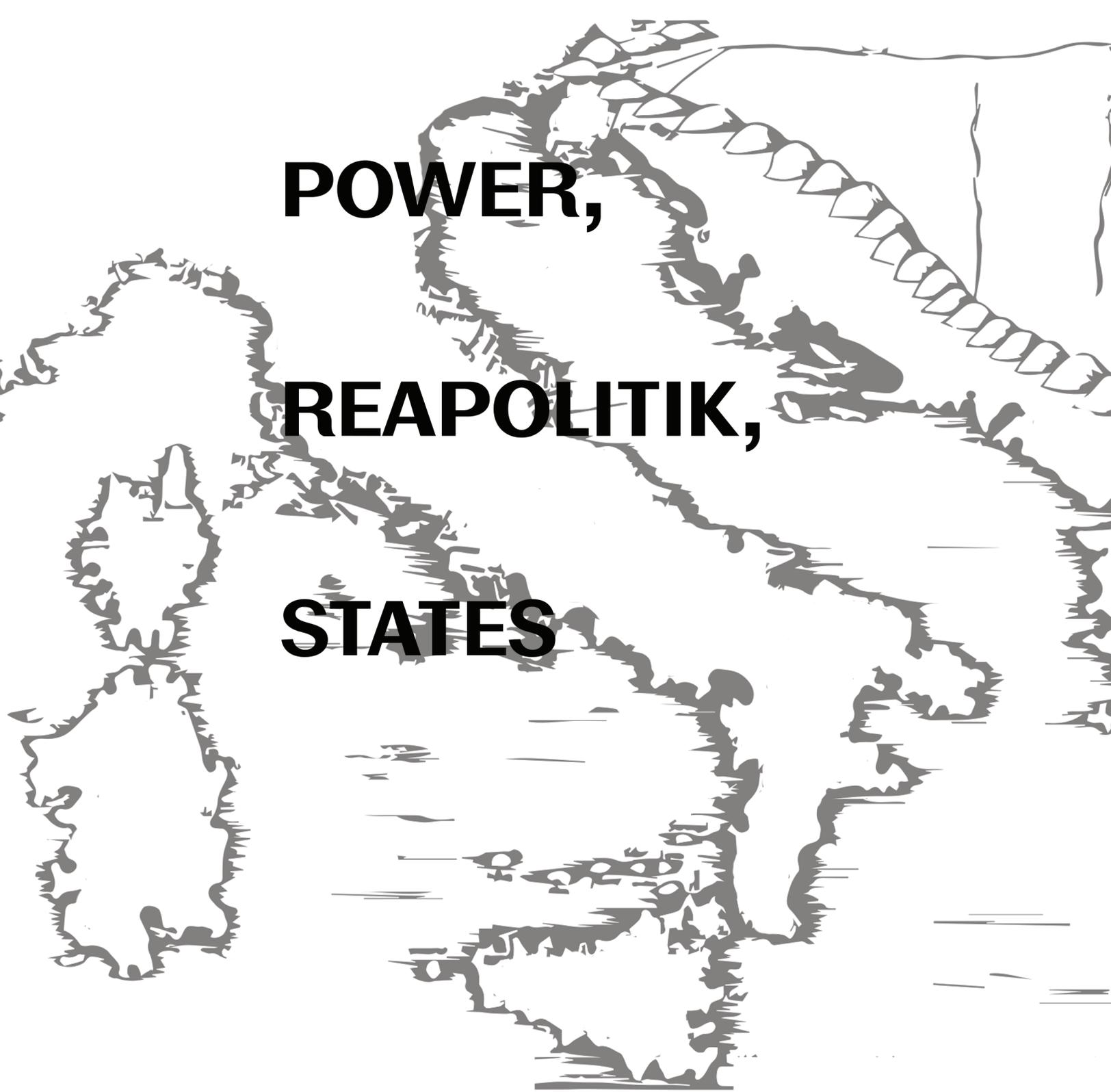
## *Activity for Engagement*

### *How do you organize a good encounter?*

In Deleuze's lecture on Spinoza, we learned about "affection"—"the state of a body insofar as it is subject to the action of another body." We talked about this idea as "mixtures", bodies mixing at a point of contact. We assume that we can't control what will happen in the universe, but that we can come to a point of contact, a mixing, with particular tools, skills and intentions in hand. We would like to have good encounters, encounters which are joyful, or increase our capacities to affect and to be affected. We raise the question: How can we organize good encounters? The following activity is meant to explore possible answers to this question.

- In a group, choose an engineer. Every one else is parts. Ask the engineer to organize a good encounter. They can arrange and rearrange the parts, set motions, engage objects in the room, whatever. Trade roles, shape and re-shape yourselves. Another play on the same game: Choose a common stuck place, and role play. What is an argument you are always finding yourselves in? Have some people act out the argument, while an engineer works around them shaping a machine that will intervene in the pattern to help facilitate a good encounter.
- Everyone in the group must discover their imaginary backpacks, and then run around filling them with whatever they need to organize a good encounter. Set a timer, and run loose. When time is up, gather together again, and show and tell. What did you put in your backpack and why? How will that

thing help you organize a good encounter? This can be general, but if the group wants to focus the good encounter on a particular situation, that is an option. Ask them to pack for that particular situation. For instance, imagine that you're going to a permitted demonstration organized by a liberal coalition; how might you prepare for good encounters in what you might otherwise consider to be a space without potential?



**POWER,  
REAPOLITIK,  
STATES**

**THE PRINCE**  
NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

## Reading Machiavelli's **The Prince**

IN A QUICK SEARCH ON BOOKS AND ARTICLES tagged “Machiavelli” I found the following titles:

*Emotional Blackmail: When the People in Your Life Use Fear, Obligation, and Guilt to Manipulate You*

*What Can Machiavelli Teach You About Business?*

*Intrusive Parenting: How Psychological Control Affects Children and Adolescents*

*Machiavellian Management Ethics*

*The Suit: A Machiavellian Approach to Men's Style,*

*Controlling people : how to recognize, understand, and deal with people who try to control you,*

*Machiavellian Intelligence: Social Expertise and the Evolution of Intellect in Monkeys, Apes, and Humans,*

*The Puppeteers: Studies of Obsessive Control*

Many different people read this book in wildly different ways for their own purposes. I want to give a little historical background and identify what I have found to be some central theoretical pivots of this bizarre and dangerous book. In the context of a group on strategy against control, power, and domination, I want to suggest reading this generously before dismissing it on moral ethical grounds—precisely because it is an amoral text. Given Machiavelli's other writings and political

history it is hard to read this as a simple manifesto for ruthless governing, and I will speak a little bit more about that later. Even if it was that simple, I would want to suggest that we read *The Prince* with an eye to how Machiavelli suggests governing works. This, I hope, will open up a space to understand how not to be governed. We might approach this to ask how it speaks to contemporary tactics of counterinsurgency, hegemony, and military strategy. It may feel obtuse, historically remote, and overly philosophical without having discussed more practical contemporary counter-insurgency projects, but I think this will provide a valuable theoretical language and background for philosophies that underlie systems of power and control for later discussions.

### *Historical background*

In 1498, Machiavelli was elected as Chancellor of Florence and presided over state affairs and correspondences within the state bureaucracy. He crusaded to create a standing army for Florence. In 1512 the Medici returned, flanked by Spanish troops and scattered Machiavelli's militia like breadcrumbs. A year later, he was arrested and tortured on accusations of participating in plot against the Medici family. It was in this context of forced retirement that Machiavelli authored his entire oeuvre, beginning with *The Prince*.

Written in the style of ‘the Mirror for Princes’, Machiavelli followed John of Salisbury, Erasmus, and others in a work whose content outstripped its inherited form. *The Prince*, addressed to Lorenzo de Medici, entreats him to unify warring city-states. In his exhortation, Machiavelli creates an expansive analysis of the delicate balance of power in different political formations and the ever-evolving exigencies of maintaining princely power. He

paints a tableau of a social whole in order to expose the ways in which the Prince can prudently position himself in order to ensure his power and the maintenance of the principality. In other words, Machiavelli takes the juridico-political order as the starting point and the end of his work.

*Realpolitik, Mirror For Princes, Human Nature*

Machiavelli's conception of politics is informed by the understanding and experience of the art of war. Politics is a battle for domination. Machiavelli should have no other aim than the art of war. His *realpolitik* or realist approach to social and political treatise exceeds the form of the *mirror for princes* genre of the Renaissance. Holding a mirror to the prince, for Machiavelli, is to hold a mirror to the relations of power of an entire social field. In the principality we see the relations between the people, the citizen militia, mercenary armies, successors, flatterers, and countless other agents and factors. The Prince is at once an instruction manual framed from the position of what Machiavelli repeatedly calls "the truth" and simultaneously a self-consciously subjective appeal. On his realist method, Machiavelli expounds:

But since it is my object to write what shall be useful to whosoever understands it, it seems better to follow the real truth of things than an imaginary view of them. For many Republics and Princedoms have been imagined that were never seen or known to exist in reality. And the manner in which we live, and that in which we ought to live, are things so wide asunder

are thing that he who quits the one to betake himself to the other is more likely to destroy than save himself; since anyone who would act up to a perfect standard of goodness in everything, must be ruined among so many who are not good.

Machiavelli's wager is that the most useful knowledge for the Prince is the knowledge of the social world. In the dedicatory letter, Machiavelli explains that his work will not be laced with ornamental language or garish adulation "since it is my desire that it should pass wholly unhonored or that the truth of the matter and the importance of its subject should alone recommend it." The Prince is no gnostic mirage or idealist refraction, but a reflection of an ever changing, non-moral social field in which the Prince must best station himself. Machiavelli's only central ontological anchor is in fact an insistence on the constant fluctuation of forces.

Consequently, if Machiavelli possesses a theory of human nature, it is precisely that men too are capricious. In support of the oft quoted dictum, "it is better to be feared than to be loved," Machiavelli warns that men are:

fickle, false studious to avoid danger, greedy of gain, devoted to you while you are able to confer benefits on them, and ready, as I said before, to shed their blood, and sacrifice their property, their lives, and their children for you; but in the hour of need they turn against you.

What the Prince must know, Machiavelli advises, is that men more readily respond to arms, but that balance of love and fear is optimal for the maintenance of power. The use of force is effective, but unsustainable, “for even though one may have the strongest of armies, he always needs the support of the inhabitants of the province in order to enter it.” The good favor of the people ensures the maintenance of unity and allegiance to the Prince’s order. This favor is dependant on the status of the kingdom and its specific history as an inherited kingdom, as one taken in conquest, etc.

### *Republicanism*

*The Prince* was a gift to the Medicis, who had pushed Machiavelli into a voluntary exile. Many scholars have argued that Machiavelli was some type of republican. There is a lot of evidence that Machiavelli wasn’t a straightforward proponent of monarchy. In addition to his alleged attempt to overthrow the Medicis and his subsequent exile, his writings elsewhere, like the *Discourses on Livy*, name republicanism (popular sovereignty with representation) as the most preferable form of government. The *Discourses on Livy* are in fact dedicated to sympathizers of republicanism.

Mary Dietz argues that Machiavelli was actually a republican and that his advice in *The Prince* was in the interest of overthrowing the Medici and is itself a practical work of deception. She says the Prince needs to be read in light of the political reality of 16th century Florence, Machiavelli’s republicanism, his imprisonment for a plot to overthrow the Medicis shortly before he wrote in a letter that he had finished writing *The Prince*.

### *Weak Republicanism*

This is the argument that Machiavelli saw *The Prince* as an alternative to the chaos of a divided Italy and an attempt to “ingratiate himself” in the Medici family after his exile. Others think that he actually changed his tune after publishing *The Prince* in 1513 and renewed his commitment to republicanism. Other scholars have argued for a stronger republicanism, that he wanted to illuminate for republicans how monarchists acquire and maintain their power so they could fight against monarchy.

This is all noteworthy for us not because representative government is preferable, but to create space to think how Machiavelli may have written this as a critique or a practical handbook against control and rule in a way that may create room for us to do that as well.

### *Mercenaries*

Machiavelli’s warning against the use of mercenary arms is particularly emblematic of the necessity for the people’s favor and love. Machiavelli warns the prince against the use of mercenary soldiers as they are useless and dangerous: if one keeps his state founded on mercenary arms, one will never be firm or secure, for they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, unfaithful, bold among friends, among enemies cowardly, have no fear of God and no faith with men. Ruin is postponed only as long as attack it postponed, and in peace you are despoiled by them, in war by the enemy. The cause is that they have no love nor cause to keep them in the field other than a small stipend, which is not sufficient to make them want to die for you. They do indeed want to be your soldiers while you are

not making war, but when war comes, they either flee or leave.

The mercenary allegiance is only ensured by a wage whereas a citizen militia is held with love and fear. In peace, mercenaries will turn against you because they hold arms, and impelled only by a stipend, they will not risk death for you in battle. Machiavelli warns that, “Only princes and armed republics ever make any progress; nothing but harm ever comes from mercenary arms.” Repression through arms is a non-starter as an exclusive method of rule, Machiavelli admonishes, but repression necessarily underwrites Princely rule.

# The Prince

Niccoló Machiavelli

## DEDICATION

*To the Magnificent Lorenzo Di Piero De' Medici:*

*Those who strive to obtain the good graces of a prince are accustomed to come before him with such things as they hold most precious, or in which they see him take most delight; whence one often sees horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments presented to princes, worthy of their greatness.*

*Desiring therefore to present myself to your Magnificence with some testimony of my devotion towards you, I have not found among my possessions anything which I hold more dear than, or value so much as, the knowledge of the actions of great men, acquired by long experience in contemporary affairs, and a continual study of antiquity; which, having reflected upon it with great and prolonged diligence, I now send, digested into a little volume, to your Magnificence.*

*And although I may consider this work unworthy of your countenance, nevertheless I trust much to your benignity that it may be acceptable, seeing that it is not possible for me to make a better gift than to offer you the opportunity of understanding in the shortest time all that I have learnt in so many years, and with so many troubles and dangers; which work I have not embellished with swelling or magnificent words, nor stuffed with rounded periods, nor with any extrinsic allurements or adornments whatever, with which so many are accustomed to embellish their works; for I have wished either that no honour should be given it, or else that the truth of the matter and the weightiness*

*of the theme shall make it acceptable.*

*Nor do I hold with those who regard it as a presumption if a man of low and humble condition dare to discuss and settle the concerns of princes; because, just as those who draw landscapes place themselves below in the plain to contemplate the nature of the mountains and of lofty places, and in order to contemplate the plains place themselves upon high mountains, even so to understand the nature of the people it needs to be a prince, and to understand that of princes it needs to be of the people.*

*Take then, your Magnificence, this little gift in the spirit in which I send it; wherein, if it be diligently read and considered by you, you will learn my extreme desire that you should attain that greatness which fortune and your other attributes promise. And if your Magnificence from the summit of your greatness will sometimes turn your eyes to these lower regions, you will see how unmeritedly I suffer a great and continued malignity of fortune.*

*Chapter I — How Many Kinds of Principalities There Are, and by What Means They Are Acquired*

All states, all powers, that have held and hold rule over men have been and are either republics or principalities.

Principalities are either hereditary, in which the family has been long established; or they are new.

The new are either entirely new, as was Milan to Francesco Sforza, or they are, as it were, members annexed to the hereditary state of the prince who has acquired them, as was the kingdom of Naples to that of the King of Spain.

Such dominions thus acquired are either accustomed to live under a prince, or to live in freedom; and are acquired either by the arms of the prince himself, or of others, or else by fortune or by ability.

*Chapter II — Concerning Hereditary Principalities*

I will leave out all discussion on republics, inasmuch as in another place I have written of them at length, and will address myself only to principalities. In doing so I will keep to the order indicated above, and discuss how such principalities are to be ruled and preserved.

I say at once there are fewer difficulties in holding hereditary states, and those long accustomed to the family of their prince, than new ones; for it is sufficient only not to transgress the customs of his ancestors, and to deal prudently with circumstances as they arise, for a prince of average powers to maintain himself in his state, unless he be deprived of it by some extraordinary and excessive force; and if he should be so deprived of it,

whenever anything sinister happens to the usurper, he will regain it.

We have in Italy, for example, the Duke of Ferrara, who could not have withstood the attacks of the Venetians in '84, nor those of Pope Julius in '10, unless he had been long established in his dominions. For the hereditary prince has less cause and less necessity to offend; hence it happens that he will be more loved; and unless extraordinary vices cause him to be hated, it is reasonable to expect that his subjects will be naturally well disposed towards him; and in the antiquity and duration of his rule the memories and motives that make for change are lost, for one change always leaves the tooting for another.

*Chapter III — Concerning Mixed Principalities*

But the difficulties occur in a new principality. And firstly, if it be not entirely new, but is, as it were, a member of a state which, taken collectively, may be called composite, the changes arise chiefly from an inherent difficulty which there is in all new principalities; for men change their rulers willingly, hoping to better themselves, and this hope induces them to take up arms against him who rules: wherein they are deceived, because they afterwards find by experience they have gone from bad to worse. This follows also on another natural and common necessity, which always causes a new prince to burden those who have submitted to him with his soldiery and with infinite other hardships which he must put upon his new acquisition.

In this way you have enemies in all those whom you have injured in seizing that principality, and you are not able to keep those friends who put you there because of your not being able to satisfy

them in the way they expected, and you cannot take strong measures against them, feeling bound to them. For, although one may be very strong in armed forces, yet in entering a province one has always need of the goodwill of the natives.

For these reasons Louis the Twelfth, King of France, quickly occupied Milan, and as quickly lost it; and to turn him out the first time it only needed Lodovico's own forces; because those who had opened the gates to him, finding themselves deceived in their hopes of future benefit, would not endure the ill-treatment of the new prince. It is very true that, after acquiring rebellious provinces a second time, they are not so lightly lost afterwards, because the prince, with little reluctance, takes the opportunity of the rebellion to punish the delinquents, to clear out the suspects, and to strengthen himself in the weakest places. Thus to cause France to lose Milan the first time it was enough for the Duke Lodovico<sup>1</sup> to raise insurrections on the borders; but to cause him to lose it a second time it was necessary to bring the whole world against him, and that his armies should be defeated and driven out of Italy; which followed from the causes above mentioned.

Nevertheless Milan was taken from France both the first and the second time. The general reasons for the first have been discussed; it remains to name those for the second, and to see what resources he had, and what any one in his situation would have had for maintaining himself more securely in his acquisition than did the King of France.

Now I say that those dominions which, when acquired, are added to an ancient state by him who acquires them, are either of the same country and language, or they are not. When they are, it is easier to hold them, especially when they have not been accustomed to self-government; and to hold them securely it is enough to have destroyed the

family of the prince who was ruling them; because the two peoples, preserving in other things the old conditions, and not being unlike in customs, will live quietly together, as one has seen in Brittany, Burgundy, Gascony, and Normandy, which have been bound to France for so long a time: and, although there may be some difference in language, nevertheless the customs are alike, and the people will easily be able to get on amongst themselves. He who has annexed them, if he wishes to hold them, has only to bear in mind two considerations: the one, that the family of their former lord is extinguished; the other, that neither their laws nor their taxes are altered, so that in a very short time they will become entirely one body with the old principality.

But when states are acquired in a country differing in language, customs, or laws, there are difficulties, and good fortune and great energy are needed to hold them, and one of the greatest and most real helps would be that he who has acquired them should go and reside there. This would make his position more secure and durable, as it has made that of the Turk in Greece, who, notwithstanding all the other measures taken by him for holding that state, if he had not settled there, would not have been able to keep it. Because, if one is on the spot, disorders are seen as they spring up, and one can quickly remedy them; but if one is not at hand, they are heard of only when they are great, and then one can no longer remedy them. Besides this, the country is not pillaged by your officials; the subjects are satisfied by prompt recourse to the prince; thus, wishing to be good, they have more cause to love him, and wishing to be otherwise, to fear him. He who would attack that state from the outside must have the utmost caution; as long as the prince resides there it can only be wrested from him with the greatest difficulty.

<sup>1</sup> Duke Lodovico was Lodovico Moro, a son of Francesco Sforza, who married Beatrice d'Este. He ruled over Milan from 1494 to 1500, and died in 1510.

The other and better course is to send colonies to one or two places, which may be as keys to that state, for it is necessary either to do this or else to keep there a great number of cavalry and infantry. A prince does not spend much on colonies, for with little or no expense he can send them out and keep them there, and he offends a minority only of the citizens from whom he takes lands and houses to give them to the new inhabitants; and those whom he offends, remaining poor and scattered, are never able to injure him; whilst the rest being uninjured are easily kept quiet, and at the same time are anxious not to err for fear it should happen to them as it has to those who have been despoiled. In conclusion, I say that these colonies are not costly, they are more faithful, they injure less, and the injured, as has been said, being poor and scattered, cannot hurt. Upon this, one has to remark that men ought either to be well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot; therefore the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not stand in fear of revenge.

But in maintaining armed men there in place of colonies one spends much more, having to consume on the garrison all the income from the state, so that the acquisition turns into a loss, and many more are exasperated, because the whole state is injured; through the shifting of the garrison up and down all become acquainted with hardship, and all become hostile, and they are enemies who, whilst beaten on their own ground, are yet able to do hurt. For every reason, therefore, such guards are as useless as a colony is useful.

Again, the prince who holds a country differing in the above respects ought to make himself the head and defender of his less powerful neighbours, and to weaken the more powerful amongst them,

taking care that no foreigner as powerful as himself shall, by any accident, get a footing there; for it will always happen that such a one will be introduced by those who are discontented, either through excess of ambition or through fear, as one has seen already. The Romans were brought into Greece by the Aetolians; and in every other country where they obtained a footing they were brought in by the inhabitants. And the usual course of affairs is that, as soon as a powerful foreigner enters a country, all the subject states are drawn to him, moved by the hatred which they feel against the ruling power. So that in respect to those subject states he has not to take any trouble to gain them over to himself, for the whole of them quickly rally to the state which he has acquired there. He has only to take care that they do not get hold of too much power and too much authority, and then with his own forces, and with their goodwill, he can easily keep down the more powerful of them, so as to remain entirely master in the country. And he who does not properly manage this business will soon lose what he has acquired, and whilst he does hold it he will have endless difficulties and troubles.

The Romans, in the countries which they annexed, observed closely these measures; they sent colonies and maintained friendly relations with the minor powers, without increasing their strength; they kept down the greater, and did not allow any strong foreign powers to gain authority. Greece appears to me sufficient for an example. The Achaeans and Aetolians were kept friendly by them, the kingdom of Macedonia was humbled, Antiochus was driven out; yet the merits of the Achaeans and Aetolians never secured for them permission to increase their power, nor did the persuasions of Philip ever induce the Romans to be his friends without first humbling him, nor did the influence of Antiochus make them agree that he should

retain any lordship over the country. Because the Romans did in these instances what all prudent princes ought to do, who have to regard not only present troubles, but also future ones, for which they must prepare with every energy, because, when foreseen, it is easy to remedy them; but if you wait until they approach, the medicine is no longer in time because the malady has become incurable; for it happens in this, as the physicians say it happens in hectic fever, that in the beginning of the malady it is easy to cure but difficult to detect, but in the course of time, not having been either detected or treated in the beginning, it becomes easy to detect but difficult to cure. Thus it happens in affairs of state, for when the evils that arise have been foreseen (which it is only given to a wise man to see), they can be quickly redressed, but when, through not having been foreseen, they have been permitted to grow in a way that every one can see them, there is no longer a remedy. Therefore, the Romans, foreseeing troubles, dealt with them at once, and, even to avoid a war, would not let them come to a head, for they knew that war is not to be avoided, but is only to be put off to the advantage of others; moreover they wished to fight with Philip and Antiochus in Greece so as not to have to do it in Italy; they could have avoided both, but this they did not wish; nor did that ever please them which is forever in the mouths of the wise ones of our time:—Let us enjoy the benefits of the time—but rather the benefits of their own valour and prudence, for time drives everything before it, and is able to bring with it good as well as evil, and evil as well as good.

But let us turn to France and inquire whether she has done any of the things mentioned. I will speak of Louis<sup>1</sup> (and not of Charles<sup>2</sup>) as the one whose conduct is the better to be observed, he having held possession of Italy for the longest period;

and you will see that he has done the opposite to those things which ought to be done to retain a state composed of divers elements

King Louis was brought into Italy by the ambition of the Venetians, who desired to obtain half the state of Lombardy by his intervention. I will not blame the course taken by the king, because, wishing to get a foothold in Italy, and having no friends there—seeing rather that every door was shut to him owing to the conduct of Charles—he was forced to accept those friendships which he could get, and he would have succeeded very quickly in his design if in other matters he had not made some mistakes. The king, however, having acquired Lombardy, regained at once the authority which Charles had lost: Genoa yielded; the Florentines became his friends; the Marquess of Mantua, the Duke of Ferrara, the Bentivogli, my lady of Forli, the Lords of Faenza, of Pesaro, of Rimini, of Camerino, of Piombino, the Lucchese, the Pisans, the Sienese—everybody made advances to him to become his friend. Then could the Venetians realize the rashness of the course taken by them, which, in order that they might secure two towns in Lombardy, had made the king master of two-thirds of Italy.

Let any one now consider with what little difficulty the king could have maintained his position in Italy had he observed the rules above laid down, and kept all his friends secure and protected; for although they were numerous they were both weak and timid, some afraid of the Church, some of the Venetians, and thus they would always have been forced to stand in with him, and by their means he could easily have made himself secure against those who remained powerful. But he was no sooner in Milan than he did the contrary by assisting Pope Alexander to occupy the Romagna. It never occurred to him that by this action he was

<sup>1</sup>Louis XII, King of France, "The Father of the People," born 1462, died 1515.

<sup>2</sup>Charles VIII, King of France, born 1470, died 1498.

weakening himself, depriving himself of friends and of those who had thrown themselves into his lap, whilst he aggrandized the Church by adding much temporal power to the spiritual, thus giving it greater authority. And having committed this prime error, he was obliged to follow it up, so much so that, to put an end to the ambition of Alexander, and to prevent his becoming the master of Tuscany, he was himself forced to come into Italy.

And as if it were not enough to have aggrandized the Church, and deprived himself of friends, he, wishing to have the kingdom of Naples, divided it with the King of Spain, and where he was the prime arbiter in Italy he takes an associate, so that the ambitious of that country and the malcontents of his own should have somewhere to shelter; and whereas he could have left in the kingdom his own pensioner as king, he drove him out, to put one there who was able to drive him, Louis, out in turn.

The wish to acquire is in truth very natural and common, and men always do so when they can, and for this they will be praised not blamed; but when they cannot do so, yet wish to do so by any means, then there is folly and blame. Therefore, if France could have attacked Naples with her own forces she ought to have done so; if she could not, then she ought not to have divided it. And if the partition which she made with the Venetians in Lombardy was justified by the excuse that by it she got a foothold in Italy, this other partition merited blame, for it had not the excuse of that necessity.

Therefore Louis made these five errors: he destroyed the minor powers, he increased the strength of one of the greater powers in Italy, he brought in a foreign power, he did not settle in the country, he did not send colonies. Which errors, had he lived, were not enough to injure him had he

not made a sixth by taking away their dominions from the Venetians; because, had he not aggrandized the Church, nor brought Spain into Italy, it would have been very reasonable and necessary to humble them; but having first taken these steps, he ought never to have consented to their ruin, for they, being powerful, would always have kept off others from designs on Lombardy, to which the Venetians would never have consented except to become masters themselves there; also because the others would not wish to take Lombardy from France in order to give it to the Venetians, and to run counter to both they would not have had the courage.

And if any one should say: “King Louis yielded the Romagna to Alexander and the kingdom to Spain to avoid war,” I answer for the reasons given above that a blunder ought never to be perpetrated to avoid war, because it is not to be avoided, but is only deferred to your disadvantage. And if another should allege the pledge which the king had given to the Pope that he would assist him in the enterprise, in exchange for the dissolution of his marriage<sup>1</sup> and for the cap to Rouen,<sup>2</sup> to that I reply what I shall write later on concerning the faith of princes, and how it ought to be kept.

Thus King Louis lost Lombardy by not having followed any of the conditions observed by those who have taken possession of countries and wished to retain them. Nor is there any miracle in this, but much that is reasonable and quite natural. And on these matters I spoke at Nantes with Rouen, when Valentino, as Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander, was usually called, occupied the Romagna, and on Cardinal Rouen observing to me that the Italians did not understand war, I replied to him that the French did not understand statecraft, meaning that otherwise they would not have allowed the Church to reach such greatness.

<sup>1</sup>Louis XII divorced his wife, Jeanne, daughter of Louis XI, and married in 1499 Anne of Brittany, widow of Charles VIII, in order to retain the Duchy of Brittany for the crown.

<sup>2</sup>The Archbishop of Rouen. He was Georges d'Amboise, created a cardinal by Alexander VI. Born 1460, died 1510.

And in fact it has been seen that the greatness of the Church and of Spain in Italy has been caused by France, and her ruin may be attributed to them. From this a general rule is drawn which never or rarely fails: that he who is the cause of another becoming powerful is ruined; because that predominancy has been brought about either by astuteness or else by force, and both are distrusted by him who has been raised to power.

*Chapter IV — Why the Kingdom of Darius, Conquered by Alexander, Did Not Rebel Against the Successors of Alexander at His Death*

Considering the difficulties which men have had to hold to a newly acquired state, some might wonder how, seeing that Alexander the Great became the master of Asia in a few years, and died whilst it was scarcely settled (whence it might appear reasonable that the whole empire would have rebelled), nevertheless his successors maintained themselves, and had to meet no other difficulty than that which arose among themselves from their own ambitions.

I answer that the principalities of which one has record are found to be governed in two different ways; either by a prince, with a body of servants, who assist him to govern the kingdom as ministers by his favour and permission; or by a prince and barons, who hold that dignity by antiquity of blood and not by the grace of the prince. Such barons have states and their own subjects, who recognize them as lords and hold them in natural affection. Those states that are governed by a prince and his servants hold their prince in more consideration, because in all the country there is no one who is recognized as superior to him, and

if they yield obedience to another they do it as to a minister and official, and they do not bear him any particular affection.

The examples of these two governments in our time are the Turk and the King of France. The entire monarchy of the Turk is governed by one lord, the others are his servants; and, dividing his kingdom into sanjaks, he sends there different administrators, and shifts and changes them as he chooses. But the King of France is placed in the midst of an ancient body of lords, acknowledged by their own subjects, and beloved by them; they have their own prerogatives, nor can the king take these away except at his peril. Therefore, he who considers both of these states will recognize great difficulties in seizing the state of the Turk, but, once it is conquered, great ease in holding it. The causes of the difficulties in seizing the kingdom of the Turk are that the usurper cannot be called in by the princes of the kingdom, nor can he hope to be assisted in his designs by the revolt of those whom the lord has around him. This arises from the reasons given above; for his ministers, being all slaves and bondmen, can only be corrupted with great difficulty, and one can expect little advantage from them when they have been corrupted, as they cannot carry the people with them, for the reasons assigned. Hence, he who attacks the Turk must bear in mind that he will find him united, and he will have to rely more on his own strength than on the revolt of others; but, if once the Turk has been conquered, and routed in the field in such a way that he cannot replace his armies, there is nothing to fear but the family of this prince, and, this being exterminated, there remains no one to fear, the others having no credit with the people; and as the conqueror did not rely on them before his victory, so he ought not to fear them after it.

The contrary happens in kingdoms governed

like that of France, because one can easily enter there by gaining over some baron of the kingdom, for one always finds malcontents and such as desire a change. Such men, for the reasons given, can open the way into the state and render the victory easy; but if you wish to hold it afterwards, you meet with infinite difficulties, both from those who have assisted you and from those you have crushed. Nor is it enough for you to have exterminated the family of the prince, because the lords that remain make themselves the heads of fresh movements against you, and as you are unable either to satisfy or exterminate them, that state is lost whenever time brings the opportunity.

Now if you will consider what was the nature of the government of Darius, you will find it similar to the kingdom of the Turk, and therefore it was only necessary for Alexander, first to overthrow him in the field, and then to take the country from him. After which victory, Darius being killed, the state remained secure to Alexander, for the above reasons. And if his successors had been united they would have enjoyed it securely and at their ease, for there were no tumults raised in the kingdom except those they provoked themselves.

But it is impossible to hold with such tranquillity states constituted like that of France. Hence arose those frequent rebellions against the Romans in Spain, France, and Greece, owing to the many principalities there were in these states, of which, as long as the memory of them endured, the Romans always held an insecure possession; but with the power and long continuance of the empire the memory of them passed away, and the Romans then became secure possessors. And when fighting afterwards amongst themselves, each one was able to attach to himself his own parts of the country, according to the authority he had assumed there; and the family of the former lord

being exterminated, none other than the Romans were acknowledged.

When these things are remembered no one will marvel at the ease with which Alexander held the Empire of Asia, or at the difficulties which others have had to keep an acquisition, such as Pyrrhus and many more; this is not occasioned by the little or abundance of ability in the conqueror, but by the want of uniformity in the subject state.

### *Chapter V— Concerning the Way to Govern Cities or Principalities Which Lived Under Their Own Laws Before They Were Annexed*

Whenever those states which have been acquired as stated have been accustomed to live under their own laws and in freedom, there are three courses for those who wish to hold them: the first is to ruin them, the next is to reside there in person, the third is to permit them to live under their own laws, drawing a tribute, and establishing within it an oligarchy which will keep it friendly to you. Because such a government, being created by the prince, knows that it cannot stand without his friendship and interest, and does its utmost to support him; and therefore he who would keep a city accustomed to freedom will hold it more easily by the means of its own citizens than in any other way.

There are, for example, the Spartans and the Romans. The Spartans held Athens and Thebes, establishing there an oligarchy: nevertheless they lost them. The Romans, in order to hold Capua, Carthage, and Numantia, dismantled them, and did not lose them. They wished to hold Greece as the Spartans held it, making it free and permitting its laws, and did not succeed. So to hold it

they were compelled to dismantle many cities in the country, for in truth there is no safe way to retain them otherwise than by ruining them. And he who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it, for in rebellion it has always the watchword of liberty and its ancient privileges as a rallying point, which neither time nor benefits will ever cause it to forget. And whatever you may do or provide against, they never forget that name or their privileges unless they are disunited or dispersed, but at every chance they immediately rally to them, as Pisa after the hundred years she had been held in bondage by the Florentines.

But when cities or countries are accustomed to live under a prince, and his family is exterminated, they, being on the one hand accustomed to obey and on the other hand not having the old prince, cannot agree in making one from amongst themselves, and they do not know how to govern themselves. For this reason they are very slow to take up arms, and a prince can gain them to himself and secure them much more easily. But in republics there is more vitality, greater hatred, and more desire for vengeance, which will never permit them to allow the memory of their former liberty to rest; so that the safest way is to destroy them or to reside there.

### *Chapter VI — Concerning New Principalities Which Are Acquired by One's Own Arms And Ability*

Let no one be surprised if, in speaking of entirely new principalities as I shall do, I adduce the highest examples both of prince and of state; because men, walking almost always in paths beaten by others, and following by imitation their deeds, are

yet unable to keep entirely to the ways of others or attain to the power of those they imitate. A wise man ought always to follow the paths beaten by great men, and to imitate those who have been supreme, so that if his ability does not equal theirs, at least it will savour of it. Let him act like the clever archers who, designing to hit the mark which yet appears too far distant, and knowing the limits to which the strength of their bow attains, take aim much higher than the mark, not to reach by their strength or arrow to so great a height, but to be able with the aid of so high an aim to hit the mark they wish to reach.

I say, therefore, that in entirely new principalities, where there is a new prince, more or less difficulty is found in keeping them, accordingly as there is more or less ability in him who has acquired the state. Now, as the fact of becoming a prince from a private station presupposes either ability or fortune, it is clear that one or other of these things will mitigate in some degree many difficulties. Nevertheless, he who has relied least on fortune is established the strongest. Further, it facilitates matters when the prince, having no other state, is compelled to reside there in person.

But to come to those who, by their own ability and not through fortune, have risen to be princes, I say that Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and such like are the most excellent examples. And although one may not discuss Moses, he having been a mere executor of the will of God, yet he ought to be admired, if only for that favour which made him worthy to speak with God. But in considering Cyrus and others who have acquired or founded kingdoms, all will be found admirable; and if their particular deeds and conduct shall be considered, they will not be found inferior to those of Moses, although he had so great a preceptor. And in examining their actions and lives one cannot see that

they owed anything to fortune beyond opportunity, which brought them the material to mould into the form which seemed best to them. Without that opportunity their powers of mind would have been extinguished, and without those powers the opportunity would have come in vain.

It was necessary, therefore, to Moses that he should find the people of Israel in Egypt enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, in order that they should be disposed to follow him so as to be delivered out of bondage. It was necessary that Romulus should not remain in Alba, and that he should be abandoned at his birth, in order that he should become King of Rome and founder of the fatherland. It was necessary that Cyrus should find the Persians discontented with the government of the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate through their long peace. Theseus could not have shown his ability had he not found the Athenians dispersed. These opportunities, therefore, made those men fortunate, and their high ability enabled them to recognize the opportunity whereby their country was ennobled and made famous.

Those who by valorous ways become princes, like these men, acquire a principality with difficulty, but they keep it with ease. The difficulties they have in acquiring it rise in part from the new rules and methods which they are forced to introduce to establish their government and its security. And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things, because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men,

who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them. Thus it happens that whenever those who are hostile have the opportunity to attack they do it like partisans, whilst the others defend lukewarmly, in such wise that the prince is endangered along with them.

It is necessary, therefore, if we desire to discuss this matter thoroughly, to inquire whether these innovators can rely on themselves or have to depend on others: that is to say, whether, to consummate their enterprise, have they to use prayers or can they use force? In the first instance they always succeed badly, and never compass anything; but when they can rely on themselves and use force, then they are rarely endangered. Hence it is that all armed prophets have conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed. Besides the reasons mentioned, the nature of the people is variable, and whilst it is easy to persuade them, it is difficult to fix them in that persuasion. And thus it is necessary to take such measures that, when they believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force.

If Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus had been unarmed they could not have enforced their constitutions for long—as happened in our time to Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who was ruined with his new order of things immediately the multitude believed in him no longer, and he had no means of keeping steadfast those who believed or of making the unbelievers to believe. Therefore such as these have great difficulties in consummating their enterprise, for all their dangers are in the ascent, yet with ability they will overcome them; but when these are overcome, and those who envied them their success are exterminated, they will begin to be respected, and they will continue afterwards powerful, secure, honoured, and happy.

To these great examples I wish to add a lesser

one; still it bears some resemblance to them, and I wish it to suffice me for all of a like kind: it is Hiero the Syracusan.<sup>1</sup> This man rose from a private station to be Prince of Syracuse, nor did he, either, owe anything to fortune but opportunity; for the Syracusans, being oppressed, chose him for their captain, afterwards he was rewarded by being made their prince. He was of so great ability, even as a private citizen, that one who writes of him says he wanted nothing but a kingdom to be a king. This man abolished the old soldiery, organized the new, gave up old alliances, made new ones; and as he had his own soldiers and allies, on such foundations he was able to build any edifice: thus, whilst he had endured much trouble in acquiring, he had but little in keeping.

*Chapter VII — Concerning New Principalities Which Are Acquired Either by the Arms of Others or by Good Fortune*

Those who solely by good fortune become princes from being private citizens have little trouble in rising, but much in keeping atop; they have not any difficulties on the way up, because they fly, but they have many when they reach the summit. Such are those to whom some state is given either for money or by the favour of him who bestows it; as happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and of the Hellespont, where princes were made by Darius, in order that they might hold the cities both for his security and his glory; as also were those emperors who, by the corruption of the soldiers, from being citizens came to empire. Such stand simply elevated upon the goodwill and the fortune of him who has elevated them—two most inconstant and unstable things. Neither have they the knowledge requisite for the position; because,

unless they are men of great worth and ability, it is not reasonable to expect that they should know how to command, having always lived in a private condition; besides, they cannot hold it because they have not forces which they can keep friendly and faithful.

States that rise unexpectedly, then, like all other things in nature which are born and grow rapidly, cannot leave their foundations and correspondencies<sup>2</sup> fixed in such a way that the first storm will not overthrow them; unless, as is said, those who unexpectedly become princes are men of so much ability that they know they have to be prepared at once to hold that which fortune has thrown into their laps, and that those foundations, which others have laid BEFORE they became princes, they must lay AFTERWARDS.

Concerning these two methods of rising to be a prince by ability or fortune, I wish to adduce two examples within our own recollection, and these are Francesco Sforza<sup>3</sup> and Cesare Borgia. Francesco, by proper means and with great ability, from being a private person rose to be Duke of Milan, and that which he had acquired with a thousand anxieties he kept with little trouble. On the other hand, Cesare Borgia, called by the people Duke Valentino, acquired his state during the ascendancy of his father, and on its decline he lost it, notwithstanding that he had taken every measure and done all that ought to be done by a wise and able man to fix firmly his roots in the states which the arms and fortunes of others had bestowed on him.

Because, as is stated above, he who has not first laid his foundations may be able with great ability to lay them afterwards, but they will be laid with trouble to the architect and danger to the building. If, therefore, all the steps taken by the duke be considered, it will be seen that he laid

<sup>1</sup>Hiero II, born about 307 B.C., died 216 B.C.

<sup>2</sup>“Le radici e corrispondenze,” their roots (i.e. foundations) and correspondencies or relations with other states—a common meaning of “correspondence” and “correspondency” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>3</sup>Francesco Sforza, born 1401, died 1466. He married Bianca Maria Visconti, a natural daughter of Filippo Visconti, the Duke of Milan, on whose death he procured his own elevation to the duchy. Machiavelli was the accredited agent of the Florentine Republic to Cesare Borgia (1478-1507) during the transactions which led up to the assassinations of the Orsini and Vitelli at Sinigaglia, and along with his letters to his chiefs in Florence he has left an account, written ten years before “The Prince,” of the proceedings of the duke in his “Descrizione del modo tenuto dal duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo Vitelli,” etc.

solid foundations for his future power, and I do not consider it superfluous to discuss them, because I do not know what better precepts to give a new prince than the example of his actions; and if his dispositions were of no avail, that was not his fault, but the extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune.

Alexander the Sixth, in wishing to aggrandize the duke, his son, had many immediate and prospective difficulties. Firstly, he did not see his way to make him master of any state that was not a state of the Church; and if he was willing to rob the Church he knew that the Duke of Milan and the Venetians would not consent, because Faenza and Rimini were already under the protection of the Venetians. Besides this, he saw the arms of Italy, especially those by which he might have been assisted, in hands that would fear the aggrandizement of the Pope, namely, the Orsini and the Colonnaesi and their following. It behoved him, therefore, to upset this state of affairs and embroil the powers, so as to make himself securely master of part of their states. This was easy for him to do, because he found the Venetians, moved by other reasons, inclined to bring back the French into Italy; he would not only not oppose this, but he would render it more easy by dissolving the former marriage of King Louis. Therefore the king came into Italy with the assistance of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander. He was no sooner in Milan than the Pope had soldiers from him for the attempt on the Romagna, which yielded to him on the reputation of the king. The duke, therefore, having acquired the Romagna and beaten the Colonnaesi, while wishing to hold that and to advance further, was hindered by two things: the one, his forces did not appear loyal to him, the other, the goodwill of France: that is to say, he feared that the forces of the Orsini, which he

was using, would not stand to him, that not only might they hinder him from winning more, but might themselves seize what he had won, and that the king might also do the same. Of the Orsini he had a warning when, after taking Faenza and attacking Bologna, he saw them go very unwillingly to that attack. And as to the king, he learned his mind when he himself, after taking the Duchy of Urbino, attacked Tuscany, and the king made him desist from that undertaking; hence the duke decided to depend no more upon the arms and the luck of others.

For the first thing he weakened the Orsini and Colonnaesi parties in Rome, by gaining to himself all their adherents who were gentlemen, making them his gentlemen, giving them good pay, and, according to their rank, honouring them with office and command in such a way that in a few months all attachment to the factions was destroyed and turned entirely to the duke. After this he awaited an opportunity to crush the Orsini, having scattered the adherents of the Colonna house. This came to him soon and he used it well; for the Orsini, perceiving at length that the aggrandizement of the duke and the Church was ruin to them, called a meeting of the Magione in Perugia. From this sprung the rebellion at Urbino and the tumults in the Romagna, with endless dangers to the duke, all of which he overcame with the help of the French. Having restored his authority, not to leave it at risk by trusting either to the French or other outside forces, he had recourse to his wiles, and he knew so well how to conceal his mind that, by the mediation of Signor Pagolo—whom the duke did not fail to secure with all kinds of attention, giving him money, apparel, and horses—the Orsini were reconciled, so that their simplicity brought them into his power at Sinigalia.<sup>1</sup> Having exterminated the leaders, and turned their

<sup>1</sup>Sinigalia, 31st December 1502.

partisans into his friends, the duke laid sufficiently good foundations to his power, having all the Romagna and the Duchy of Urbino; and the people now beginning to appreciate their prosperity, he gained them all over to himself. And as this point is worthy of notice, and to be imitated by others, I am not willing to leave it out.

When the duke occupied the Romagna he found it under the rule of weak masters, who rather plundered their subjects than ruled them, and gave them more cause for disunion than for union, so that the country was full of robbery, quarrels, and every kind of violence; and so, wishing to bring back peace and obedience to authority, he considered it necessary to give it a good governor. Thereupon he promoted Messer Ramiro d'Orco,<sup>1</sup> a swift and cruel man, to whom he gave the fullest power. This man in a short time restored peace and unity with the greatest success. Afterwards the duke considered that it was not advisable to confer such excessive authority, for he had no doubt but that he would become odious, so he set up a court of judgment in the country, under a most excellent president, wherein all cities had their advocates. And because he knew that the past severity had caused some hatred against himself, so, to clear himself in the minds of the people, and gain them entirely to himself, he desired to show that, if any cruelty had been practised, it had not originated with him, but in the natural sternness of the minister. Under this pretence he took Ramiro, and one morning caused him to be executed and left on the piazza at Cesena with the block and a bloody knife at his side. The barbarity of this spectacle caused the people to be at once satisfied and dismayed.

But let us return whence we started. I say that the duke, finding himself now sufficiently powerful and partly secured from immediate dangers by having armed himself in his own way, and having

in a great measure crushed those forces in his vicinity that could injure him if he wished to proceed with his conquest, had next to consider France, for he knew that the king, who too late was aware of his mistake, would not support him. And from this time he began to seek new alliances and to temporize with France in the expedition which she was making towards the kingdom of Naples against the Spaniards who were besieging Gaeta. It was his intention to secure himself against them, and this he would have quickly accomplished had Alexander lived.

Such was his line of action as to present affairs. But as to the future he had to fear, in the first place, that a new successor to the Church might not be friendly to him and might seek to take from him that which Alexander had given him, so he decided to act in four ways. Firstly, by exterminating the families of those lords whom he had despoiled, so as to take away that pretext from the Pope. Secondly, by winning to himself all the gentlemen of Rome, so as to be able to curb the Pope with their aid, as has been observed. Thirdly, by converting the college more to himself. Fourthly, by acquiring so much power before the Pope should die that he could by his own measures resist the first shock. Of these four things, at the death of Alexander, he had accomplished three. For he had killed as many of the dispossessed lords as he could lay hands on, and few had escaped; he had won over the Roman gentlemen, and he had the most numerous party in the college. And as to any fresh acquisition, he intended to become master of Tuscany, for he already possessed Perugia and Piombino, and Pisa was under his protection. And as he had no longer to study France (for the French were already driven out of the kingdom of Naples by the Spaniards, and in this way both were compelled to buy his goodwill), he pounced down

<sup>1</sup>Ramiro d'Orco.  
Ramiro de Lorqua.

upon Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena yielded at once, partly through hatred and partly through fear of the Florentines; and the Florentines would have had no remedy had he continued to prosper, as he was prospering the year that Alexander died, for he had acquired so much power and reputation that he would have stood by himself, and no longer have depended on the luck and the forces of others, but solely on his own power and ability.

But Alexander died five years after he had first drawn the sword. He left the duke with the state of Romagna alone consolidated, with the rest in the air, between two most powerful hostile armies, and sick unto death. Yet there were in the duke such boldness and ability, and he knew so well how men are to be won or lost, and so firm were the foundations which in so short a time he had laid, that if he had not had those armies on his back, or if he had been in good health, he would have overcome all difficulties. And it is seen that his foundations were good, for the Romagna awaited him for more than a month. In Rome, although but half alive, he remained secure; and whilst the Baglioni, the Vitelli, and the Orsini might come to Rome, they could not effect anything against him. If he could not have made Pope him whom he wished, at least the one whom he did not wish would not have been elected. But if he had been in sound health at the death of Alexander,<sup>1</sup> everything would have been different to him. On the day that Julius the Second<sup>2</sup> was elected, he told me that he had thought of everything that might occur at the death of his father, and had provided a remedy for all, except that he had never anticipated that, when the death did happen, he himself would be on the point to die.

When all the actions of the duke are recalled, I do not know how to blame him, but rather it appears to be, as I have said, that I ought to offer

him for imitation to all those who, by the fortune or the arms of others, are raised to government. Because he, having a lofty spirit and far-reaching aims, could not have regulated his conduct otherwise, and only the shortness of the life of Alexander and his own sickness frustrated his designs. Therefore, he who considers it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, to win friends, to overcome either by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people, to be followed and revered by the soldiers, to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him, to change the old order of things for new, to be severe and gracious, magnanimous and liberal, to destroy a disloyal soldiery and to create new, to maintain friendship with kings and princes in such a way that they must help him with zeal and offend with caution, cannot find a more lively example than the actions of this man.

Only can he be blamed for the election of Julius the Second, in whom he made a bad choice, because, as is said, not being able to elect a Pope to his own mind, he could have hindered any other from being elected Pope; and he ought never to have consented to the election of any cardinal whom he had injured or who had cause to fear him if they became pontiffs. For men injure either from fear or hatred. Those whom he had injured, amongst others, were San Pietro ad Vincula, Colonna, San Giorgio, and Ascanio.<sup>3</sup> The rest, in becoming Pope, had to fear him, Rouen and the Spaniards excepted; the latter from their relationship and obligations, the former from his influence, the kingdom of France having relations with him. Therefore, above everything, the duke ought to have created a Spaniard Pope, and, failing him, he ought to have consented to Rouen and not San Pietro ad Vincula. He who believes that new benefits will cause great personages to forget

<sup>1</sup>Alexander VI died of fever, 18th August 1503.

<sup>2</sup>Julius II was Giuliano della Rovere, Cardinal of San Pietro ad Vincula, born 1443, died 1513.

<sup>3</sup>San Giorgio is Raffaello Riario. Ascanio is Ascanio Sforza.

old injuries is deceived. Therefore, the duke erred in his choice, and it was the cause of his ultimate ruin.

*Chapter VIII — Concerning Those  
Who Have Obtained a Principality by  
Wickedness*

Although a prince may rise from a private station in two ways, neither of which can be entirely attributed to fortune or genius, yet it is manifest to me that I must not be silent on them, although one could be more copiously treated when I discuss republics. These methods are when, either by some wicked or nefarious ways, one ascends to the principality, or when by the favour of his fellow-citizens a private person becomes the prince of his country. And speaking of the first method, it will be illustrated by two examples—one ancient, the other modern—and without entering further into the subject, I consider these two examples will suffice those who may be compelled to follow them.

Agathocles, the Sicilian,<sup>1</sup> became King of Syracuse not only from a private but from a low and abject position. This man, the son of a potter, through all the changes in his fortunes always led an infamous life. Nevertheless, he accompanied his infamies with so much ability of mind and body that, having devoted himself to the military profession, he rose through its ranks to be Praetor of Syracuse. Being established in that position, and having deliberately resolved to make himself prince and to seize by violence, without obligation to others, that which had been conceded to him by assent, he came to an understanding for this purpose with Amilcar, the Carthaginian, who, with his army, was fighting in Sicily. One morning he assembled the people and the senate of Syracuse,

as if he had to discuss with them things relating to the Republic, and at a given signal the soldiers killed all the senators and the richest of the people; these dead, he seized and held the principality of that city without any civil commotion. And although he was twice routed by the Carthaginians, and ultimately besieged, yet not only was he able to defend his city, but leaving part of his men for its defence, with the others he attacked Africa, and in a short time raised the siege of Syracuse. The Carthaginians, reduced to extreme necessity, were compelled to come to terms with Agathocles, and, leaving Sicily to him, had to be content with the possession of Africa.

Therefore, he who considers the actions and the genius of this man will see nothing, or little, which can be attributed to fortune, inasmuch as he attained pre-eminence, as is shown above, not by the favour of any one, but step by step in the military profession, which steps were gained with a thousand troubles and perils, and were afterwards boldly held by him with many hazardous dangers. Yet it cannot be called talent to slay fellow-citizens, to deceive friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; such methods may gain empire, but not glory. Still, if the courage of Agathocles in entering into and extricating himself from dangers be considered, together with his greatness of mind in enduring and overcoming hardships, it cannot be seen why he should be esteemed less than the most notable captain. Nevertheless, his barbarous cruelty and inhumanity with infinite wickedness do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men. What he achieved cannot be attributed either to fortune or genius.

In our times, during the rule of Alexander the Sixth, Oliverotto da Fermo, having been left an orphan many years before, was brought up by his maternal uncle, Giovanni Fogliani, and in the

<sup>1</sup>Agathocles the Sicilian, born 361 B.C., died 289 B.C.

early days of his youth sent to fight under Pagolo Vitelli, that, being trained under his discipline, he might attain some high position in the military profession. After Pagolo died, he fought under his brother Vitellozzo, and in a very short time, being endowed with wit and a vigorous body and mind, he became the first man in his profession. But it appearing a paltry thing to serve under others, he resolved, with the aid of some citizens of Fermo, to whom the slavery of their country was dearer than its liberty, and with the help of the Vitelleschi, to seize Fermo. So he wrote to Giovanni Fogliani that, having been away from home for many years, he wished to visit him and his city, and in some measure to look upon his patrimony; and although he had not laboured to acquire anything except honour, yet, in order that the citizens should see he had not spent his time in vain, he desired to come honourably, so would be accompanied by one hundred horsemen, his friends and retainers; and he entreated Giovanni to arrange that he should be received honourably by the Fermians, all of which would be not only to his honour, but also to that of Giovanni himself, who had brought him up.

Giovanni, therefore, did not fail in any attentions due to his nephew, and he caused him to be honourably received by the Fermians, and he lodged him in his own house, where, having passed some days, and having arranged what was necessary for his wicked designs, Oliverotto gave a solemn banquet to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and the chiefs of Fermo. When the viands and all the other entertainments that are usual in such banquets were finished, Oliverotto artfully began certain grave discourses, speaking of the greatness of Pope Alexander and his son Cesare, and of their enterprises, to which discourse Giovanni and others answered; but he rose at once, saying that such matters ought to be discussed in

a more private place, and he betook himself to a chamber, whither Giovanni and the rest of the citizens went in after him. No sooner were they seated than soldiers issued from secret places and slaughtered Giovanni and the rest. After these murders Oliverotto, mounted on horseback, rode up and down the town and besieged the chief magistrate in the palace, so that in fear the people were forced to obey him, and to form a government, of which he made himself the prince. He killed all the malcontents who were able to injure him, and strengthened himself with new civil and military ordinances, in such a way that, in the year during which he held the principality, not only was he secure in the city of Fermo, but he had become formidable to all his neighbours. And his destruction would have been as difficult as that of Agathocles if he had not allowed himself to be overreached by Cesare Borgia, who took him with the Orsini and Vitelli at Sinigalia, as was stated above. Thus one year after he had committed this parricide, he was strangled, together with Vitellozzo, whom he had made his leader in valour and wickedness.

Some may wonder how it can happen that Agathocles, and his like, after infinite treacheries and cruelties, should live for long secure in his country, and defend himself from external enemies, and never be conspired against by his own citizens; seeing that many others, by means of cruelty, have never been able even in peaceful times to hold the state, still less in the doubtful times of war. I believe that this follows from severities being badly or properly used. Those may be called properly used, if of evil it is possible to speak well, that are applied at one blow and are necessary to one's security, and that are not persisted in afterwards unless they can be turned to the advantage of the subjects. The badly employed are those which, notwithstanding they may be few in the

commencement, multiply with time rather than decrease. Those who practise the first system are able, by aid of God or man, to mitigate in some degree their rule, as Agathocles did. It is impossible for those who follow the other to maintain themselves.

Hence it is to be remarked that, in seizing a state, the usurper ought to examine closely into all those injuries which it is necessary for him to inflict, and to do them all at one stroke so as not to have to repeat them daily; and thus by not unsettling men he will be able to reassure them, and win them to himself by benefits. He who does otherwise, either from timidity or evil advice, is always compelled to keep the knife in his hand; neither can he rely on his subjects, nor can they attach themselves to him, owing to their continued and repeated wrongs. For injuries ought to be done all at one time, so that, being tasted less, they offend less; benefits ought to be given little by little, so that the flavour of them may last longer.

And above all things, a prince ought to live amongst his people in such a way that no unexpected circumstances, whether of good or evil, shall make him change; because if the necessity for this comes in troubled times, you are too late for harsh measures; and mild ones will not help you, for they will be considered as forced from you, and no one will be under any obligation to you for them.

### *Chapter IX—Concerning a Civil Principality*

But coming to the other point—where a leading citizen becomes the prince of his country, not by wickedness or any intolerable violence, but by the favour of his fellow citizens—this may be called

a civil principality: nor is genius or fortune altogether necessary to attain to it, but rather a happy shrewdness. I say then that such a principality is obtained either by the favour of the people or by the favour of the nobles. Because in all cities these two distinct parties are found, and from this it arises that the people do not wish to be ruled nor oppressed by the nobles, and the nobles wish to rule and oppress the people; and from these two opposite desires there arises in cities one of three results, either a principality, self-government, or anarchy.

A principality is created either by the people or by the nobles, accordingly as one or other of them has the opportunity; for the nobles, seeing they cannot withstand the people, begin to cry up the reputation of one of themselves, and they make him a prince, so that under his shadow they can give vent to their ambitions. The people, finding they cannot resist the nobles, also cry up the reputation of one of themselves, and make him a prince so as to be defended by his authority. He who obtains sovereignty by the assistance of the nobles maintains himself with more difficulty than he who comes to it by the aid of the people, because the former finds himself with many around him who consider themselves his equals, and because of this he can neither rule nor manage them to his liking. But he who reaches sovereignty by popular favour finds himself alone, and has none around him, or few, who are not prepared to obey him.

Besides this, one cannot by fair dealing, and without injury to others, satisfy the nobles, but you can satisfy the people, for their object is more righteous than that of the nobles, the latter wishing to oppress, while the former only desire not to be oppressed. It is to be added also that a prince can never secure himself against a hostile people,

because of there being too many, whilst from the nobles he can secure himself, as they are few in number. The worst that a prince may expect from a hostile people is to be abandoned by them; but from hostile nobles he has not only to fear abandonment, but also that they will rise against him; for they, being in these affairs more far-seeing and astute, always come forward in time to save themselves, and to obtain favours from him whom they expect to prevail. Further, the prince is compelled to live always with the same people, but he can do well without the same nobles, being able to make and unmake them daily, and to give or take away authority when it pleases him.

<sup>1</sup>Nabis, tyrant of Sparta, conquered by the Romans under Flamininus in 195 B.C.; killed 192 B.C.

Therefore, to make this point clearer, I say that the nobles ought to be looked at mainly in two ways: that is to say, they either shape their course in such a way as binds them entirely to your fortune, or they do not. Those who so bind themselves, and are not rapacious, ought to be honoured and loved; those who do not bind themselves may be dealt with in two ways; they may fail to do this through pusillanimity and a natural want of courage, in which case you ought to make use of them, especially of those who are of good counsel; and thus, whilst in prosperity you honour them, in adversity you do not have to fear them. But when for their own ambitious ends they shun binding themselves, it is a token that they are giving more thought to themselves than to you, and a prince ought to guard against such, and to fear them as if they were open enemies, because in adversity they always help to ruin him.

<sup>2</sup>Messer Giorgio Scali. This event is to be found in Machiavelli's "Florentine History," Book III.

Therefore, one who becomes a prince through the favour of the people ought to keep them friendly, and this he can easily do seeing they only ask not to be oppressed by him. But one who, in opposition to the people, becomes a prince by the favour of the nobles, ought, above everything, to

seek to win the people over to himself, and this he may easily do if he takes them under his protection. Because men, when they receive good from him of whom they were expecting evil, are bound more closely to their benefactor; thus the people quickly become more devoted to him than if he had been raised to the principality by their favours; and the prince can win their affections in many ways, but as these vary according to the circumstances one cannot give fixed rules, so I omit them; but, I repeat, it is necessary for a prince to have the people friendly, otherwise he has no security in adversity.

Nabis,<sup>1</sup> Prince of the Spartans, sustained the attack of all Greece, and of a victorious Roman army, and against them he defended his country and his government; and for the overcoming of this peril it was only necessary for him to make himself secure against a few, but this would not have been sufficient had the people been hostile. And do not let any one impugn this statement with the trite proverb that "He who builds on the people, builds on the mud," for this is true when a private citizen makes a foundation there, and persuades himself that the people will free him when he is oppressed by his enemies or by the magistrates; wherein he would find himself very often deceived, as happened to the Gracchi in Rome and to Messer Giorgio Scali<sup>2</sup> in Florence. But granted a prince who has established himself as above, who can command, and is a man of courage, undismayed in adversity, who does not fail in other qualifications, and who, by his resolution and energy, keeps the whole people encouraged—such a one will never find himself deceived in them, and it will be shown that he has laid his foundations well.

These principalities are liable to danger when they are passing from the civil to the absolute order

of government, for such princes either rule personally or through magistrates. In the latter case their government is weaker and more insecure, because it rests entirely on the goodwill of those citizens who are raised to the magistracy, and who, especially in troubled times, can destroy the government with great ease, either by intrigue or open defiance; and the prince has not the chance amid tumults to exercise absolute authority, because the citizens and subjects, accustomed to receive orders from magistrates, are not of a mind to obey him amid these confusions, and there will always be in doubtful times a scarcity of men whom he can trust. For such a prince cannot rely upon what he observes in quiet times, when citizens have need of the state, because then every one agrees with him; they all promise, and when death is far distant they all wish to die for him; but in troubled times, when the state has need of its citizens, then he finds but few. And so much the more is this experiment dangerous, inasmuch as it can only be tried once. Therefore a wise prince ought to adopt such a course that his citizens will always in every sort and kind of circumstance have need of the state and of him, and then he will always find them faithful.

*Chapter X — Concerning the Way in  
Which the Strength of All Principalities  
Ought to Be Measured*

It is necessary to consider another point in examining the character of these principalities: that is, whether a prince has such power that, in case of need, he can support himself with his own resources, or whether he has always need of the assistance of others. And to make this quite clear I say that I consider those who are able to support themselves

by their own resources who can, either by abundance of men or money, raise a sufficient army to join battle against any one who comes to attack them; and I consider those always to have need of others who cannot show themselves against the enemy in the field, but are forced to defend themselves by sheltering behind walls. The first case has been discussed, but we will speak of it again should it recur. In the second case one can say nothing except to encourage such princes to provision and fortify their towns, and not on any account to defend the country. And whoever shall fortify his town well, and shall have managed the other concerns of his subjects in the way stated above, and to be often repeated, will never be attacked without great caution, for men are always adverse to enterprises where difficulties can be seen, and it will be seen not to be an easy thing to attack one who has his town well fortified, and is not hated by his people.

The cities of Germany are absolutely free, they own but little country around them, and they yield obedience to the emperor when it suits them, nor do they fear this or any other power they may have near them, because they are fortified in such a way that every one thinks the taking of them by assault would be tedious and difficult, seeing they have proper ditches and walls, they have sufficient artillery, and they always keep in public depots enough for one year's eating, drinking, and firing. And beyond this, to keep the people quiet and without loss to the state, they always have the means of giving work to the community in those labours that are the life and strength of the city, and on the pursuit of which the people are supported; they also hold military exercises in repute, and moreover have many ordinances to uphold them.

Therefore, a prince who has a strong city, and had not made himself odious, will not be attacked,

or if any one should attack he will only be driven off with disgrace; again, because that the affairs of this world are so changeable, it is almost impossible to keep an army a whole year in the field without being interfered with. And whoever should reply: If the people have property outside the city, and see it burnt, they will not remain patient, and the long siege and self-interest will make them forget their prince; to this I answer that a powerful and courageous prince will overcome all such difficulties by giving at one time hope to his subjects that the evil will not be for long, at another time fear of the cruelty of the enemy, then preserving himself adroitly from those subjects who seem to him to be too bold.

Further, the enemy would naturally on his arrival at once burn and ruin the country at the time when the spirits of the people are still hot and ready for the defence; and, therefore, so much the less ought the prince to hesitate; because after a time, when spirits have cooled, the damage is already done, the ills are incurred, and there is no longer any remedy; and therefore they are so much the more ready to unite with their prince, he appearing to be under obligations to them now that their houses have been burnt and their possessions ruined in his defence. For it is the nature of men to be bound by the benefits they confer as much as by those they receive. Therefore, if everything is well considered, it will not be difficult for a wise prince to keep the minds of his citizens steadfast from first to last, when he does not fail to support and defend them.

## *Chapter XI — Concerning Ecclesiastical Principalities*

It only remains now to speak of ecclesiastical principalities, touching which all difficulties are prior to getting possession, because they are acquired either by capacity or good fortune, and they can be held without either; for they are sustained by the ancient ordinances of religion, which are so all-powerful, and of such a character that the principalities may be held no matter how their princes behave and live. These princes alone have states and do not defend them; and they have subjects and do not rule them; and the states, although unguarded, are not taken from them, and the subjects, although not ruled, do not care, and they have neither the desire nor the ability to alienate themselves. Such principalities only are secure and happy. But being upheld by powers, to which the human mind cannot reach, I shall speak no more of them, because, being exalted and maintained by God, it would be the act of a presumptuous and rash man to discuss them.

Nevertheless, if any one should ask of me how comes it that the Church has attained such greatness in temporal power, seeing that from Alexander backwards the Italian potentates (not only those who have been called potentates, but every baron and lord, though the smallest) have valued the temporal power very slightly—yet now a king of France trembles before it, and it has been able to drive him from Italy, and to ruin the Venetians—although this may be very manifest, it does not appear to me superfluous to recall it in some measure to memory.

Before Charles, King of France, passed into Italy,<sup>1</sup> this country was under the dominion of the Pope, the Venetians, the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and the Florentines. These potentates

<sup>1</sup>Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494.

had two principal anxieties: the one, that no foreigner should enter Italy under arms; the other, that none of themselves should seize more territory. Those about whom there was the most anxiety were the Pope and the Venetians. To restrain the Venetians the union of all the others was necessary, as it was for the defence of Ferrara; and to keep down the Pope they made use of the barons of Rome, who, being divided into two factions, Orsini and Colonna, had always a pretext for disorder, and, standing with arms in their hands under the eyes of the Pontiff, kept the pontificate weak and powerless. And although there might arise sometimes a courageous pope, such as Sixtus, yet neither fortune nor wisdom could rid him of these annoyances. And the short life of a pope is also a cause of weakness; for in the ten years, which is the average life of a pope, he can with difficulty lower one of the factions; and if, so to speak, one people should almost destroy the Colonna, another would arise hostile to the Orsini, who would support their opponents, and yet would not have time to ruin the Orsini. This was the reason why the temporal powers of the pope were little esteemed in Italy.

Alexander the Sixth arose afterwards, who of all the pontiffs that have ever been showed how a pope with both money and arms was able to prevail; and through the instrumentality of the Duke Valentino, and by reason of the entry of the French, he brought about all those things which I have discussed above in the actions of the duke. And although his intention was not to aggrandize the Church, but the duke, nevertheless, what he did contributed to the greatness of the Church, which, after his death and the ruin of the duke, became the heir to all his labours.

Pope Julius came afterwards and found the Church strong, possessing all the Romagna, the

barons of Rome reduced to impotence, and, through the chastisements of Alexander, the factions wiped out; he also found the way open to accumulate money in a manner such as had never been practised before Alexander's time. Such things Julius not only followed, but improved upon, and he intended to gain Bologna, to ruin the Venetians, and to drive the French out of Italy. All of these enterprises prospered with him, and so much the more to his credit, inasmuch as he did everything to strengthen the Church and not any private person. He kept also the Orsini and Colonna factions within the bounds in which he found them; and although there was among them some mind to make disturbance, nevertheless he held two things firm: the one, the greatness of the Church, with which he terrified them; and the other, not allowing them to have their own cardinals, who caused the disorders among them. For whenever these factions have their cardinals they do not remain quiet for long, because cardinals foster the factions in Rome and out of it, and the barons are compelled to support them, and thus from the ambitions of prelates arise disorders and tumults among the barons. For these reasons his Holiness Pope Leo<sup>1</sup> found the pontificate most powerful, and it is to be hoped that, if others made it great in arms, he will make it still greater and more venerated by his goodness and infinite other virtues.

<sup>1</sup>Pope Leo X was the Cardinal de' Medici.

### *Chapter XII — How Many Kinds of Soldiery There Are, and Concerning Mercenaries*

Having discoursed particularly on the characteristics of such principalities as in the beginning I proposed to discuss, and having considered in some

<sup>1</sup>“With chalk in hand,” “col gesso.” This is one of the *bons mots* of Alexander VI, and refers to the ease with which Charles VIII seized Italy, implying that it was only necessary for him to send his quartermasters to chalk up the billets for his soldiers to conquer the country. Cf. “The History of Henry VII,” by Lord Bacon: “King Charles had conquered the realm of Naples, and lost it again, in a kind of a felicity of a dream. He passed the whole length of Italy without resistance: so that it was true what Pope Alexander was wont to say: That the Frenchmen came into Italy with chalk in their hands, to mark up their lodgings, rather than with swords to fight.”

degree the causes of there being good or bad, and having shown the methods by which many have sought to acquire them and to hold them, it now remains for me to discuss generally the means of offence and defence which belong to each of them.

We have seen above how necessary it is for a prince to have his foundations well laid, otherwise it follows of necessity he will go to ruin. The chief foundations of all states, new as well as old or composite, are good laws and good arms; and as there cannot be good laws where the state is not well armed, it follows that where they are well armed they have good laws. I shall leave the laws out of the discussion and shall speak of the arms.

I say, therefore, that the arms with which a prince defends his state are either his own, or they are mercenaries, auxiliaries, or mixed. Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous; and if one holds his state based on these arms, he will stand neither firm nor safe; for they are disunited, ambitious, and without discipline, unfaithful, valiant before friends, cowardly before enemies; they have neither the fear of God nor fidelity to men, and destruction is deferred only so long as the attack is; for in peace one is robbed by them, and in war by the enemy. The fact is, they have no other attraction or reason for keeping the field than a trifle of stipend, which is not sufficient to make them willing to die for you. They are ready enough to be your soldiers whilst you do not make war, but if war comes they take themselves off or run from the foe; which I should have little trouble to prove, for the ruin of Italy has been caused by nothing else than by resting all her hopes for many years on mercenaries, and although they formerly made some display and appeared valiant amongst themselves, yet when the foreigners came they showed what they were. Thus it was that Charles, King of France, was allowed to seize Italy with chalk in

hand;<sup>1</sup> and he who told us that our sins were the cause of it told the truth, but they were not the sins he imagined, but those which I have related. And as they were the sins of princes, it is the princes who have also suffered the penalty.

I wish to demonstrate further the infelicity of these arms. The mercenary captains are either capable men or they are not; if they are, you cannot trust them, because they always aspire to their own greatness, either by oppressing you, who are their master, or others contrary to your intentions; but if the captain is not skilful, you are ruined in the usual way.

And if it be urged that whoever is armed will act in the same way, whether mercenary or not, I reply that when arms have to be resorted to, either by a prince or a republic, then the prince ought to go in person and perform the duty of a captain; the republic has to send its citizens, and when one is sent who does not turn out satisfactorily, it ought to recall him, and when one is worthy, to hold him by the laws so that he does not leave the command. And experience has shown princes and republics, single-handed, making the greatest progress, and mercenaries doing nothing except damage; and it is more difficult to bring a republic, armed with its own arms, under the sway of one of its citizens than it is to bring one armed with foreign arms. Rome and Sparta stood for many ages armed and free. The Switzers are completely armed and quite free.

Of ancient mercenaries, for example, there are the Carthaginians, who were oppressed by their mercenary soldiers after the first war with the Romans, although the Carthaginians had their own citizens for captains. After the death of Epaminondas, Philip of Macedon was made captain of their soldiers by the Thebans, and after victory he took away their liberty.

Duke Filippo being dead, the Milanese enlisted Francesco Sforza against the Venetians, and he, having overcome the enemy at Caravaggio,<sup>1</sup> allied himself with them to crush the Milanese, his masters. His father, Sforza, having been engaged by Queen Johanna<sup>2</sup> of Naples, left her unprotected, so that she was forced to throw herself into the arms of the King of Aragon, in order to save her kingdom. And if the Venetians and Florentines formerly extended their dominions by these arms, and yet their captains did not make themselves princes, but have defended them, I reply that the Florentines in this case have been favoured by chance, for of the able captains, of whom they might have stood in fear, some have not conquered, some have been opposed, and others have turned their ambitions elsewhere. One who did not conquer was Giovanni Acuto,<sup>3</sup> and since he did not conquer his fidelity cannot be proved; but every one will acknowledge that, had he conquered, the Florentines would have stood at his discretion. Sforza had the Bracceschi always against him, so they watched each other. Francesco turned his ambition to Lombardy; Braccio against the Church and the kingdom of Naples. But let us come to that which happened a short while ago. The Florentines appointed as their captain Pagolo Vitelli, a most prudent man, who from a private position had risen to the greatest renown. If this man had taken Pisa, nobody can deny that it would have been proper for the Florentines to keep in with him, for if he became the soldier of their enemies they had no means of resisting, and if they held to him they must obey him. The Venetians, if their achievements are considered, will be seen to have acted safely and gloriously so long as they sent to war their own men, when with armed gentlemen and plebians they did valiantly. This was before they turned to enterprises on land,

but when they began to fight on land they forsook this virtue and followed the custom of Italy. And in the beginning of their expansion on land, through not having much territory, and because of their great reputation, they had not much to fear from their captains; but when they expanded, as under Carmignuola,<sup>4</sup> they had a taste of this mistake; for, having found him a most valiant man (they beat the Duke of Milan under his leadership), and, on the other hand, knowing how lukewarm he was in the war, they feared they would no longer conquer under him, and for this reason they were not willing, nor were they able, to let him go; and so, not to lose again that which they had acquired, they were compelled, in order to secure themselves, to murder him. They had afterwards for their captains Bartolomeo da Bergamo, Roberto da San Severino, the count of Pitigliano,<sup>5</sup> and the like, under whom they had to dread loss and not gain, as happened afterwards at Vaila,<sup>6</sup> where in one battle they lost that which in eight hundred years they had acquired with so much trouble. Because from such arms conquests come but slowly, long delayed and inconsiderable, but the losses sudden and portentous.

And as with these examples I have reached Italy, which has been ruled for many years by mercenaries, I wish to discuss them more seriously, in order that, having seen their rise and progress, one may be better prepared to counteract them. You must understand that the empire has recently come to be repudiated in Italy, that the Pope has acquired more temporal power, and that Italy has been divided up into more states, for the reason that many of the great cities took up arms against their nobles, who, formerly favoured by the emperor, were oppressing them, whilst the Church was favouring them so as to gain authority in temporal power: in many others their citizens became princes. From

<sup>1</sup> Battle of Caravaggio, 15th September 1448.

<sup>2</sup> Johanna II of Naples, the widow of Ladislao, King of Naples.

<sup>3</sup> Giovanni Acuto. An English knight whose name was Sir John Hawkwood. He fought in the English wars in France, and was knighted by Edward III; afterwards he collected a body of troops and went into Italy. These became the famous "White Company." He took part in many wars, and died in Florence in 1394. He was born about 1320 at Sible Hedingham, a village in Essex. He married Domnia, a daughter of Bernabo Visconti.

<sup>4</sup> Carmignuola. Francesco Bussone, born at Carmagnola about 1390, executed at Venice, 5th May 1432.

<sup>5</sup> Bartolomeo Colleoni of Bergamo; died 1457. Roberto of San Severino; died fighting for Venice against Sigismund, Duke of Austria, in 1487. "Primo capitano in Italia."

<sup>6</sup> Battle of Vaila in 1509.

### *Chapter XIII — Concerning Auxiliaries, Mixed Soldiery, and One's Own*

this it came to pass that Italy fell partly into the hands of the Church and of republics, and, the Church consisting of priests and the republic of citizens unaccustomed to arms, both commenced to enlist foreigners.

The first who gave renown to this soldiery was Alberigo da Conio,<sup>1</sup> the Romagnian. From the school of this man sprang, among others, Braccio and Sforza, who in their time were the arbiters of Italy. After these came all the other captains who till now have directed the arms of Italy; and the end of all their valour has been, that she has been overrun by Charles, robbed by Louis, ravaged by Ferdinand, and insulted by the Switzers. The principle that has guided them has been, first, to lower the credit of infantry so that they might increase their own. They did this because, subsisting on their pay and without territory, they were unable to support many soldiers, and a few infantry did not give them any authority; so they were led to employ cavalry, with a moderate force of which they were maintained and honoured; and affairs were brought to such a pass that, in an army of twenty thousand soldiers, there were not to be found two thousand foot soldiers. They had, besides this, used every art to lessen fatigue and danger to themselves and their soldiers, not killing in the fray, but taking prisoners and liberating without ransom. They did not attack towns at night, nor did the garrisons of the towns attack encampments at night; they did not surround the camp either with stockade or ditch, nor did they campaign in the winter. All these things were permitted by their military rules, and devised by them to avoid, as I have said, both fatigue and dangers; thus they have brought Italy to slavery and contempt.

Auxiliaries, which are the other useless arm, are employed when a prince is called in with his forces to aid and defend, as was done by Pope Julius in the most recent times; for he, having, in the enterprise against Ferrara, had poor proof of his mercenaries, turned to auxiliaries, and stipulated with Ferdinand, King of Spain,<sup>2</sup> for his assistance with men and arms. These arms may be useful and good in themselves, but for him who calls them in they are always disadvantageous; for losing, one is undone, and winning, one is their captive.

And although ancient histories may be full of examples, I do not wish to leave this recent one of Pope Julius the Second, the peril of which cannot fail to be perceived; for he, wishing to get Ferrara, threw himself entirely into the hands of the foreigner. But his good fortune brought about a third event, so that he did not reap the fruit of his rash choice; because, having his auxiliaries routed at Ravenna, and the Switzers having risen and driven out the conquerors (against all expectation, both his and others), it so came to pass that he did not become prisoner to his enemies, they having fled, nor to his auxiliaries, he having conquered by other arms than theirs.

The Florentines, being entirely without arms, sent ten thousand Frenchmen to take Pisa, whereby they ran more danger than at any other time of their troubles.

The Emperor of Constantinople,<sup>3</sup> to oppose his neighbours, sent ten thousand Turks into Greece, who, on the war being finished, were not willing to quit; this was the beginning of the servitude of Greece to the infidels.

Therefore, let him who has no desire to conquer make use of these arms, for they are much more

<sup>1</sup> Alberigo da Conio. Alberico da Barbiano, Count of Cunio in Romagna. He was the leader of the famous "Company of St George," composed entirely of Italian soldiers. He died in 1409.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand V (F. II of Aragon and Sicily, F. III of Naples), surnamed "The Catholic," born 1452, died 1516.

<sup>3</sup> Joannes Cantacuzenus, born 1300, died 1383.

hazardous than mercenaries, because with them the ruin is ready made; they are all united, all yield obedience to others; but with mercenaries, when they have conquered, more time and better opportunities are needed to injure you; they are not all of one community, they are found and paid by you, and a third party, which you have made their head, is not able all at once to assume enough authority to injure you. In conclusion, in mercenaries dastardly is most dangerous; in auxiliaries, valour. The wise prince, therefore, has always avoided these arms and turned to his own; and has been willing rather to lose with them than to conquer with the others, not deeming that a real victory which is gained with the arms of others.

I shall never hesitate to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions. This duke entered the Romagna with auxiliaries, taking there only French soldiers, and with them he captured Imola and Forli; but afterwards, such forces not appearing to him reliable, he turned to mercenaries, discerning less danger in them, and enlisted the Orsini and Vitelli; whom presently, on handling and finding them doubtful, unfaithful, and dangerous, he destroyed and turned to his own men. And the difference between one and the other of these forces can easily be seen when one considers the difference there was in the reputation of the duke, when he had the French, when he had the Orsini and Vitelli, and when he relied on his own soldiers, on whose fidelity he could always count and found it ever increasing; he was never esteemed more highly than when every one saw that he was complete master of his own forces.

I was not intending to go beyond Italian and recent examples, but I am unwilling to leave out Hiero, the Syracusan, he being one of those I have named above. This man, as I have said, made head of the army by the Syracusans, soon found out that

a mercenary soldiery, constituted like our Italian condottieri, was of no use; and it appearing to him that he could neither keep them nor let them go, he had them all cut to pieces, and afterwards made war with his own forces and not with aliens.

I wish also to recall to memory an instance from the Old Testament applicable to this subject. David offered himself to Saul to fight with Goliath, the Philistine champion, and, to give him courage, Saul armed him with his own weapons; which David rejected as soon as he had them on his back, saying he could make no use of them, and that he wished to meet the enemy with his sling and his knife. In conclusion, the arms of others either fall from your back, or they weigh you down, or they bind you fast.

Charles the Seventh,<sup>1</sup> the father of King Louis the Eleventh,<sup>2</sup> having by good fortune and valour liberated France from the English, recognized the necessity of being armed with forces of his own, and he established in his kingdom ordinances concerning men-at-arms and infantry. Afterwards his son, King Louis, abolished the infantry and began to enlist the Switzers, which mistake, followed by others, is, as is now seen, a source of peril to that kingdom; because, having raised the reputation of the Switzers, he has entirely diminished the value of his own arms, for he has destroyed the infantry altogether; and his men-at-arms he has subordinated to others, for, being as they are so accustomed to fight along with Switzers, it does not appear that they can now conquer without them. Hence it arises that the French cannot stand against the Switzers, and without the Switzers they do not come off well against others. The armies of the French have thus become mixed, partly mercenary and partly national, both of which arms together are much better than mercenaries alone or auxiliaries alone, but much inferior to one's own forces.

<sup>1</sup>Charles VII of France, surnamed "The Victorious," born 1403, died 1461.

<sup>2</sup>Louis XI, son of the above, born 1423, died 1483.

And this example proves it, for the kingdom of France would be unconquerable if the ordinance of Charles had been enlarged or maintained.

But the scanty wisdom of man, on entering into an affair which looks well at first, cannot discern the poison that is hidden in it, as I have said above of hectic fevers. Therefore, if he who rules a principality cannot recognize evils until they are upon him, he is not truly wise; and this insight is given to few. And if the first disaster to the Roman Empire<sup>1</sup> should be examined, it will be found to have commenced only with the enlisting of the Goths; because from that time the vigour of the Roman Empire began to decline, and all that valour which had raised it passed away to others.

I conclude, therefore, that no principality is secure without having its own forces; on the contrary, it is entirely dependent on good fortune, not having the valour which in adversity would defend it. And it has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men that nothing can be so uncertain or unstable as fame or power not founded on its own strength. And one's own forces are those which are composed either of subjects, citizens, or dependents; all others are mercenaries or auxiliaries. And the way to make ready one's own forces will be easily found if the rules suggested by me shall be reflected upon, and if one will consider how Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, and many republics and princes have armed and organized themselves, to which rules I entirely commit myself.

#### *Chapter XIV— That Which Concerns a Prince on the Subject of the Art of War*

A prince ought to have no other aim or thought, nor select anything else for his study, than war

and its rules and discipline; for this is the sole art that belongs to him who rules, and it is of such force that it not only upholds those who are born princes, but it often enables men to rise from a private station to that rank. And, on the contrary, it is seen that when princes have thought more of ease than of arms they have lost their states. And the first cause of your losing it is to neglect this art; and what enables you to acquire a state is to be master of the art. Francesco Sforza, through being martial, from a private person became Duke of Milan; and the sons, through avoiding the hardships and troubles of arms, from dukes became private persons. For among other evils which being unarmed brings you, it causes you to be despised, and this is one of those ignominies against which a prince ought to guard himself, as is shown later on. Because there is nothing proportionate between the armed and the unarmed; and it is not reasonable that he who is armed should yield obedience willingly to him who is unarmed, or that the unarmed man should be secure among armed servants. Because, there being in the one disdain and in the other suspicion, it is not possible for them to work well together. And therefore a prince who does not understand the art of war, over and above the other misfortunes already mentioned, cannot be respected by his soldiers, nor can he rely on them. He ought never, therefore, to have out of his thoughts this subject of war, and in peace he should addict himself more to its exercise than in war; this he can do in two ways, the one by action, the other by study.

As regards action, he ought above all things to keep his men well organized and drilled, to follow incessantly the chase, by which he accustoms his body to hardships, and learns something of the nature of localities, and gets to find out how the mountains rise, how the valleys open out, how the

<sup>1</sup>“Many speakers to the House the other night in the debate on the reduction of armaments seemed to show a most lamentable ignorance of the conditions under which the British Empire maintains its existence. When Mr Balfour replied to the allegations that the Roman Empire sank under the weight of its military obligations, he said that this was ‘wholly un-historical.’ He might well have added that the Roman power was at its zenith when every citizen acknowledged his liability to fight for the State, but that it began to decline as soon as this obligation was no longer recognized.”—Pall Mall Gazette, 15th May 1906.

plains lie, and to understand the nature of rivers and marshes, and in all this to take the greatest care. Which knowledge is useful in two ways. Firstly, he learns to know his country, and is better able to undertake its defence; afterwards, by means of the knowledge and observation of that locality, he understands with ease any other which it may be necessary for him to study hereafter; because the hills, valleys, and plains, and rivers and marshes that are, for instance, in Tuscany, have a certain resemblance to those of other countries, so that with a knowledge of the aspect of one country one can easily arrive at a knowledge of others. And the prince that lacks this skill lacks the essential which it is desirable that a captain should possess, for it teaches him to surprise his enemy, to select quarters, to lead armies, to array the battle, to besiege towns to advantage.

Philopoemen,<sup>1</sup> Prince of the Achaeans, among other praises which writers have bestowed on him, is commended because in time of peace he never had anything in his mind but the rules of war; and when he was in the country with friends, he often stopped and reasoned with them: "If the enemy should be upon that hill, and we should find ourselves here with our army, with whom would be the advantage? How should one best advance to meet him, keeping the ranks? If we should wish to retreat, how ought we to pursue?" And he would set forth to them, as he went, all the chances that could befall an army; he would listen to their opinion and state his, confirming it with reasons, so that by these continual discussions there could never arise, in time of war, any unexpected circumstances that he could not deal with.

But to exercise the intellect the prince should read histories, and study there the actions of illustrious men, to see how they have borne themselves in war, to examine the causes of their victories and

defeat, so as to avoid the latter and imitate the former; and above all do as an illustrious man did, who took as an exemplar one who had been praised and famous before him, and whose achievements and deeds he always kept in his mind, as it is said Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar Alexander, Scipio Cyrus. And whoever reads the life of Cyrus, written by Xenophon, will recognize afterwards in the life of Scipio how that imitation was his glory, and how in chastity, affability, humanity, and liberality Scipio conformed to those things which have been written of Cyrus by Xenophon. A wise prince ought to observe some such rules, and never in peaceful times stand idle, but increase his resources with industry in such a way that they may be available to him in adversity, so that if fortune chances it may find him prepared to resist her blows.

#### *Chapter XV—Concerning Things for Which Men, and Especially Princes, are Praised or Blamed*

It remains now to see what ought to be the rules of conduct for a prince towards subject and friends. And as I know that many have written on this point, I expect I shall be considered presumptuous in mentioning it again, especially as in discussing it I shall depart from the methods of other people. But, it being my intention to write a thing which shall be useful to him who apprehends it, it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of the matter than the imagination of it; for many have pictured republics and principalities which in fact have never been known or seen, because how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live, that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his

<sup>1</sup>Philopoemen, "the last of the Greeks," born 252 B.C., died 183 B.C.

preservation; for a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil.

Hence it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity. Therefore, putting on one side imaginary things concerning a prince, and discussing those which are real, I say that all men when they are spoken of, and chiefly princes for being more highly placed, are remarkable for some of those qualities which bring them either blame or praise; and thus it is that one is reputed liberal, another miserly, using a Tuscan term (because an avaricious person in our language is still he who desires to possess by robbery, whilst we call one miserly who deprives himself too much of the use of his own); one is reputed generous, one rapacious; one cruel, one compassionate; one faithless, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and brave; one affable, another haughty; one lascivious, another chaste; one sincere, another cunning; one hard, another easy; one grave, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving, and the like. And I know that every one will confess that it would be most praiseworthy in a prince to exhibit all the above qualities that are considered good; but because they can neither be entirely possessed nor observed, for human conditions do not permit it, it is necessary for him to be sufficiently prudent that he may know how to avoid the reproach of those vices which would lose him his state; and also to keep himself, if it be possible, from those which would not lose him it; but this not being possible, he may with less hesitation abandon himself to them. And again, he need not make himself uneasy at incurring a reproach for those vices without which the state can only be saved with difficulty, for if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which

looks like virtue, if followed, would be his ruin; whilst something else, which looks like vice, yet followed brings him security and prosperity.

### *Chapter XVI — Concerning Liberality and Meanness*

Commencing then with the first of the above-named characteristics, I say that it would be well to be reputed liberal. Nevertheless, liberality exercised in a way that does not bring you the reputation for it, injures you; for if one exercises it honestly and as it should be exercised, it may not become known, and you will not avoid the reproach of its opposite. Therefore, any one wishing to maintain among men the name of liberal is obliged to avoid no attribute of magnificence; so that a prince thus inclined will consume in such acts all his property, and will be compelled in the end, if he wish to maintain the name of liberal, to unduly weigh down his people, and tax them, and do everything he can to get money. This will soon make him odious to his subjects, and becoming poor he will be little valued by any one; thus, with his liberality, having offended many and rewarded few, he is affected by the very first trouble and imperilled by whatever may be the first danger; recognizing this himself, and wishing to draw back from it, he runs at once into the reproach of being miserly.

Therefore, a prince, not being able to exercise this virtue of liberality in such a way that it is recognized, except to his cost, if he is wise he ought not to fear the reputation of being mean, for in time he will come to be more considered than if liberal, seeing that with his economy his revenues are enough, that he can defend himself against all attacks, and is able to engage in enterprises without burdening his people; thus it comes to pass

that he exercises liberality towards all from whom he does not take, who are numberless, and meanness towards those to whom he does not give, who are few.

We have not seen great things done in our time except by those who have been considered mean; the rest have failed. Pope Julius the Second was assisted in reaching the papacy by a reputation for liberality, yet he did not strive afterwards to keep it up, when he made war on the King of France; and he made many wars without imposing any extraordinary tax on his subjects, for he supplied his additional expenses out of his long thriftiness. The present King of Spain would not have undertaken or conquered in so many enterprises if he had been reputed liberal. A prince, therefore, provided that he has not to rob his subjects, that he can defend himself, that he does not become poor and abject, that he is not forced to become rapacious, ought to hold of little account a reputation for being mean, for it is one of those vices which will enable him to govern.

And if any one should say: Caesar obtained empire by liberality, and many others have reached the highest positions by having been liberal, and by being considered so, I answer: Either you are a prince in fact, or in a way to become one. In the first case this liberality is dangerous, in the second it is very necessary to be considered liberal; and Caesar was one of those who wished to become pre-eminent in Rome; but if he had survived after becoming so, and had not moderated his expenses, he would have destroyed his government. And if any one should reply: Many have been princes, and have done great things with armies, who have been considered very liberal, I reply: Either a prince spends that which is his own or his subjects' or else that of others. In the first case he ought to be sparing, in the second he ought not to neglect

any opportunity for liberality. And to the prince who goes forth with his army, supporting it by pillage, sack, and extortion, handling that which belongs to others, this liberality is necessary, otherwise he would not be followed by soldiers. And of that which is neither yours nor your subjects' you can be a ready giver, as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander; because it does not take away your reputation if you squander that of others, but adds to it; it is only squandering your own that injures you.

And there is nothing wastes so rapidly as liberality, for even whilst you exercise it you lose the power to do so, and so become either poor or despised, or else, in avoiding poverty, rapacious and hated. And a prince should guard himself, above all things, against being despised and hated; and liberality leads you to both. Therefore it is wiser to have a reputation for meanness which brings reproach without hatred, than to be compelled through seeking a reputation for liberality to incur a name for rapacity which begets reproach with hatred.

### *Chapter XVII — Concerning Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved Than Feared*

Coming now to the other qualities mentioned above, I say that every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; notwithstanding, his cruelty reconciled the Romagna, unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. And if this be rightly considered, he will be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, permitted

<sup>1</sup>During the rioting between the Cancellieri and Panciatichi factions in 1502 and 1503.

Pistoia to be destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise, from which follow murders or robberies; for these are wont to injure the whole people, whilst those executions which originate with a prince offend the individual only.

And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to avoid the imputation of cruelty, owing to new states being full of dangers. Hence Virgil, through the mouth of Dido, excuses the inhumanity of her reign owing to its being new, saying:

*“Res dura, et regni novitas me talia  
cogunt Moliri, et late fines custode  
tueri.”*<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless he ought to be slow to believe and to act, nor should he himself show fear, but proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable.

Upon this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children, as is said above, when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you. And that prince who, relying entirely on their promises, has neglected other precautions, is ruined; because

friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon; and men have less scruple in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.

Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred; because he can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated, which will always be as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for manifest cause, but above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Besides, pretexts for taking away the property are never wanting; for he who has once begun to live by robbery will always find pretexts for seizing what belongs to others; but reasons for taking life, on the contrary, are more difficult to find and sooner lapse. But when a prince is with his army, and has under control a multitude of soldiers, then it is quite necessary for him to disregard the reputation of cruelty, for without it he would never hold his army united or disposed to its duties.

Among the wonderful deeds of Hannibal this one is enumerated: that having led an enormous army, composed of many various races of men, to fight in foreign lands, no dissensions arose either among them or against the prince, whether in his bad or in his good fortune. This arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, with his

<sup>2</sup>. . . against my will,  
my fate  
A throne unsettled,  
and an infant state,  
Bid me defend  
my realms with all  
my pow'rs,  
And guard with  
these severities my  
shores.

-Christopher Pitt

boundless valour, made him revered and terrible in the sight of his soldiers, but without that cruelty, his other virtues were not sufficient to produce this effect. And short-sighted writers admire his deeds from one point of view and from another condemn the principal cause of them. That it is true his other virtues would not have been sufficient for him may be proved by the case of Scipio, that most excellent man, not only of his own times but within the memory of man, against whom, nevertheless, his army rebelled in Spain; this arose from nothing but his too great forbearance, which gave his soldiers more license than is consistent with military discipline. For this he was upbraided in the Senate by Fabius Maximus, and called the corrupter of the Roman soldiery. The Locrians were laid waste by a legate of Scipio, yet they were not avenged by him, nor was the insolence of the legate punished, owing entirely to his easy nature. Insomuch that someone in the Senate, wishing to excuse him, said there were many men who knew much better how not to err than to correct the errors of others. This disposition, if he had been continued in the command, would have destroyed in time the fame and glory of Scipio; but, he being under the control of the Senate, this injurious characteristic not only concealed itself, but contributed to his glory.

Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I come to the conclusion that, men loving according to their own will and fearing according to that of the prince, a wise prince should establish himself on that which is in his own control and not in that of others; he must endeavour only to avoid hatred, as is noted.

### *Chapter XVIII — Concerning the Way in Which Princes Should Keep Faith*

Every one admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word. You must know there are two ways of contesting,\* the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man. This has been figuratively taught to princes by ancient writers, who describe how Achilles and many other princes of old were given to the Centaur Chiron to nurse, who brought them up in his discipline; which means solely that, as they had for a teacher one who was half beast and half man, so it is necessary for a prince to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not durable. A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are about. Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer. If men were entirely good this precept would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them. Nor will there ever be wanting to a prince legitimate reasons to excuse this non-observance.

<sup>1</sup>“Contrary to fidelity” or “faith,” “contro alla fede,” and “tutto fede,” “altogether faithful,” in the next paragraph. It is noteworthy that these two phrases, “contro alla fede” and “tutto fede,” were omitted in the Testina edition, which was published with the sanction of the papal authorities. It may be that the meaning attached to the word “fede” was “the faith,” i.e. the Catholic creed, and not as rendered here “fidelity” and “faithful.” Observe that the word “religione” was suffered to stand in the text of the Testina, being used to signify indifferently every shade of belief, as witness “the religion,” a phrase inevitably employed to designate the Huguenot heresy. South in his Sermon IX, p. 69, ed. 1843, comments on this passage as follows: “That great patron and Coryphaeus of this tribe, Nicolo Machiavel, laid down this for a master rule in his political scheme: ‘That the show of religion was helpful to the politician, but the reality of it hurtful and pernicious.’”

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand of Aragon. “When Machiavelli was writing ‘The Prince’ it would have been clearly impossible to mention Ferdinand’s name here without giving offence.” Burd’s “Il Principe,” p. 308.

Of this endless modern examples could be given, showing how many treaties and engagements have been made void and of no effect through the faithlessness of princes; and he who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best.

But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived. One recent example I cannot pass over in silence. Alexander the Sixth did nothing else but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise, and he always found victims; for there never was a man who had greater power in asserting, or who with greater oaths would affirm a thing, yet would observe it less; nevertheless his deceits always succeeded according to his wishes, because he well understood this side of mankind.

Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite.

And you have to understand this, that a prince, especially a new one, cannot observe all those things for which men are esteemed, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to fidelity,<sup>1</sup> friendship, humanity, and religion. Therefore it is necessary for him to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it, yet, as I have said above, not to diverge from the good if he can avoid doing so, but, if compelled, then to know how to

set about it.

For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not replete with the above-named five qualities, that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you. Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result.

For that reason, let a prince have the credit of conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody; because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on.

One prince<sup>2</sup> of the present time, whom it is not well to name, never preaches anything else but peace and good faith, and to both he is most hostile, and either, if he had kept it, would have deprived him of reputation and kingdom many a time.

## *Chapter XIX — That One Should Avoid Being Despised and Hated*

Now, concerning the characteristics of which mention is made above, I have spoken of the more important ones, the others I wish to discuss briefly under this generality, that the prince must consider, as has been in part said before, how to avoid those things which will make him hated or contemptible; and as often as he shall have succeeded he will have fulfilled his part, and he need not fear any danger in other reproaches.

It makes him hated above all things, as I have said, to be rapacious, and to be a violator of the property and women of his subjects, from both of which he must abstain. And when neither their property nor their honor is touched, the majority of men live content, and he has only to contend with the ambition of a few, whom he can curb with ease in many ways.

It makes him contemptible to be considered fickle, frivolous, effeminate, mean-spirited, irresolute, from all of which a prince should guard himself as from a rock; and he should endeavour to show in his actions greatness, courage, gravity, and fortitude; and in his private dealings with his subjects let him show that his judgments are irrevocable, and maintain himself in such reputation that no one can hope either to deceive him or to get round him.

That prince is highly esteemed who conveys this impression of himself, and he who is highly esteemed is not easily conspired against; for, provided it is well known that he is an excellent man and revered by his people, he can only be attacked with difficulty. For this reason a prince ought to have two fears, one from within, on account of his subjects, the other from without, on account of external powers. From the latter he is defended by

being well armed and having good allies, and if he is well armed he will have good friends, and affairs will always remain quiet within when they are quiet without, unless they should have been already disturbed by conspiracy; and even should affairs outside be disturbed, if he has carried out his preparations and has lived as I have said, as long as he does not despair, he will resist every attack, as I said Nabis the Spartan did.

But concerning his subjects, when affairs outside are disturbed he has only to fear that they will conspire secretly, from which a prince can easily secure himself by avoiding being hated and despised, and by keeping the people satisfied with him, which it is most necessary for him to accomplish, as I said above at length. And one of the most efficacious remedies that a prince can have against conspiracies is not to be hated and despised by the people, for he who conspires against a prince always expects to please them by his removal; but when the conspirator can only look forward to offending them, he will not have the courage to take such a course, for the difficulties that confront a conspirator are infinite. And as experience shows, many have been the conspiracies, but few have been successful; because he who conspires cannot act alone, nor can he take a companion except from those whom he believes to be malcontents, and as soon as you have opened your mind to a malcontent you have given him the material with which to content himself, for by denouncing you he can look for every advantage; so that, seeing the gain from this course to be assured, and seeing the other to be doubtful and full of dangers, he must be a very rare friend, or a thoroughly obstinate enemy of the prince, to keep faith with you.

And, to reduce the matter into a small compass, I say that, on the side of the conspirator, there is nothing but fear, jealousy, prospect of punishment

to terrify him; but on the side of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, the protection of friends and the state to defend him; so that, adding to all these things the popular goodwill, it is impossible that any one should be so rash as to conspire. For whereas in general the conspirator has to fear before the execution of his plot, in this case he has also to fear the sequel to the crime; because on account of it he has the people for an enemy, and thus cannot hope for any escape.

Endless examples could be given on this subject, but I will be content with one, brought to pass within the memory of our fathers. Messer Annibale Bentivogli, who was prince in Bologna (grandfather of the present Annibale), having been murdered by the Canneschi, who had conspired against him, not one of his family survived but Messer Giovanni,<sup>1</sup> who was in childhood: immediately after his assassination the people rose and murdered all the Canneschi. This sprung from the popular goodwill which the house of Bentivogli enjoyed in those days in Bologna; which was so great that, although none remained there after the death of Annibale who was able to rule the state, the Bolognese, having information that there was one of the Bentivogli family in Florence, who up to that time had been considered the son of a blacksmith, sent to Florence for him and gave him the government of their city, and it was ruled by him until Messer Giovanni came in due course to the government.

For this reason I consider that a prince ought to reckon conspiracies of little account when his people hold him in esteem; but when it is hostile to him, and bears hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody. And well-ordered states and wise princes have taken every care not to drive the nobles to desperation, and to keep the people satisfied and contented, for this is one of

the most important objects a prince can have.

Among the best ordered and governed kingdoms of our times is France, and in it are found many good institutions on which depend the liberty and security of the king; of these the first is the parliament and its authority, because he who founded the kingdom, knowing the ambition of the nobility and their boldness, considered that a bit to their mouths would be necessary to hold them in; and, on the other side, knowing the hatred of the people, founded in fear, against the nobles, he wished to protect them, yet he was not anxious for this to be the particular care of the king; therefore, to take away the reproach which he would be liable to from the nobles for favouring the people, and from the people for favouring the nobles, he set up an arbiter, who should be one who could beat down the great and favour the lesser without reproach to the king. Neither could you have a better or a more prudent arrangement, or a greater source of security to the king and kingdom. From this one can draw another important conclusion, that princes ought to leave affairs of reproach to the management of others, and keep those of grace in their own hands. And further, I consider that a prince ought to cherish the nobles, but not so as to make himself hated by the people.

It may appear, perhaps, to some who have examined the lives and deaths of the Roman emperors that many of them would be an example contrary to my opinion, seeing that some of them lived nobly and showed great qualities of soul, nevertheless they have lost their empire or have been killed by subjects who have conspired against them. Wishing, therefore, to answer these objections, I will recall the characters of some of the emperors, and will show that the causes of their ruin were not different to those alleged by me; at the same time I will only submit for consideration

<sup>1</sup>Giovanni Bentivogli, born in Bologna 1438, died at Milan 1508. He ruled Bologna from 1462 to 1506. Machiavelli's strong condemnation of conspiracies may get its edge from his own very recent experience (February 1513), when he had been arrested and tortured for his alleged complicity in the Boscoli conspiracy.

those things that are noteworthy to him who studies the affairs of those times.

It seems to me sufficient to take all those emperors who succeeded to the empire from Marcus the philosopher down to Maximinus; they were Marcus and his son Commodus, Pertinax, Julian, Severus and his son Antoninus Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander, and Maximinus.

There is first to note that, whereas in other principalities the ambition of the nobles and the insolence of the people only have to be contended with, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty in having to put up with the cruelty and avarice of their soldiers, a matter so beset with difficulties that it was the ruin of many; for it was a hard thing to give satisfaction both to soldiers and people; because the people loved peace, and for this reason they loved the unambitious prince, whilst the soldiers loved the warlike prince who was bold, cruel, and rapacious, which qualities they were quite willing he should exercise upon the people, so that they could get double pay and give vent to their own greed and cruelty. Hence it arose that those emperors were always overthrown who, either by birth or training, had no great authority, and most of them, especially those who came new to the principality, recognizing the difficulty of these two opposing humours, were inclined to give satisfaction to the soldiers, caring little about injuring the people. Which course was necessary, because, as princes cannot help being hated by someone, they ought, in the first place, to avoid being hated by every one, and when they cannot compass this, they ought to endeavour with the utmost diligence to avoid the hatred of the most powerful. Therefore, those emperors who through inexperience had need of special favour adhered more readily to the soldiers than to the people; a course which turned out advantageous to them or

not, accordingly as the prince knew how to maintain authority over them.

From these causes it arose that Marcus, Pertinax, and Alexander, being all men of modest life, lovers of justice, enemies to cruelty, humane, and benignant, came to a sad end except Marcus; he alone lived and died honoured, because he had succeeded to the throne by hereditary title, and owed nothing either to the soldiers or the people; and afterwards, being possessed of many virtues which made him respected, he always kept both orders in their places whilst he lived, and was neither hated nor despised.

But Pertinax was created emperor against the wishes of the soldiers, who, being accustomed to live licentiously under Commodus, could not endure the honest life to which Pertinax wished to reduce them; thus, having given cause for hatred, to which hatred there was added contempt for his old age, he was overthrown at the very beginning of his administration. And here it should be noted that hatred is acquired as much by good works as by bad ones, therefore, as I said before, a prince wishing to keep his state is very often forced to do evil; for when that body is corrupt whom you think you have need of to maintain yourself—it may be either the people or the soldiers or the nobles—you have to submit to its humours and to gratify them, and then good works will do you harm.

But let us come to Alexander, who was a man of such great goodness, that among the other praises which are accorded him is this, that in the fourteen years he held the empire no one was ever put to death by him unjudged; nevertheless, being considered effeminate and a man who allowed himself to be governed by his mother, he became despised, the army conspired against him, and murdered him.

Turning now to the opposite characters of

Commodus, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximinus, you will find them all cruel and rapacious-men who, to satisfy their soldiers, did not hesitate to commit every kind of iniquity against the people; and all, except Severus, came to a bad end; but in Severus there was so much valour that, keeping the soldiers friendly, although the people were oppressed by him, he reigned successfully; for his valour made him so much admired in the sight of the soldiers and people that the latter were kept in a way astonished and awed and the former respectful and satisfied. And because the actions of this man, as a new prince, were great, I wish to show briefly that he knew well how to counterfeit the fox and the lion, which natures, as I said above, it is necessary for a prince to imitate.

Knowing the sloth of the Emperor Julian, he persuaded the army in Scavonia, of which he was captain, that it would be right to go to Rome and avenge the death of Pertinax, who had been killed by the praetorian soldiers; and under this pretext, without appearing to aspire to the throne, he moved the army on Rome, and reached Italy before it was known that he had started. On his arrival at Rome, the Senate, through fear, elected him emperor and killed Julian. After this there remained for Severus, who wished to make himself master of the whole empire, two difficulties; one in Asia, where Niger, head of the Asiatic army, had caused himself to be proclaimed emperor; the other in the west where Albinus was, who also aspired to the throne. And as he considered it dangerous to declare himself hostile to both, he decided to attack Niger and to deceive Albinus. To the latter he wrote that, being elected emperor by the Senate, he was willing to share that dignity with him and sent him the title of Caesar; and, moreover, that the Senate had made Albinus his colleague; which things were accepted by Albinus as true. But after

Severus had conquered and killed Niger, and settled oriental affairs, he returned to Rome and complained to the Senate that Albinus, little recognizing the benefits that he had received from him, had by treachery sought to murder him, and for this ingratitude he was compelled to punish him. Afterwards he sought him out in France, and took from him his government and life. He who will, therefore, carefully examine the actions of this man will find him a most valiant lion and a most cunning fox; he will find him feared and respected by every one, and not hated by the army; and it need not be wondered at that he, a new man, was able to hold the empire so well, because his supreme renown always protected him from that hatred which the people might have conceived against him for his violence.

But his son Antoninus was a most eminent man, and had very excellent qualities, which made him admirable in the sight of the people and acceptable to the soldiers, for he was a warlike man, most enduring of fatigue, a despiser of all delicate food and other luxuries, which caused him to be beloved by the armies. Nevertheless, his ferocity and cruelties were so great and so unheard of that, after endless single murders, he killed a large number of the people of Rome and all those of Alexandria. He became hated by the whole world, and also feared by those he had around him, to such an extent that he was murdered in the midst of his army by a centurion. And here it must be noted that such-like deaths, which are deliberately inflicted with a resolved and desperate courage, cannot be avoided by princes, because any one who does not fear to die can inflict them; but a prince may fear them the less because they are very rare; he has only to be careful not to do any grave injury to those whom he employs or has around him in the service of the state. Antoninus had not taken this care, but had

contumeliously killed a brother of that centurion, whom also he daily threatened, yet retained in his bodyguard; which, as it turned out, was a rash thing to do, and proved the emperor's ruin.

But let us come to Commodus, to whom it should have been very easy to hold the empire, for, being the son of Marcus, he had inherited it, and he had only to follow in the footsteps of his father to please his people and soldiers; but, being by nature cruel and brutal, he gave himself up to amusing the soldiers and corrupting them, so that he might indulge his rapacity upon the people; on the other hand, not maintaining his dignity, often descending to the theatre to compete with gladiators, and doing other vile things, little worthy of the imperial majesty, he fell into contempt with the soldiers, and being hated by one party and despised by the other, he was conspired against and was killed.

It remains to discuss the character of Maximinus. He was a very warlike man, and the armies, being disgusted with the effeminacy of Alexander, of whom I have already spoken, killed him and elected Maximinus to the throne. This he did not possess for long, for two things made him hated and despised; the one, his having kept sheep in Thrace, which brought him into contempt (it being well known to all, and considered a great indignity by every one), and the other, his having at the accession to his dominions deferred going to Rome and taking possession of the imperial seat; he had also gained a reputation for the utmost ferocity by having, through his prefects in Rome and elsewhere in the empire, practised many cruelties, so that the whole world was moved to anger at the meanness of his birth and to fear at his barbarity. First Africa rebelled, then the Senate with all the people of Rome, and all Italy conspired against him, to which may be added his own army; this latter,

besieging Aquileia and meeting with difficulties in taking it, were disgusted with his cruelties, and fearing him less when they found so many against him, murdered him.

I do not wish to discuss Heliogabalus, Macrinus, or Julian, who, being thoroughly contemptible, were quickly wiped out; but I will bring this discourse to a conclusion by saying that princes in our times have this difficulty of giving inordinate satisfaction to their soldiers in a far less degree, because, notwithstanding one has to give them some indulgence, that is soon done; none of these princes have armies that are veterans in the governance and administration of provinces, as were the armies of the Roman Empire; and whereas it was then more necessary to give satisfaction to the soldiers than to the people, it is now more necessary to all princes, except the Turk and the Soldan, to satisfy the people rather the soldiers, because the people are the more powerful.

From the above I have excepted the Turk, who always keeps round him twelve thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry on which depend the security and strength of the kingdom, and it is necessary that, putting aside every consideration for the people, he should keep them his friends. The kingdom of the Soldan is similar; being entirely in the hands of soldiers, it follows again that, without regard to the people, he must keep them his friends. But you must note that the state of the Soldan is unlike all other principalities, for the reason that it is like the Christian pontificate, which cannot be called either an hereditary or a newly formed principality; because the sons of the old prince are not the heirs, but he who is elected to that position by those who have authority, and the sons remain only noblemen. And this being an ancient custom, it cannot be called a new principality, because there are none of those difficulties in

it that are met with in new ones; for although the prince is new, the constitution of the state is old, and it is framed so as to receive him as if he were its hereditary lord.

But returning to the subject of our discourse, I say that whoever will consider it will acknowledge that either hatred or contempt has been fatal to the above-named emperors, and it will be recognized also how it happened that, a number of them acting in one way and a number in another, only one in each way came to a happy end and the rest to unhappy ones. Because it would have been useless and dangerous for Pertinax and Alexander, being new princes, to imitate Marcus, who was heir to the principality; and likewise it would have been utterly destructive to Caracalla, Commodus, and Maximinus to have imitated Severus, they not having sufficient valour to enable them to tread in his footsteps. Therefore a prince, new to the principality, cannot imitate the actions of Marcus, nor, again, is it necessary to follow those of Severus, but he ought to take from Severus those parts which are necessary to found his state, and from Marcus those which are proper and glorious to keep a state that may already be stable and firm.

*Chapter XX — Are Fortresses, and Many Other Things to Which Princes Often Resort, Advantageous or Hurtful?*

1. Some princes, so as to hold securely the state, have disarmed their subjects; others have kept their subject towns distracted by factions; others have fostered enmities against themselves; others have laid themselves out to gain over those whom they distrusted in the beginning of their governments; some have built fortresses; some have overthrown and destroyed them. And although one

cannot give a final judgment on all of these things unless one possesses the particulars of those states in which a decision has to be made, nevertheless I will speak as comprehensively as the matter of itself will admit.

2. There never was a new prince who has disarmed his subjects; rather when he has found them disarmed he has always armed them, because, by arming them, those arms become yours, those men who were distrusted become faithful, and those who were faithful are kept so, and your subjects become your adherents. And whereas all subjects cannot be armed, yet when those whom you do arm are benefited, the others can be handled more freely, and this difference in their treatment, which they quite understand, makes the former your dependents, and the latter, considering it to be necessary that those who have the most danger and service should have the most reward, excuse you. But when you disarm them, you at once offend them by showing that you distrust them, either for cowardice or for want of loyalty, and either of these opinions breeds hatred against you. And because you cannot remain unarmed, it follows that you turn to mercenaries, which are of the character already shown; even if they should be good they would not be sufficient to defend you against powerful enemies and distrusted subjects. Therefore, as I have said, a new prince in a new principality has always distributed arms. Histories are full of examples. But when a prince acquires a new state, which he adds as a province to his old one, then it is necessary to disarm the men of that state, except those who have been his adherents in acquiring it; and these again, with time and opportunity, should be rendered soft and effeminate; and matters should be managed in such a way that all the armed men in the state shall be your own

soldiers who in your old state were living near you.

3. Our forefathers, and those who were reckoned wise, were accustomed to say that it was necessary to hold Pistoia by factions and Pisa by fortresses; and with this idea they fostered quarrels in some of their tributary towns so as to keep possession of them the more easily. This may have been well enough in those times when Italy was in a way balanced, but I do not believe that it can be accepted as a precept for to-day, because I do not believe that factions can ever be of use; rather it is certain that when the enemy comes upon you in divided cities you are quickly lost, because the weakest party will always assist the outside forces and the other will not be able to resist. The Venetians, moved, as I believe, by the above reasons, fostered the Guelph and Ghibelline factions in their tributary cities; and although they never allowed them to come to bloodshed, yet they nursed these disputes amongst them, so that the citizens, distracted by their differences, should not unite against them. Which, as we saw, did not afterwards turn out as expected, because, after the rout at Vaila, one party at once took courage and seized the state. Such methods argue, therefore, weakness in the prince, because these factions will never be permitted in a vigorous principality; such methods for enabling one the more easily to manage subjects are only useful in times of peace, but if war comes this policy proves fallacious.

4. Without doubt princes become great when they overcome the difficulties and obstacles by which they are confronted, and therefore fortune, especially when she desires to make a new prince great, who has a greater necessity to earn renown than an hereditary one, causes enemies to arise and form designs against him, in order that he may have the

opportunity of overcoming them, and by them to mount higher, as by a ladder which his enemies have raised. For this reason many consider that a wise prince, when he has the opportunity, ought with craft to foster some animosity against himself, so that, having crushed it, his renown may rise higher.

5. Princes, especially new ones, have found more fidelity and assistance in those men who in the beginning of their rule were distrusted than among those who in the beginning were trusted. Pandolfo Petrucci, Prince of Siena, ruled his state more by those who had been distrusted than by others. But on this question one cannot speak generally, for it varies so much with the individual; I will only say this, that those men who at the commencement of a principedom have been hostile, if they are of a description to need assistance to support themselves, can always be gained over with the greatest ease, and they will be tightly held to serve the prince with fidelity, inasmuch as they know it to be very necessary for them to cancel by deeds the bad impression which he had formed of them; and thus the prince always extracts more profit from them than from those who, serving him in too much security, may neglect his affairs. And since the matter demands it, I must not fail to warn a prince, who by means of secret favours has acquired a new state, that he must well consider the reasons which induced those to favour him who did so; and if it be not a natural affection towards him, but only discontent with their government, then he will only keep them friendly with great trouble and difficulty, for it will be impossible to satisfy them. And weighing well the reasons for this in those examples which can be taken from ancient and modern affairs, we shall find that it is easier for the prince to make friends of those men who

were contented under the former government, and are therefore his enemies, than of those who, being discontented with it, were favourable to him and encouraged him to seize it.

6. It has been a custom with princes, in order to hold their states more securely, to build fortresses that may serve as a bridle and bit to those who might design to work against them, and as a place of refuge from a first attack. I praise this system because it has been made use of formerly. Notwithstanding that, Messer Nicolo Vitelli in our times has been seen to demolish two fortresses in Citta di Castello so that he might keep that state; Guido Ubaldo, Duke of Urbino, on returning to his dominion, whence he had been driven by Cesare Borgia, razed to the foundations all the fortresses in that province, and considered that without them it would be more difficult to lose it; the Bentivogli returning to Bologna came to a similar decision. Fortresses, therefore, are useful or not according to circumstances; if they do you good in one way they injure you in another. And this question can be reasoned thus: the prince who has more to fear from the people than from foreigners ought to build fortresses, but he who has more to fear from foreigners than from the people ought to leave them alone. The castle of Milan, built by Francesco Sforza, has made, and will make, more trouble for the house of Sforza than any other disorder in the state. For this reason the best possible fortress is—not to be hated by the people, because, although you may hold the fortresses, yet they will not save you if the people hate you, for there will never be wanting foreigners to assist a people who have taken arms against you. It has not been seen in our times that such fortresses have been of use to any prince, unless to the Countess of Forli,\* when the Count Girolamo, her consort, was killed; for

by that means she was able to withstand the popular attack and wait for assistance from Milan, and thus recover her state; and the posture of affairs was such at that time that the foreigners could not assist the people. But fortresses were of little value to her afterwards when Cesare Borgia attacked her, and when the people, her enemy, were allied with foreigners. Therefore, it would have been safer for her, both then and before, not to have been hated by the people than to have had the fortresses. All these things considered then, I shall praise him who builds fortresses as well as him who does not, and I shall blame whoever, trusting in them, cares little about being hated by the people.

### *Chapter XVI — How a Prince Should Conduct Himself so as to Gain Renown*

Nothing makes a prince so much esteemed as great enterprises and setting a fine example. We have in our time Ferdinand of Aragon, the present King of Spain. He can almost be called a new prince, because he has risen, by fame and glory, from being an insignificant king to be the foremost king in Christendom; and if you will consider his deeds you will find them all great and some of them extraordinary. In the beginning of his reign he attacked Granada, and this enterprise was the foundation of his dominions. He did this quietly at first and without any fear of hindrance, for he held the minds of the barons of Castile occupied in thinking of the war and not anticipating any innovations; thus they did not perceive that by these means he was acquiring power and authority over them. He was able with the money of the Church and of the people to sustain his armies, and by that long war to lay the foundation for the military skill which has since distinguished him. Further, always

\*Catherine Sforza, a daughter of Galeazzo Sforza and Lucrezia Landriani, born 1463, died 1509. It was to the Countess of Forli that Machiavelli was sent as envoy on 1499. A letter from Fortunati to the countess announces the appointment: "I have been with the signori," wrote Fortunati, "to learn whom they would send and when. They tell me that Nicolo Machiavelli, a learned young Florentine noble, secretary to my Lords of the Ten, is to leave with me at once." Cf. "Catherine Sforza," by Count Pasolini, translated by P. Sylvester, 1898.

using religion as a plea, so as to undertake greater schemes, he devoted himself with pious cruelty to driving out and clearing his kingdom of the Moors; nor could there be a more admirable example, nor one more rare. Under this same cloak he assailed Africa, he came down on Italy, he has finally attacked France; and thus his achievements and designs have always been great, and have kept the minds of his people in suspense and admiration and occupied with the issue of them. And his actions have arisen in such a way, one out of the other, that men have never been given time to work steadily against him.

Again, it much assists a prince to set unusual examples in internal affairs, similar to those which are related of Messer Bernabo da Milano, who, when he had the opportunity, by any one in civil life doing some extraordinary thing, either good or bad, would take some method of rewarding or punishing him, which would be much spoken about. And a prince ought, above all things, always endeavour in every action to gain for himself the reputation of being a great and remarkable man.

A prince is also respected when he is either a true friend or a downright enemy, that is to say, when, without any reservation, he declares himself in favour of one party against the other; which course will always be more advantageous than standing neutral; because if two of your powerful neighbours come to blows, they are of such a character that, if one of them conquers, you have either to fear him or not. In either case it will always be more advantageous for you to declare yourself and to make war strenuously; because, in the first case, if you do not declare yourself, you will invariably fall a prey to the conqueror, to the pleasure and satisfaction of him who has been conquered, and you will have no reasons to offer, nor anything to protect or to shelter you. Because he who conquers

does not want doubtful friends who will not aid him in the time of trial; and he who loses will not harbour you because you did not willingly, sword in hand, court his fate.

Antiochus went into Greece, being sent for by the Aetolians to drive out the Romans. He sent envoys to the Achaeans, who were friends of the Romans, exhorting them to remain neutral; and on the other hand the Romans urged them to take up arms. This question came to be discussed in the council of the Achaeans, where the legate of Antiochus urged them to stand neutral. To this the Roman legate answered: "As for that which has been said, that it is better and more advantageous for your state not to interfere in our war, nothing can be more erroneous; because by not interfering you will be left, without favour or consideration, the guerdon of the conqueror." Thus it will always happen that he who is not your friend will demand your neutrality, whilst he who is your friend will entreat you to declare yourself with arms. And irresolute princes, to avoid present dangers, generally follow the neutral path, and are generally ruined. But when a prince declares himself gallantly in favour of one side, if the party with whom he allies himself conquers, although the victor may be powerful and may have him at his mercy, yet he is indebted to him, and there is established a bond of amity; and men are never so shameless as to become a monument of ingratitude by oppressing you. Victories after all are never so complete that the victor must not show some regard, especially to justice. But if he with whom you ally yourself loses, you may be sheltered by him, and whilst he is able he may aid you, and you become companions on a fortune that may rise again.

In the second case, when those who fight are of such a character that you have no anxiety as to who may conquer, so much the more is it greater

<sup>1</sup>"Guilds or societies," "in arti o in tribu." "Arti" were craft or trade guilds, cf. Florio: "Arte . . . a whole company of any trade in any city or corporation town." The guilds of Florence are most admirably described by Mr Edgcumbe Staley in his work on the subject (Methuen, 1906). Institutions of a somewhat similar character, called "artel," exist in Russia today, cf. Sir Mackenzie Wallace's "Russia," ed. 1905: "The sons . . . were always during the working season members of an artel. In some of the larger towns there are artels of a much more complex kind— permanent associations, possessing large capital, and pecuniarily responsible for the acts of the individual members." The word "artel," despite its apparent similarity, has, Mr Aylmer Maude assures me, no connection with "ars" or "arte." Its root is that of the verb "rotisya," to bind oneself by an oath; and it is generally admitted to be only another form of "rota," which now signifies a "regimental company." In both words the underlying idea is that of a body of men united by an oath. "Tribu" (*cont.*) were possibly gentile groups, united by common descent, and included individuals connected by marriage. Perhaps our words "sects" or "clans" would be most appropriate.

prudence to be allied, because you assist at the destruction of one by the aid of another who, if he had been wise, would have saved him; and conquering, as it is impossible that he should not do with your assistance, he remains at your discretion. And here it is to be noted that a prince ought to take care never to make an alliance with one more powerful than himself for the purposes of attacking others, unless necessity compels him, as is said above; because if he conquers you are at his discretion, and princes ought to avoid as much as possible being at the discretion of any one. The Venetians joined with France against the Duke of Milan, and this alliance, which caused their ruin, could have been avoided. But when it cannot be avoided, as happened to the Florentines when the Pope and Spain sent armies to attack Lombardy, then in such a case, for the above reasons, the prince ought to favour one of the parties.

Never let any Government imagine that it can choose perfectly safe courses; rather let it expect to have to take very doubtful ones, because it is found in ordinary affairs that one never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another; but prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil.

A prince ought also to show himself a patron of ability, and to honour the proficient in every art. At the same time he should encourage his citizens to practise their callings peaceably, both in commerce and agriculture, and in every other following, so that the one should not be deterred from improving his possessions for fear lest they be taken away from him or another from opening up trade for fear of taxes; but the prince ought to offer rewards to whoever wishes to do these things and designs in any way to honour his city or state.

Further, he ought to entertain the people with

festivals and spectacles at convenient seasons of the year; and as every city is divided into guilds or into societies,<sup>1</sup> he ought to hold such bodies in esteem, and associate with them sometimes, and show himself an example of courtesy and liberality; nevertheless, always maintaining the majesty of his rank, for this he must never consent to abate in anything.

### *Chapter XXII — Concerning the Secretaries of Princes*

The choice of servants is of no little importance to a prince, and they are good or not according to the discrimination of the prince. And the first opinion which one forms of a prince, and of his understanding, is by observing the men he has around him; and when they are capable and faithful he may always be considered wise, because he has known how to recognize the capable and to keep them faithful. But when they are otherwise one cannot form a good opinion of him, for the prime error which he made was in choosing them.

There were none who knew Messer Antonio da Venafrò as the servant of Pandolfo Petrucci, Prince of Siena, who would not consider Pandolfo to be a very clever man in having Venafrò for his servant. Because there are three classes of intellects: one which comprehends by itself; another which appreciates what others comprehended; and a third which neither comprehends by itself nor by the showing of others; the first is the most excellent, the second is good, the third is useless. Therefore, it follows necessarily that, if Pandolfo was not in the first rank, he was in the second, for whenever one has judgment to know good and bad when it is said and done, although he himself may not have the initiative, yet he can recognize the good

and the bad in his servant, and the one he can praise and the other correct; thus the servant cannot hope to deceive him, and is kept honest.

But to enable a prince to form an opinion of his servant there is one test which never fails; when you see the servant thinking more of his own interests than of yours, and seeking inwardly his own profit in everything, such a man will never make a good servant, nor will you ever be able to trust him; because he who has the state of another in his hands ought never to think of himself, but always of his prince, and never pay any attention to matters in which the prince is not concerned.

On the other hand, to keep his servant honest the prince ought to study him, honouring him, enriching him, doing him kindnesses, sharing with him the honours and cares; and at the same time let him see that he cannot stand alone, so that many honours may not make him desire more, many riches make him wish for more, and that many cares may make him dread chances. When, therefore, servants, and princes towards servants, are thus disposed, they can trust each other, but when it is otherwise, the end will always be disastrous for either one or the other.

### *Chapter XXIII — How Flatterers Should be Avoided*

I do not wish to leave out an important branch of this subject, for it is a danger from which princes are with difficulty preserved, unless they are very careful and discriminating. It is that of flatterers, of whom courts are full, because men are so self-complacent in their own affairs, and in a way so deceived in them, that they are preserved with difficulty from this pest, and if they wish to defend themselves they run the danger of falling

into contempt. Because there is no other way of guarding oneself from flatterers except letting men understand that to tell you the truth does not offend you; but when every one may tell you the truth, respect for you abates.

Therefore a wise prince ought to hold a third course by choosing the wise men in his state, and giving to them only the liberty of speaking the truth to him, and then only of those things of which he inquires, and of none others; but he ought to question them upon everything, and listen to their opinions, and afterwards form his own conclusions. With these councillors, separately and collectively, he ought to carry himself in such a way that each of them should know that, the more freely he shall speak, the more he shall be preferred; outside of these, he should listen to no one, pursue the thing resolved on, and be steadfast in his resolutions. He who does otherwise is either overthrown by flatterers, or is so often changed by varying opinions that he falls into contempt.

I wish on this subject to adduce a modern example. Fra Luca, the man of affairs to Maximilian,<sup>1</sup> the present emperor, speaking of his majesty, said: He consulted with no one, yet never got his own way in anything. This arose because of his following a practice the opposite to the above; for the emperor is a secretive man—he does not communicate his designs to any one, nor does he receive opinions on them. But as in carrying them into effect they become revealed and known, they are at once obstructed by those men whom he has around him, and he, being pliant, is diverted from them. Hence it follows that those things he does one day he undoes the next, and no one ever understands what he wishes or intends to do, and no one can rely on his resolutions.

A prince, therefore, ought always to take counsel, but only when he wishes and not when others

<sup>1</sup>Maximilian I, born in 1459, died 1519, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. He married, first, Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold; after her death, Bianca Sforza; and thus became involved in Italian politics.

wish; he ought rather to discourage every one from offering advice unless he asks it; but, however, he ought to be a constant inquirer, and afterwards a patient listener concerning the things of which he inquired; also, on learning that any one, on any consideration, has not told him the truth, he should let his anger be felt.

And if there are some who think that a prince who conveys an impression of his wisdom is not so through his own ability, but through the good advisers that he has around him, beyond doubt they are deceived, because this is an axiom which never fails: that a prince who is not wise himself will never take good advice, unless by chance he has yielded his affairs entirely to one person who happens to be a very prudent man. In this case indeed he may be well governed, but it would not be for long, because such a governor would in a short time take away his state from him.

But if a prince who is not inexperienced should take counsel from more than one he will never get united counsels, nor will he know how to unite them. Each of the counsellors will think of his own interests, and the prince will not know how to control them or to see through them. And they are not to be found otherwise, because men will always prove untrue to you unless they are kept honest by constraint. Therefore it must be inferred that good counsels, whencesoever they come, are born of the wisdom of the prince, and not the wisdom of the prince from good counsels.

#### *Chapter XXIV — Why the Princes of Italy Have Lost Their States*

The previous suggestions, carefully observed, will enable a new prince to appear well established,

and render him at once more secure and fixed in the state than if he had been long seated there. For the actions of a new prince are more narrowly observed than those of an hereditary one, and when they are seen to be able they gain more men and bind far tighter than ancient blood; because men are attracted more by the present than by the past, and when they find the present good they enjoy it and seek no further; they will also make the utmost defence of a prince if he fails them not in other things. Thus it will be a double glory for him to have established a new principality, and adorned and strengthened it with good laws, good arms, good allies, and with a good example; so will it be a double disgrace to him who, born a prince, shall lose his state by want of wisdom.

And if those signiors are considered who have lost their states in Italy in our times, such as the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and others, there will be found in them, firstly, one common defect in regard to arms from the causes which have been discussed at length; in the next place, some one of them will be seen, either to have had the people hostile, or if he has had the people friendly, he has not known how to secure the nobles. In the absence of these defects states that have power enough to keep an army in the field cannot be lost.

Philip of Macedon, not the father of Alexander the Great, but he who was conquered by Titus Quintius, had not much territory compared to the greatness of the Romans and of Greece who attacked him, yet being a warlike man who knew how to attract the people and secure the nobles, he sustained the war against his enemies for many years, and if in the end he lost the dominion of some cities, nevertheless he retained the kingdom.

Therefore, do not let our princes accuse fortune for the loss of their principalities after so many years' possession, but rather their own sloth,

because in quiet times they never thought there could be a change (it is a common defect in man not to make any provision in the calm against the tempest), and when afterwards the bad times came they thought of flight and not of defending themselves, and they hoped that the people, disgusted with the insolence of the conquerors, would recall them. This course, when others fail, may be good, but it is very bad to have neglected all other expedients for that, since you would never wish to fall because you trusted to be able to find someone later on to restore you. This again either does not happen, or, if it does, it will not be for your security, because that deliverance is of no avail which does not depend upon yourself; those only are reliable, certain, and durable that depend on yourself and your valour.

*Chapter XXV — What Fortune Can  
Effect in Human Affairs and How to  
Withstand Her*

It is not unknown to me how many men have had, and still have, the opinion that the affairs of the world are in such wise governed by fortune and by God that men with their wisdom cannot direct them and that no one can even help them; and because of this they would have us believe that it is not necessary to labour much in affairs, but to let chance govern them. This opinion has been more credited in our times because of the great changes in affairs which have been seen, and may still be seen, every day, beyond all human conjecture. Sometimes pondering over this, I am in some degree inclined to their opinion. Nevertheless, not to extinguish our free will, I hold it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one-half of our actions,<sup>1</sup> but that she still leaves us to direct the other half,

or perhaps a little less.

I compare her to one of those raging rivers, which when in flood overflows the plains, sweeping away trees and buildings, bearing away the soil from place to place; everything flies before it, all yield to its violence, without being able in any way to withstand it; and yet, though its nature be such, it does not follow therefore that men, when the weather becomes fair, shall not make provision, both with defences and barriers, in such a manner that, rising again, the waters may pass away by canal, and their force be neither so unrestrained nor so dangerous. So it happens with fortune, who shows her power where valour has not prepared to resist her, and thither she turns her forces where she knows that barriers and defences have not been raised to constrain her.

And if you will consider Italy, which is the seat of these changes, and which has given to them their impulse, you will see it to be an open country without barriers and without any defence. For if it had been defended by proper valour, as are Germany, Spain, and France, either this invasion would not have made the great changes it has made or it would not have come at all. And this I consider enough to say concerning resistance to fortune in general.

But confining myself more to the particular, I say that a prince may be seen happy to-day and ruined to-morrow without having shown any change of disposition or character. This, I believe, arises firstly from causes that have already been discussed at length, namely, that the prince who relies entirely on fortune is lost when it changes. I believe also that he will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of the times, and that he whose actions do not accord with the times will not be successful. Because men are seen, in affairs that lead to the end which every

<sup>1</sup>Frederick the Great was accustomed to say: "The older one gets the more convinced one becomes that his Majesty King Chance does three-quarters of the business of this miserable universe."

Sorel's "Eastern Question."

man has before him, namely, glory and riches, to get there by various methods; one with caution, another with haste; one by force, another by skill; one by patience, another by its opposite; and each one succeeds in reaching the goal by a different method. One can also see of two cautious men the one attain his end, the other fail; and similarly, two men by different observances are equally successful, the one being cautious, the other impetuous; all this arises from nothing else than whether or not they conform in their methods to the spirit of the times. This follows from what I have said, that two men working differently bring about the same effect, and of two working similarly, one attains his object and the other does not.

Changes in estate also issue from this, for if, to one who governs himself with caution and patience, times and affairs converge in such a way that his administration is successful, his fortune is made; but if times and affairs change, he is ruined if he does not change his course of action. But a man is not often found sufficiently circumspect to know how to accommodate himself to the change, both because he cannot deviate from what nature inclines him to do, and also because, having always prospered by acting in one way, he cannot be persuaded that it is well to leave it; and, therefore, the cautious man, when it is time to turn adventurous, does not know how to do it, hence he is ruined; but had he changed his conduct with the times fortune would not have changed.

Pope Julius the Second went to work impetuously in all his affairs, and found the times and circumstances conform so well to that line of action that he always met with success. Consider his first enterprise against Bologna, Messer Giovanni Bentivogli being still alive. The Venetians were not agreeable to it, nor was the King of Spain, and he had the enterprise still under discussion with the

King of France; nevertheless he personally entered upon the expedition with his accustomed boldness and energy, a move which made Spain and the Venetians stand irresolute and passive, the latter from fear, the former from desire to recover the kingdom of Naples; on the other hand, he drew after him the King of France, because that king, having observed the movement, and desiring to make the Pope his friend so as to humble the Venetians, found it impossible to refuse him. Therefore Julius with his impetuous action accomplished what no other pontiff with simple human wisdom could have done; for if he had waited in Rome until he could get away, with his plans arranged and everything fixed, as any other pontiff would have done, he would never have succeeded. Because the King of France would have made a thousand excuses, and the others would have raised a thousand fears.

I will leave his other actions alone, as they were all alike, and they all succeeded, for the shortness of his life did not let him experience the contrary; but if circumstances had arisen which required him to go cautiously, his ruin would have followed, because he would never have deviated from those ways to which nature inclined him.

I conclude, therefore that, fortune being changeful and mankind steadfast in their ways, so long as the two are in agreement men are successful, but unsuccessful when they fall out. For my part I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her.

*Chapter XXVI — An Exhortation to  
Liberate Italy from the Barbarians*

Having carefully considered the subject of the above discourses, and wondering within myself whether the present times were propitious to a new prince, and whether there were elements that would give an opportunity to a wise and virtuous one to introduce a new order of things which would do honour to him and good to the people of this country, it appears to me that so many things concur to favour a new prince that I never knew a time more fit than the present.

And if, as I said, it was necessary that the people of Israel should be captive so as to make manifest the ability of Moses; that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes so as to discover the greatness of the soul of Cyrus; and that the Athenians should be dispersed to illustrate the capabilities of Theseus: then at the present time, in order to discover the virtue of an Italian spirit, it was necessary that Italy should be reduced to the extremity that she is now in, that she should be more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; without head, without order, beaten, despoiled, torn, overrun; and to have endured every kind of desolation.

Although lately some spark may have been shown by one, which made us think he was ordained by God for our redemption, nevertheless it was afterwards seen, in the height of his career, that fortune rejected him; so that Italy, left as without life, waits for him who shall yet heal her wounds and put an end to the ravaging and plundering of Lombardy, to the swindling and taxing of the kingdom and of Tuscany, and cleanse those sores that for long have festered. It is seen how she entreats God to send someone who shall deliver

her from these wrongs and barbarous insolencies. It is seen also that she is ready and willing to follow a banner if only someone will raise it.

Nor is there to be seen at present one in whom she can place more hope than in your illustrious house,<sup>1</sup> with its valour and fortune, favoured by God and by the Church of which it is now the chief, and which could be made the head of this redemption. This will not be difficult if you will recall to yourself the actions and lives of the men I have named. And although they were great and wonderful men, yet they were men, and each one of them had no more opportunity than the present offers, for their enterprises were neither more just nor easier than this, nor was God more their friend than He is yours.

With us there is great justice, because that war is just which is necessary, and arms are hallowed when there is no other hope but in them. Here there is the greatest willingness, and where the willingness is great the difficulties cannot be great if you will only follow those men to whom I have directed your attention. Further than this, how extraordinarily the ways of God have been manifested beyond example: the sea is divided, a cloud has led the way, the rock has poured forth water, it has rained manna, everything has contributed to your greatness; you ought to do the rest. God is not willing to do everything, and thus take away our free will and that share of glory which belongs to us.

And it is not to be wondered at if none of the above-named Italians have been able to accomplish all that is expected from your illustrious house; and if in so many revolutions in Italy, and in so many campaigns, it has always appeared as if military virtue were exhausted, this has happened because the old order of things was not good, and none of us have known how to find a new one.

<sup>1</sup>Giuliano de Medici. He had just been created a cardinal by Leo X. In 1523 Giuliano was elected Pope, and took the title of Clement VII.

And nothing honours a man more than to establish new laws and new ordinances when he himself was newly risen. Such things when they are well founded and dignified will make him revered and admired, and in Italy there are not wanting opportunities to bring such into use in every form.

Here there is great valour in the limbs whilst it fails in the head. Look attentively at the duels and the hand-to-hand combats, how superior the Italians are in strength, dexterity, and subtlety. But when it comes to armies they do not bear comparison, and this springs entirely from the insufficiency of the leaders, since those who are capable are not obedient, and each one seems to himself to know, there having never been any one so distinguished above the rest, either by valour or fortune, that others would yield to him. Hence it is that for so long a time, and during so much fighting in the past twenty years, whenever there has been an army wholly Italian, it has always given a poor account of itself; the first witness to this is Il Taro, afterwards Allesandria, Capua, Genoa, Vaila, Bologna, Mestri.<sup>1</sup>

If, therefore, your illustrious house wishes to follow these remarkable men who have redeemed their country, it is necessary before all things, as a true foundation for every enterprise, to be provided with your own forces, because there can be no more faithful, truer, or better soldiers. And although singly they are good, altogether they will be much better when they find themselves commanded by their prince, honoured by him, and maintained at his expense. Therefore it is necessary to be prepared with such arms, so that you can be defended against foreigners by Italian valour.

And although Swiss and Spanish infantry may be considered very formidable, nevertheless there is a defect in both, by reason of which a third

order would not only be able to oppose them, but might be relied upon to overthrow them. For the Spaniards cannot resist cavalry, and the Switzers are afraid of infantry whenever they encounter them in close combat. Owing to this, as has been and may again be seen, the Spaniards are unable to resist French cavalry, and the Switzers are overthrown by Spanish infantry. And although a complete proof of this latter cannot be shown, nevertheless there was some evidence of it at the battle of Ravenna, when the Spanish infantry were confronted by German battalions, who follow the same tactics as the Swiss; when the Spaniards, by agility of body and with the aid of their shields, got in under the pikes of the Germans and stood out of danger, able to attack, while the Germans stood helpless, and, if the cavalry had not dashed up, all would have been over with them. It is possible, therefore, knowing the defects of both these infantries, to invent a new one, which will resist cavalry and not be afraid of infantry; this need not create a new order of arms, but a variation upon the old. And these are the kind of improvements which confer reputation and power upon a new prince.

This opportunity, therefore, ought not to be allowed to pass for letting Italy at last see her liberator appear. Nor can one express the love with which he would be received in all those provinces which have suffered so much from these foreign scourings, with what thirst for revenge, with what stubborn faith, with what devotion, with what tears. What door would be closed to him? Who would refuse obedience to him? What envy would hinder him? What Italian would refuse him homage? To all of us this barbarous dominion stinks. Let, therefore, your illustrious house take up this charge with that courage and hope with which all just enterprises are undertaken, so

<sup>1</sup> The battles of Il Taro, 1495; Alessandria, 1499; Capua, 1501; Genoa, 1507; Vaila, 1509; Bologna, 1511; Mestri, 1513.

that under its standard our native country may be ennobled, and under its auspices may be verified that saying of Petrarch:

*Virtu contro al Furore  
Prendera l'arme, e fia il combatter corto:  
Che l'antico valore  
Negli italici cuor non e ancor morto.*

*Virtue against fury shall advance the fight,  
And it i' th' combat soon shall put to flight:  
For the old Roman valour is not dead,  
Nor in th' Italians' breasts extinguished.*

*Edward Dacre, 1640.*

## Study Guide: **Power, Realpolitik, States**

### *Key Concepts and Terms*

- **It is easier to rule people if they're used to being ruled;** it's harder to rule people if they're used to being free.
- **People have a general tendency to dislike their current ruler** and to be swayed towards a new ruler with the promise that "things will get better", only to be disappointed. This reminds us of the constant pendulum between the right and left in electoral politics.
- **Occupied territories can be held by a state by finding a minor power,** using them, and granting them some small degree of power. This is a typical counterinsurgency/colonization tactic. It only works for minor players, who depend on the ruler to some extent.
- **There is a cost-benefit analysis of armed occupation.** A state will move citizens/colonists to territories in order to keep the territory secure and to collect revenues. Armed occupations are costly and ineffective. This works in the American context by deputizing settler-colonialists as the standing army; institutionalizing racism.
- **"Men ought to be well-treated or crushed"** so that a ruler won't stand in fear of revenge. Destroy your enemies or don't engage with them. Weak hostility is not helpful.
- **Don't avoid conflict or make strategic blunders in order to avoid conflict.** War can't be avoided, it can only be deferred. Defer it only if it is to your advantage.
- **It is easy to take over a bureaucracy, change the head and let the machinery keep working.** Easier—in comparison—than having a new monarch invade; People are loyal to their feudal lords (sometimes) and will identify with them. Powers or rulers have different ways to claim to legitimacy. How important is the difference between rulers whose claim is legitimized by bloodlines vs. citizens who take power? One response is that it is easy to retroactively mythologize divine right after the fact.
- **Those who inherit power or get lucky have an easy time taking it but a harder time keeping it.** Those who struggle and seize power through adversity have a harder time taking it but are better prepared to keep it.
- **Sometimes someone comes to power, does everything right, and then just gets sick and dies.** Machiavelli discusses *Fortuna* which we can understand as luck, or that there is no divine order to things. *Fortuna* is in contrast to *Virtue*. *Fortune* is fickle, changing, uncertain. *Virtue* is the strength or will to act in a changing & unpredictable field. (We note that this is a deeply patriarchal/misogynist/rapey language & framework)
- **A ruler must be a cunning strategist (a fox) and be forceful (a lion).**

- **Spectacles and holidays** are important to rulers to distract people from rebellion.
- We note that Machiavelli's main antagonist is the people, not other princes. **The main anxiety that a state has is being overthrown by the people.** Another anxiety a state has is fear of attack by jealous or ambitious nobles. Machiavelli frames concepts between oppressed people and rulers. The people have a basic desire to not be oppressed and nobles have a basic desire to oppress.
- **Memory is a weapon.** Power cannot be secure when people remember their homelands. Erasing memory is an essential feature of colonialism. Later in the text, Machiavelli says, "men more quickly forget the death of their fathers than the loss of their property." There is a consistent focus on memory, on what is held and what is forgotten.
- **A good ruler will keep people both satisfied and stupefied.** Take the example of the cruel minister who was used by power to implement necessary measures to take control, and then was executed and left in the public square by the prince. A contemporary analogy would be the outlier killer cop who gets convicted. Some people are satisfied and stupefied, and the police and white supremacy are maintained. The state needs occasional scapegoats for the violence that it wants committed, so that it can stoke conflict and then show up as the good guy restoring order.

- **"He who builds on the people builds on mud."** When people are dependent on the state, they will fight for the state. If the state is in need, the people won't fight. The habit of being governed and a desire for order keeps the people dependent on the state.

### *Topics for Discussion*

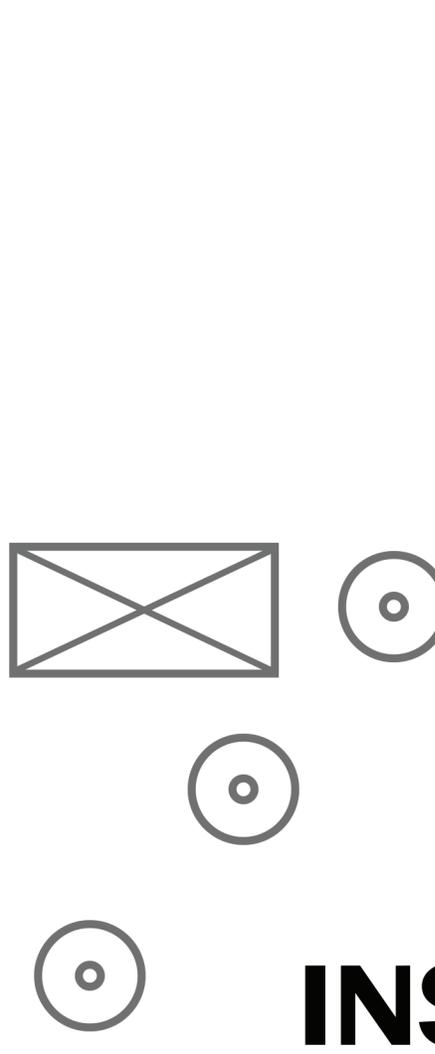
- The text refers frequently to "the people"—this is a troubling term for us. Why?
- Is Google the new prince of a self-governing community?
- We are not interested in seizing control of the army, the police, or the state. We want to dissolve these institutions altogether. It's hard to articulate our goals in a Machiavellian framework because our goals often feel amorphous and impossible to quantify.
  - What is success for us?
- Machiavelli says that a ruler must create in people the habit of being ruled.
  - How do we create habits of not being ruled?
  - What enables breaking habits of being ruled?
- The text points to the pacification of people by making them dependent on the state. It's hard to be self-sufficient, but people will desert the state if their needs are being met outside of the state. Consider housing, food

and medicine. Temporary uprisings that do not support people's needs are not sustainable. We can consider this on a more micro or interpersonal level: Why don't people leave their abusers? There is often a dependency there for basic needs. The conversation on desertion reminds us of Spinoza: If you don't have joyful encounters, your power to act is not increasing, your needs aren't getting met, you cannot desert. You have to build on joy, however small. Joyful passions allow us to be ungoverned, breaks the cycle of sad passions that despots require in us.

- What have people who have deserted the state historically done to get their needs met together?
  - What can be done during uprisings to support people's basic needs?
- We relate Machiavelli's general principle that people don't want to be oppressed to the narratives white men in reactionary movements have built about being oppressed. Consider the myth of the American Revolution.
    - How can we engage with or disrupt this narrative?
  - There is this concept that it is better to be feared than to be hated. We observe that Trump is hated more than feared, and wonder why that is working for him?
    - Is Trump taking a gamble on being hated because polarization is working for him?
    - What are other situations where we see fear versus hatred? Do people generally fear or generally hate the police?

- A stripped down economy of control reveals a center that is very much about gendered control and violence. Consider how rape refers to state logic, Virtue seizing Fortuna.





**TACTICS,  
POLICING,  
INSURGENCY**

TOM NOMAD **THE MASTERS TOOLS**

## Reading Tom Nomad on **The Master's Tools**

THE MASTER'S TOOLS IS THE MOST PARTISAN TEXT we read in our study group. Written by Tom Nomad in 2013, it is an explicitly anarchist attempt to engage with questions of tactics and strategy, coming out of a decade of street conflicts in the US. While some elements feel dated, many of the insights and reflections remain extremely useful and, so far, under-examined by radicals in so-called America. In particular, some of the critiques in "Beyond Property Destruction" are aimed at a particular insurrectionary anarchist milieu which has since decomposed and shifted shape; nonetheless, many of the underlying assumptions and tendencies have survived. For those of us around for the summit-hopping and night-time mischief era of anarchy, the critiques feel well-thought out and useful; for those whose entrance to radical circles may have come later or through different modes, it provides an interesting and useful history that is often not told, which may clarify conflicts and arguments that still occur today.

# The Master's Tools: Beyond Property Destruction

## *Introduction*

*All politics is against the police*

- Jacques Ranciere

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REMARKABLY DISRUPTIVE actions of property destruction in the last series of years. This is a welcome shift away from the aimless people dressed in black marching in circles, away from crowds that rely on numerical concentration in a specific space, away from the island effect (where a group at the front becomes isolated and boxed in because the rest of the crowd has dispersed due to some minor police threat). The streets of Athens, London, Pittsburgh, Santa Cruz, Asheville, Oakland, Los Angeles, Vancouver and Toronto (among others—the list grows daily) have been littered with broken glass and barricaded with burning dumpsters (or cop cars). But beyond the immediate appropriation by the media spectacle and the payday for plate glass companies, something remains lacking. From the obsession with “riot porn” to the images produced to explain or call for actions, this reliance on property destruction, both as a tactic and indicator of success, has moved from being a tactic, to a fetish, a trap that we have not yet been able to move away from. Maybe it is the militant rejection of nonviolence coupled with instances of overwhelming police force, leaving property destruction as the simplest direct yet low risk alternative to actual conflict. But regardless, we need to move away from this

tactic, this concept of a certain tactical necessity, and beyond property destruction.

Property destruction can be remarkably disruptive, especially when there's lots of it, but it has come to exist as some sort of abstract anarchist threat in a reactionary politics of consequences. Every time a city announces a summit, out go the calls to action, the grandstanding starts, the hype builds, and the security apparatus is put in place to “maintain order.” The script has played itself out, without apparent end or even acknowledgement that we have been down this path before. So, this discussion of where to go tends to fall into a series of ridiculous dichotomies: direct action, community organizing (as if there is a separation), or the endless violence or nonviolence debate (as if concepts can ever speak of particular tactical terrains). In this collapse into dichotomy we have lost the purpose of the discussion: what we are doing and how it is, or is not, effective. In other words, in the swirling conversations about concepts and definitions what gets lost are tactics, action, material tactical situations. It is not as simple as saying that property destruction is the logical surpassing of nonviolence. We need to look at tactics and to remove them from the conceptualizations of politics that we have all become so fond of.

This is far from a call for a return to mass movements or the large-scale parades of the antiwar movement (as well attended as they were ineffective). It is about seeing beyond this dead end of mass actions and the shattered windows that sometimes result. In other words, these tactics are exactly that; tactical deployments into space, deployments with effects that change tactical terrains. It is not a question of the affectivity of property destruction or how riots constitute our subjectivity, or something like that; this is merely a question of the material dynamics of conflict.

When we look at these instances of concentrated property destruction, or even the isolated attack in the middle of the night, we must see not the action itself but rather the tactical medium that it exists in and as a part of. This focus on property destruction has tended to come from two mutually reinforcing perspectives. On the one hand, property destruction is spoken of affectively, as something that feels appropriate to those who carry out the actions. On the other hand, property destruction and its fetishization tend to focus attention on the act itself, as if any action has some inherent meaning outside of the terrain and medium that it exists within.

This focus on affectivity, the idea that an action is carried out for the affective results, exists as an attempt to isolate actions, to speak of the action in itself, while marginalizing the action in some attempt to proliferate subjectivities. In order for this sort of analysis to carry through, the action has to be first isolated as a space that generates results separate from the dynamics that the actions exists within, and then analyzed in relation to this affective result (and apart from any other material results). This occurs in all attempts to generate essentialist concepts of certain sorts of actions, whether in the form of nonviolence or of fetishized property destruction. This conceptualization of tactical actions begins with the generation of some transcendental imperative, a concept held as true, in which the action in itself becomes an expression. As in all concepts of ethics, the action is reduced to a conceptual object, a sort of constancy that can be applied between moments, and is then analyzed as such, in isolation from the particularity of the dynamics that the action occurs within and the terrain that the action generates in its effects. In other words, what occurs, at the point of treating actions as something with a specified, legible, result, is that

the action becomes isolated from history (from the dynamics of conflict that construct its possibility), and then judged through some transcendental lens, in this case the lens of abstracted affective profit. But this isolation, in order to obtain some profit or gain in the amount of possible subjective manifestations, is just another form of isolating action from the context that it is a result of and that it produces. It seems odd how much some of this rhetoric surrounding affectivity (especially among the more hipsterly-inclined among us), begins to resemble early capitalist arguments about the importance of material profit: the action is isolated as carrying transcendental value, which benefits an isolated producer. Now, this does not mean that we should reject any analysis of affectivity, rather we need to understand the co-immanence {footnote: occurring in parallel, effecting one another, but never fusing together}, the necessary relation between the affective and the effective. In other words, there are no actions that in themselves exist purely affectively, there is always an effect, and with that effect a consequent construction of other particular moments.

Action exists as a manifestation of one of various possibilities present at any moment and has effects; that is, it participates in the construction of other possibilities. Put another way, there is no action that is not necessarily external, that does not project a certain existence into the world, and on that level there is no way to separate the affective from the effective; affective results from effects. In the fundamental shift in the dynamics of terrain, new, inconceivable, unpredictable dynamics will result, new possibilities will become apparent, and the entire terrain is constructed in a particular way in each moment. This occurs with any action; the effects of any action will fundamentally rupture the dynamics that existed before the action occurred.

In other words, due to the inherent connection between the affective and the effective, predicting the affectivity of an action, planning affective actions, is impossible. There is just no way to sit in a room and determine the possible effects, the shifts in the terrain of action that we call a world, before an action is taken. All that we can do is conceptualize possibilities, but always in necessarily inaccurate ways. And, because no action exists completely internally, no action is completely affective, all action implies effect and thus a reconstruction of the entirety of the terrain of existence in the very truth of its occurrence as something that had not occurred before.

Nothing can exist as more or less affective, all moments are singular as what they are, they are all moments that have never occurred before and will never occur again, and as such we cannot understand the affective as a quantity that produces subjectivities (especially because the act of production also necessarily has an effect, but that is a minor point here). The affective is not a quantity; comparisons of quantity imply the ability to compare moments which in themselves are fundamentally particular, and its co-immanence with the effective, or the tactical, necessarily means first, that all action exists as one trajectory of affect/effect within a innumerable series of actions (or everything that has ever occurred) and trajectories that come into conflict in the tactical medium. Also, this very conflict, this collision of trajectories, makes the future indeterminable and that the conflict itself, the unfulfilled trajectory of affect/effect, is what constructs what we call the world. To go back to something Patton said, following Clausewitz, “no battle plan survives first contact with the enemy.” In other words, theoretical attempts to isolate affectivity, to predict affective consequences, may not be wrong in the absolute conceptual sense, but it is

impossible. We project the theoretical within this smooth context devoid of actions and affect/effect, devoid of conflict, devoid of the unfulfilled; but the moment any action occurs the very context that was theorized is already obsolete, the theoretical and the material necessarily exist at a division across a wide gap, an infinite distance between concept and moment, as Blanchot would argue.

Now I do not want to reject the affective consequences of direct action. Going on missions, smashing bank windows, taking out surveillance cameras, building barricades, running through streets, has a large affective result for a lot of people. For some of us who grew up in places that elevated property to the status of the sacred, destroying property is a way to break free from that culturally imposed limit. For those of us who grew up in places where there was very little property to fetishize, destroying banks and fighting cops exists as an outlet for the rage that we had always felt about the positions that we had been relegated to from birth. It was a way to get over the fear that the police had instilled in us from a very young age when they rolled up on us, searched us, walked into our classrooms to pull people out for questioning, beat us for minor infractions and then dropped us off without being arrested (because arrest would entail explanation), the killings in cold blood, the criminalization of our youth, the friends locked in the dungeons of America; for us it was about finding a catharsis, a way to fight, a way to feel powerful in a world that constantly beat us down. But often this discourse of affectivity tends to focus on only the “positive” or “empowering” aspects of property destruction and fails to deal with the trauma, the mental affects that this has had on a lot of us who have been in serious situations. (This has a lot to do with the inattention that trauma gets in our community, but that is a topic for another essay.)

This focus on affectivity is a result of and reinforces a certain theory of isolation. To focus on the affective in action to the exclusion of the co-immanence with the effective, is only possible through a dual isolation, the isolation of agents and the isolation of actions. The focus on the affective exists within a focus on subjectivity. We all love the Situationists, but they made this same error. While recognizing that our actions can cause wider destabilizations, the purpose of these destabilizations became about the manifestation of some subjective desires. Now, I am not rejecting the existence of a certain sense of the subjective, rather I argue that we need to reject the separation of this so-called subjectivity from some form of objectivity. In other words, we need to reject the basic error of the Enlightenment, which is the separation of the subjective from the objective, the individual from the totality of our existences, the self from history. It is an error that permeates Kant and Hegel and that has crept in to this discourse of affectivity. To focus on the subjective to the exclusion of effects, or of the external and tactical, is to isolate our existence into the perpetuation of some form of the individual, to isolate ourselves from the very conditions and possibilities of our existences. Not only is that the same move replicated in all capitalist discourse (the isolated producer who owns property, implying exclusion as well as use), it is also the generation of a subject who cannot speak, who has no context for words, no way to make sense of things, no way to actually experience phenomenon, all of which imply an externality.

In this isolation of agents there is also a co-immanent isolation of actions. We tend to see single smashed windows, or even instances of large scale property destruction, as actions in themselves, as if they have meaning in themselves. Theory only exists as a way to make sense of the world,

it cannot actually describe moments that always exist as singular, unrepeatable, unreplicable. In other words, all actions are possible due to the dynamics of everything that has ever occurred, yet that totality of actions is inaccessible in a moment and particular to that moment, while the attempt to construct conceptual understandings of moments implies some sort of constancy across moments. Theory is the impossible attempt to chain moments together, to generate concepts from some notion of a constancy of actions. It forgets that describing a moment, all the dynamics that led to the manifestation of a certain possibility, all the possible meanings, all the moments that have ever occurred, is impossible from the positionality of theory as something that occurs at a particular time and place; the theoretical requires transcendence that in itself is impossible. To put it another way, acts of property destruction in themselves are meaningless, all actions are materially meaningless. Not that they do not have effects, but rather that there is no way to theorize about the affect/effect of an action or moment isolated from the totality of history that led to that moment and there is no way to make sense of history in any way that is not just more or less persuasive speculation.

Yet, this fetishization of property destruction as an action in itself is the attempt to do just that. When we isolate actions from the totality of history that led to the possibility of that action itself in order to make sense of the action itself, we ignore the relevance of the context that the action exists within, the terrain of conflict that constructs possibility, the effects that action has in the construction of history, or the dynamics of the tactical medium itself. This is just a really long way to say that we need to see beyond single actions, beyond single windows, beyond single streets isolated by the tactical medium that made these moments

possible. In all instances of property destruction another phenomenon is presenting itself, one that we need to be able to see and analyze, if only speculatively. Rather than seeing single actions outside of the dynamics that they exist within, we need to look at tactical mediums as a dynamic, as a conflict and collision. When we look at the burning of cop cars in Toronto, the smashing of shopping districts in Santa Cruz and Asheville, the riots that broke out in Pittsburgh, the property destruction around Oakland after the verdict in the Oscar Grant case, we see one commonality. In each of these instances, and in innumerable other sites of unrest globally, beyond the property destruction, beyond the taking of streets, beyond the barricades, these events were possible because of the disruption of police coverage, the disruption of the ability of police to suppress conflict, to close gaps in coverage and projection, to police as a material totality. What we are witnessing is not the result of any one action, any one window, but the result of a disorganization of the ability of the cops to define territory and situations, a break down that is always possible if we only take a moment to analyze police tactics through a certain lens, a lens of immediacy, of the immediate material operations of policing itself.

Again, this is not a rejection of the legitimacy of property destruction nor is this an attempt to discourage property destruction—whatever choices people make in actions are the choices they make. Rather, this is a rejection of the attempt to systematize property destruction by only focusing on this one gap in police coverage, to only see the gap as an opportunity to break stuff, rather than as a disruption of the very logistical capacity of police to project through space, a disruption that can be expanded and amplified. In other words, when we separate the gap from the dynamics that

create these gaps we lose the resonance amplified by conflict and destabilization (an amplification that implicates the state's functioning on larger levels as well) and instead we take actions as isolated opportunities. What many seem to have been forgotten is that insurrection is not a fulfillment of some conceptual conditions, but an immediate and material rupture in the attempt of police to maintain operational coherence.

There has been a lot of discussion about a Plan B: abandoning instances of conflict with the police to go elsewhere to exploit gaps in coverage to engage in property destruction. The concept underlying Plan B, that attacks and actions should be occurring outside of concentrations of conflict, is sound. It is based in the necessity of the crisis in policing, the impossibility of a totality of policing. But, rather than seeing the gaps in police coverage—the impossibility of total policing—as something that can be amplified, Plan B takes these gaps as “the best we can do,” as something to be exploited by single actions that can be easily mediated and repaired. It begins from the assumption that we are already defeated, that no new possibilities are able to be generated, that the situation is totally defined, and then entrenches this notion of defeat in our actions and the way we imagine our tactical possibilities. Because, really, what is the importance of broken glass, how much existential weight does a smashed ATM screen carry? What we need to see is that even isolated attacks, when frequent, are important to the degree that they stretch police logistics to the breaking point, to the point of rupture. They are not imperatives in themselves, or do they carry some essential conceptual weight on their own. We need to look beyond the isolation of moments imposed by the thinking underlying Plan B. This rejection of Plan B is not in favor of some “Plan A,” but an attempt

to take the thing that Plan B recognizes—which is that there is always a necessary gap in police coverage, that policing exists as a dynamic in crisis—and amplify this crisis rather than accepting it as static, something outside of our engagement, that only opens the way for isolated actions. Until we analyze policing as an operation in constant crisis we are doomed to minor attacks (that leave almost no marks mere hours later), locked within a strategy of defeat.

*The Impossibility of Total Policing or Why Policing Exists as Motion*

*War is the province of chance. In no other sphere of human activity must such margin be left for this intruder.*

—Karl von Clausewitz

When we look at police it is all too easy to see the riot shields, the armored personnel carriers, the tear gas, and the lock-step formations and forget that the police operate within a certain paradox, a certain impossibility. When we are on the streets it is easy to see the cops as some mechanistic force, marching to orders, and we forget that they themselves move, that these actions exist within a dynamic terrain of conflict. To move outside of the context of viewing policing in mechanistic forms is not an attempt to “humanize” police, to make them into people with feelings. The very basic reality of policing itself is that the police exist as a logistical form of organization that attempts to accomplish the impossible.

Like our friends that demand that theory can speak of the world itself, that it is directly applicable, the cops exist in the vain attempt to organize

space and to channel possibility to manifest some abstract theoretical principle, the construction of their own materially impossible coherence as well as the unity of time and space in the very operations of policing. In the construction of police logistics a certain coherence is relied upon, in which moments can find some connection—even though this implied connection rejects the particularity of these moments, how they exist in particular ways, with particular dynamics, in particular times and spaces. Authorities have constructed all sorts of mechanisms to force some sort of coherence into police logistics, but cannot overcome the material particularity of actions, which always demonstrates this coherence as mythological and logistical, at best.

The state itself exists as a theoretical principle—the idea of the nation as a unit, the idea that law can express some truth or operate with immanence, the idea that those who construct laws could possibly represent others. The state is something that is created partially through paper, in constitutions, in theory books. There have been a lot of really fascist theory books written, there have been a lot of attempts to generate some all-knowing theoretical principle that defines life itself; these are problematic enough. But what we need to understand is that the state, though formed around certain notions of the world, does not exist on paper. Rather the state is the logistical attempt to make concepts manifest materially, to manipulate the concept of unity in a materially total way, as an immediate and material form. In other words, the state itself does not exist without the attempt to structure the material possibilities of our lives, to construct immanence in the moments that are our existence; it cannot exist without conceptualizing all change, all life, all contingency, within certain defined limits that attempt to transcend the theoretical

and become material. Not only must the state project theoretical principles (whether these are laws or “revolutionary principles” does not matter) into the future and across all space, particular momentary existences, and all moments from the moment of construction, but— barring the state leaving the material world suddenly and becoming the “kingdom of god”—it must do so at every moment, moments that are increasingly divergent from the moment of conception. Put another way, the state is a constant operation, a constant attempt to channel the dynamics of everyday life into the models generated by politicians, to make some constancy of moments operate in spite of the singularity and particularity of moments themselves. Theory is just not enough to accomplish this task. Regardless of how bought-off the average American may be, they still interpret this form of agreement through a particular series of circumstances and experiences, in a particular way that changes momentarily.

To cross this gap, to make the theoretical operate, requires a logistical form of organization: the police. To put this another way, it is not that the state is not at base a conceptual construction, it’s just not one that can be grouped into the categories that we have generated to understand political history. It is not that that the United States is a liberal democracy, it is that the United States is a conceptual construction based on a unitary concept of time and space, in that it constructs its own reality, which exists in wildly divergent ways in different spaces and at different times. The United States exists as what it is now, a conceptual coherence existing at a distance from the attempt at coherent operation, not as some expression of a certain reality constructed in times gone by by rich white men. Rather, it is that the ideological allegiance claimed by the state itself, though it can

serve to set a series of abstract limits to the state’s operation (we have elections periodically, for example, and courts), is in itself largely inconsequential. To put this another way, the question is not the “what,” the attempt to conceptually define the state conceptually (which implies a materially impossible coherence and differentiation); rather, the question is “how,” a question of tactical operation in the impossible attempt to overcome the infinite distance between transcendental concept and materially particular moments.

When we think of the state we must not think of a political operation, an operation borne of an absence of conflict. It is, instead, the attempt to operate as a totality in a constantly shifting tactical medium constructed through conflict and a collision of many dynamics of action projected into space. It is the mobilization of politics, the dynamics of conflict in space, to end politics, to construct a unity of time and space that can only exist in a terrain devoid of conflict. In this the state is always utopian, and utopia always implies the construction of absolute unity and the end of all conflict. To say this another way, the state is not, at its most basic, a political reality. Rather it is a logistical policing operation that attempts to avert conflict, that attempts to be the end of politics itself. For many of us this is clear in the post-Cold War age (hell, Francis Fukuyama wrote *The End of History* and *The Last Man* about this end of politics). But we need to see beyond the historical moment of the manifestation, or increasing apparent success, of this attempt to end politics and understand that the very possibility of this move lies in the basis of the state itself.

This may all seem like so much hot theoretical air, but the point is that when we speak of the state it makes no sense to talk of policies. Rather we need to see policies (and politicians) as

nothing but certain appropriations of an attempt to operate a conceptual “unity,” materially, in a constantly shifting tactical medium, through constant policing. Concepts of law, citizenship, and so on attempt to define existence, regardless of the particularities of time and space in moments, as a singular unity—which in itself is impossible. Policing is the attempt to operate a logistics of force to construct this unity, but this requires a total operation in all moments simultaneously. A constant operation is waged every day to operate a coherence of the operations of the State in a moment. This, by the very fact that it is constructed by actions that are constantly generating different possibilities, is in itself necessarily particular in each moment. Regardless of the structure of unity that policing is an attempt to construct, this can only function in different, particular ways in each and every action taken by each and every cop in each and every moment, and never, even in itself, as a unity. The state is a logistical phenomenon, one that exists in a state of constant crisis. It is impossible to transcribe the theoretical, the legal, the ideological, onto the material. This material attempt to construct the state in a moment—to at once define existence in the theoretical-legal while at the same time encompassing and defining innumerable constantly shifting particular manifestations—the attempt to logistically operate this definition materially, is at once both occurring (police function in time and space), while at the same time impossible. For all the attempts to construct the unity of time and space, moments can never be defined in their totality; for all the attempts to construct the coherence of police logistics, these logistics fails to operate in a unified way; for all the attempts to project policing into every moment, they can only cover so much ground.

What this all points to is a certain impossibility of the state, an impossibility that shows itself in the constant crisis of its logistical operations, and the tactical possibilities (and lack of them) that this crisis generates. Policing, the attempt to make the state material, is also a vision of a logistics in constant crisis, one that is dealing with a dual impossibility. On the one hand, there is no possibility of total policing spatially and mathematically. If policing were total, then the very differentiation of “police” would be an impossibility; the state would always already be an actual material immanence, and our existences would collapse into irrelevancy. To the degree that the police manifest through a separation, between police and non-police, this totality remains always already impossible. So, if we take the many thousands of cops that were brought out in Pittsburgh for the G20—or the 50,000 that they are mobilizing for the G20 in Seoul, South Korea—and stick them side by side, they cover very little space. If we add all the fancy toys and vehicles that they use, they cover a little more space, but not much. And these mobilizations include much larger numbers than in normal days when summits are not in town. If we space these numbers out across a major city their coverage begins to look rather weak. This all indicates that the police need to operate through projection. They need to project themselves across space in order to amplify the effectiveness of these numbers. To help with this they use, among other things, communications and vehicular transportation. In other words, the police are a logistical operation in constant movement, in constant motion, and they rely on the ability to move through space, either materially or virtually, in order to construct operational coherence. This projection is also amplified through the use of snitches, stings, undercovers, and informants, to destroy our ability to

trust our space and those around us. They stick cameras up at intersections and in what they call “troubled neighborhoods,” with big flashing lights on top, to give off the impression that we are being watched. When we see it this way, we begin to see the police not as an institution but as a logistical operation in constant motion that is attempting to construct the territory that we live in, the tactical medium of conflict and resistance. As we see in the 21st Century metropolis, criss-crossed by its overlapping networks of surveillance, the structure of space impacts police operations as much as police operations shape the dynamics of space. If they were relying on force and physical presence in itself, they would quickly lose control; instead they attempt to project themselves through space to operate a certain, conceptual, tactical terrain. What this means is that, regardless of the fear that cops strike into the hearts of many, there are always gaps, there is always crisis.

The second impossibility of policing is all the more glaring in light of the first. It is not that we can just look at the problems with this logistical operation numerically, it is that this numerical limitation implies the inability to project across all space simultaneously, all the time, and therefore requires movement, action, which in itself generates conflict and modifies the dynamics of terrain, and thus the dynamics of operation. The police have developed all sorts of ways to amplify their projection through preparing the ground, so to speak. So much time and resources are spent by police departments every year on DARE programs, Neighborhood Watch, and auxiliary programs, all to amplify this projection; and this does not even mention the more sublime weapons: the tear gas, helicopters, and now sound weapons that are meant to be projections of force over vast areas in the literal sense rather than just potentially or

metaphorically. The attempt to operate a material unity, which assumes an elimination of conflict in space (a total peace), comes to operate through organizing conflict. In order for the police to operate they must mobilize the very dynamic that they are trying to operate coherently and without internal conflict, action itself. As already mentioned, the very necessity of all action, all moments, is that through action contingency and possibility are generated affectively/effectively. New possibilities are generated, new things occur that have never occurred before. The totality of history, the entirety of the collisions of everything that has ever occurred in any one moment is now a different totality, even in something as simple as a breath.

So the tactical medium in which action is carried out is a constantly shifting phenomenon. For the police to function with any coherence, they attempt to “unify,” operate, and define these moments; to chain them to other moments, to construct some form of coherent and constant discourse of moments that functions materially. It is not in the theoretical that the issue arises—all theory takes on this transcendent mode, and constructs a sort of consistent totality. Rather, it arises in the attempt to bridge this gap from the theoretical to the material, from a notion of sense to manifesting materially and totally. At the moment of operation the very actions that are mobilized to bridge this gap from the theoretical to the material (or from the strategic to the tactical), end up generating contingencies, shifting the tactical medium, and generating the very destabilization that the police are organized to prevent. In other words, the point here is not our value judgements, not our individual opinions of the actions of the police, the way they violate our humanity, their use of force. Rather, what is at issue is that the very attempt to logistically operate policing is in itself

paradoxical, impossible; the very operation itself is one that always attempts to mediate the very internal crisis that it generates in its own operation. In other words, rather than seeing police as a static form of military organization, we need to see the magnitude of the paradox. To function as pure policing, a policing that realizes some form of “pure policing” (in which the state through policing applies totally and defines all moments), circumstance could never change, all moments would be defined by the operation of policing, and policing itself would be some inert total form of existence. In order for them to maintain order they could never act because all action unleashes conflict into the tactical terrain that the organization of policing is mobilized to prevent. In the very fact that policing does act, in the very fact that action occurs to the degree that it does, in infinite ways at all moments, the very operation of policing must be one that always is in motion and thus an operation that is always causing a crisis in its own mobilization.

It is this impossibility that leads to the material impossibilities of policing (the mathematical gaps that always must persist, combined with the paradoxical attempt to use action to cease action) that really makes politics possible. If politics itself is a conflict (a collision between innumerable desires and the possibilities of action), then the very operation of policing can only operate cryogenically, in the impossible attempt to cease this motion while at the same time amplifying it, through its very operation. The impossibility of pure policing is the impossibility of the philosophical becoming material, of moments becoming defined within a total unity of time and space. It is not that they don't try to realize the “promises of philosophy,” it is that the very attempt implies a fascist attempt to define life itself. This attempt to materialize the

philosophical found expression in the Terror and the gulag, one organized around concepts of virtue and the other around concepts of the revolutionary. This is the mistake of radical movements that always exists on the horizon. We see this ambition in all the great tyrants, from Robespierre to Lenin, from your local police captain to the president, the goal is always the same: “to fulfill the intentions of nature and the destiny of man, realize the promises of philosophy” (Robespierre).

Because the police exist as a logistical organization always in crisis, the basic categories of analysis that we have been using, those of victory and defeat, are outmoded. The very category of victory (how many hours have been devoted to talking about “what victory looks like”) is an impossibility. To claim victory implies that at some moment all action has ceased, that there is a static situation in place that can be termed victorious. But just as for the police, victory is impossible. Rather than victory we need to be thinking of movement, of speed, of the multiplication of possibilities. In other words, the logistical organization of the police is not an object to be defeated, rather it is an operation that, in the very constancy of crisis, can be disorganized and rendered increasingly inoperable. Defeat would mean the end of all options, the complete total end of action itself. But as we have mentioned at length, the very operation of the police generates possibilities in its attempt to eliminate possibility; it creates contingency in the constant security operation meant to define situations.

This means that there is never a tactical dead end, there are always other options, other possibilities, to the degree that we stop seeing the police as an institution that can control single actions, to the degree that we stop seeing our actions as singular and begin to think of this conflict as a fluid

tactical medium. The real fallacy of Plan B is not even so much that it entrenches defeat (although it does), but that it operates within the categories of victory and defeat. Plan B-based tactical thinking entrenches the idea that we are already defeated in our attempts to be “victorious” over police and then comes around to saying that our defeat can be mitigated by opening up other planes of conflict only to the degree that the police are absent. In this approach, in this form of tactical essentialism, in which all tactical moments somehow become common and understandable through singular conceptual frameworks, the terrain of action itself becomes some inert totality, and we fail to identify the tactical points of convergence and possibility as they manifest in particular moments. We need to see beyond these categories of victory and defeat and see the proliferation of possibilities in front of us all the time. Until we do this we are doomed to thinking the police are stronger than we are, and to entrenching this defeat in approaches that further construct our position as being defeated.

### *Constant Crisis and Capacity*

*Uncertainty is the only certainty there is,  
and knowing how to live with insecurity is  
the only security.*

-John Allen Paulos

As we mentioned earlier, the impossibility of policing numerically and tactically means that the police must operate through projection. This means not just that they need to operate and move quickly, both in communication and logistics, but also that, as a movement, they require absence of interference to function. Every person on the street who calls the cops, everyone who gives them information, all the snitches and informants, all

the cameras, are minor compared to the effect of organizing space through “self-control”. Not only do police project themselves spatially in a material way but the crux of their ability to construct space, their ability to operate in non-resistant spaces, is a product of their projection: not where they are, but their ability to project anywhere. In the most concrete terms possible, it is not that people do not shoplift because there is a cop in every store but that the notion of being able to shoplift is made difficult by the possibility of arrest, by the possible projection of police into a space where they are not within or apparent. However, as much as this deterrent effect, this ability to project through space, may seem total, it is not. Otherwise the police would not need to function, let alone be armed. All spaces, all times, all terrains present their own particular resistances, from the potholes in the streets to the tendency of many to have a deep hatred and resentment toward the police—let alone when certain terrains present much more concentrated resistance. And all of these resistances to police movement disrupt their ability to project. This conflict in space, combined with the conflict from the effects of police action, generates a crisis for the coherence of police operations.

To think of crisis as something that occurs only episodically is to think that at some moment there is a condition in which a catastrophic collapse is not possible, in which moments are actually determined and defined existentially, in which policing functions totally; this can never be the case unless we assume that policing has structured some metaphysical truth of some sort or another. As such, we cannot just look at crisis as something that can occur, or consequently goes through periods where it does not occur. The mistake that works like Nihilist Communism makes is assuming that because a situation does not seem to be in crisis,

that it is stabilized in a complete and metaphysical way, that there are no other possibilities. In other words, and to use an argument from *Capital* (Volume 1), it is not that abstract value actually functions, rather it must be inscribed over moments constantly; in itself it is an impossibility. To say that crisis is ever eliminated, that there are periods of crisis and periods of non-crisis, is to make the assumption that concepts actually come to be joined with and define moments and objects. It is not that crisis exists or does not exist. Rather it is that crisis is perpetual in the attempt to actualize the philosophical, to operate any unity of moments across time and space. Instead of seeing crisis as only existing in some moments and not others, we need to embrace the impossibility of philosophy becoming actualized and treat crisis as something with magnitude, as generating more or less resistant mediums of operation, or tactical mediums that become disruptive to the point of disorganizing policing's attempt to logistically materialize definitions.

Policing develops logistical structures around the capacity to contain this crisis, to prevent it from taking on such power that the semblance of coherence ruptures, due to either internal or external factors. Policing therefore cannot be understood as something to defeat, but rather as a projection to disrupt and disorganize, a crisis that can be amplified to the point where their capacity is exceeded. This capacity is not just material (the number of vehicles and personnel that can be mobilized) but the ability to mediate contingency, to operate logistically, to define territory according to strategy. That capacity, as the ability to logistically project across time and space, allows them to deal with the crisis implicit in the operation of policing. When that capacity is exceeded the police are reduced to nothing but a physical force that operates

in direct physical contact, responding to situations without being able to either define the limits of movement or space, unable to project coherent force, unable to maintain a coherence of operations, reduced to nothing but isolated individual units separated from their logistical network. This is what we call rupture; it is the disorganization of the logistics of policing and the policing of logistics. We should not understand rupture as some privileged historical moment, yet another metaphor for Revolution. Rather rupture exists fluidly and alongside space where projection can operate, as a concentration of conflict in space, particular to a space and terrain. But it is these ruptures, these gaps in coverage where projection ceases to operate, that can be expanded and amplified.

What the act of property destruction recognizes is this gap in coverage, this space, either through direct resistance, fluid movement through space, or logistical incapacities that actions can deploy from or into. But, in limiting our imagination to the exploitation of this gap for a single action, rather than tactically amplifying these gaps, the real importance of these gaps, of this crisis, is missed. It is not that we are looking at an inert map, with some spaces covered and others not. We want to exploit that to attempt to cover these gaps, police have to engage in logistical shifts, stretching their resources even further, creating more gaps that have to be covered. It is in this that policing logistics become stretched, that their capacity is exhausted, that crisis amplifies, and rupture occurs; it is this point of rupture that is called insurrection. Each and every thing that occurs, each breathe, each step, each person leaving a building or crossing a street, each conversation, generates a new contingency and a series of possibilities that police logistics have to compensate for in order to maintain their projections, and this ability to cope with and mitigate

the possibilities generated through basic, banal, everyday actions is limited. Each act of property destruction gives them something else to respond to, each barricade disrupts their ability to project through space, each action amplifies the crisis that is always present, especially in spaces where pacified self-control does not operate totally. The police are constantly disorganized, there is no actual logistical coherence, only the occasional ability to contain crisis; it is just a matter of whether this time they have the capacity to project or reinscribe themselves into space. This is why they patrol constantly, why they stand on sidewalks, why they use overwhelming brutality: all attempts to amplify this projection, to operate in the face of their own uncertainty.

In a story about the Greek insurrection in 2008 an anarchist said that they knew the insurrectionary events had resonance when they realized that old ladies were smoking cigarettes on the train and telling the cops who came to stop them to “fuck off!” In other words, the insurrection had resonance because, long after the windows were replaced, long after the streets were cleared of the burned-out carcasses of cars, the ability of the police to project themselves through space, the ability of the state to operate logistically, was still disrupted. And in this disruption people inhabited the space to realize new possibilities, even if that only meant that people smoked with impunity on the subway.

In every action that occurs there are effects, and in these effects the terrain of action shifts, disrupting the ability of the police to maintain a coherence of operation. This infinite distance between the dynamics of action in space and the ability of police to gather information, interpret this information, and generate operations becomes even wider when action is accelerated, and when actions

occur in concentration. We can clearly see this in the riot, where the spatial and conflictual amplification of action can quickly overwhelm police logistics—not because these logistics are attacked directly (although this can contribute to rupture)—but because the terrain of conflict can get dense so quickly that there is no ability to mount a coordinated response. Property destruction actions cause points in the constellation of response, that the police can compensate for, that are easily containable as single points in isolation; the police show up, the window frame is boarded, and the window replaced in a short period of time. In this containability these strikes fail to generate an amplification of conflict which can overwhelm and disorganize police logistics, but it does not have to be this way. The isolation of the act of property destruction comes from the tendency to analyze the action-in-itself, the isolated action. This analysis removes property destruction from the dynamics of action and conflict that surround these actions, preventing both the process of targeting actions for maximum effectiveness, and understanding this effectiveness in reference to the dynamics of policing and resistance in that space. As an action, property destruction can be a form of amplification, but this means moving beyond the tendency to think of the action-in-itself, or in terms of affectivity (the tendency to explain away the lack of tactical thought through claiming that the act of destruction is some act of desire). We can do better, but only to the degree that we move away from conceptual understandings of philosophical conflicts. This requires a simple shift in the way that action is thought, away from the idea of the isolated action taken for conceptual reasons, and into a sober, material analysis of the dynamics of conflict and policing where they occur, when they occur, and how they occur.

If we fail to do this, we will continue to be locked into this faulty concept that actions become more and more radical or effective to the degree that they become more materially destructive, a mentality that pervades organizations like Deep Green Resistance—reducing all terrain to a collection of inert infrastructural points. In this approach the action is isolated from its dynamics, and we fail to even engage in a discussion of effective action. When effectiveness becomes obscured all that we can do is engage in isolated actions, with the vain hope that something will result from them. Actions are always external and externalizing, moving into a space outside of the physical confines of a particular existence and having effects in this external space; action is not about the self, but rather about what exists outside, as a dynamic between things. It is this dynamic between things that is the plane of operation of the police, structured around attempting to regulate the movement of people through space, the actions that can be taken, and the dynamics that can form. But, insurgency is also a product of this space, the point in the dynamics of space where this space becomes so resistant that policing becomes impossible. This does not occur by focusing discussions of actions on abstract threats and personal affirmation. It is not a question of means, property destruction, direct action, and so on, but of how these means are thought, and on what level they are able to have a resonant effect in an immediate material situation.

## Conclusion

*The movement of time is guaranteed by  
the birth of generation after generation, a  
never-ending succession that fills the gods  
with fear*

—Mikhail Bakhtin

The fetishization of property destruction makes various serious errors, but two are primary. First, it relegates action to isolated times and spaces. When we focus on individual broken windows, or spaces of concentrated destruction, we fail to see the tactical terrain that made this space possible, the amplification of the constant crisis in policing that generated this possibility. Instead, we relegate action to isolated points in a vacuum, separated from the tactical medium. We need to understand that property destruction has a space, but it is not in riot porn videos on Youtube. Property destruction exists as one of many means to amplify the crisis in policing, to generate space for more actions to occur which further amplify this crisis to the point of rupture, the point of disorganization. But we need to understand this rupture, this disorganization, not as an end but as the possibility of possibility itself, as a beginning. But, we must be clear, disorganization is not some goal, something to be thought in itself as a conceptual ideal, but rather is a constant movement that makes policing impossible and severs the state from any possibility of manifestation. Fetishization of property destruction has taken these gaps in coverage, the crisis in policing, for granted. It has squandered them on actions that only exist in isolated moments, that begin and end with the swing of a crowbar rather than understanding the broken window as something that amplifies, as something that disorganizes, or has resonance. Property destruction can be used tactically, as a generation of

another point of response and as a potential amplification of crisis, but only to the degree that we can move beyond the fetishization of property destruction, the focus on the action itself in a vacuum, and begin to understand it as a potentially effective action that is taken in reference to its effectiveness.

As was mentioned earlier, we must get beyond the notions of “victory” and “defeat,” but this requires us to challenge another categorical mythology handed down to us from the trajectory of traditional politics: the myth that movements in themselves accomplish anything directly. We have to dispel the notion that anarchists are the movement, that we directly construct the new world. This trap has led us down the road of traditional politics too often, into the trap of defining moments and enacting theory. If we learn anything from the gulags, the massacres, and the numerous other failures of the radical project, it should be that once we go down this road of defining moments, the moment we go beyond understanding our role as anything but being another disruption to the functioning of the state, then we come to replicate the impossibilities that have plagued all politics, the arrogance of disregarding the basic fact that theory exists at a divide from the material. Once we forget that we come to replicate the police. It is not that we ourselves cannot have politics, it is not that we cannot take positions (on one level all insurgency is an attempt to encourage a density of positions and possibilities that can enter into conflict). Rather, we should not be so arrogant as to assume that those are something other than attempts to make sense of the world. It is not about the operation of theory, which is really nothing but an opinion from a particular point of view, but about generating the possibility of possibility; of generating the possibility of politics itself through the disorganization of the police.

## What Is Policing?

### *Policing as Paradox*

*Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitization another name. I propose to call it the police.*

—Jacques Ranciere, *Dis-agreement*

Insurgency, an intentional engagement in social war, is always an immediate and material dynamic. It is a series of actions with effects in immediate moments in time and space, within a particular convergence of the dynamics of history, but we would never be able to grasp this by listening to our activist friends and the ways that resistance is spoken about in those circles. Listening to movement rhetoric, we are transported to a world where meta-problems exist, where political passions and concepts of true speech somehow mean something in themselves, where the interests of the movement mean more than taking materially effective action. A feedback loop builds: they talk to one another about the reasons they resist, and the conceptual frameworks that justify certain actions, but never about the actual dynamics of resistance, or the terrain in which one fights. In this discourse two questions are fused together: one involving the actual dynamics of action and history and the other how we conceptually make sense of this in more or less consistent, but still arbitrary, ways. Rather than this odd sort of meta-analysis, which

prevents us from engaging in a way to understand and impact the operation of the state, we must start to ask questions of operation, the inscription of concepts, or policies (which are just conceptual), into time and space (rather than concepts like ethics and political desire). It requires an approach to action that starts from a sober reading of the dynamics of operation, the moments in which operation occurs, and the structuring of space. To engage with the dynamics of resistance, of fighting and thus of warfare, means to separate these questions of events and the ways that we make sense of events in a conceptual sense, to analyze action on the level of immediacy, and to take action based on this concept of the immediate. In this analysis there is no purpose in complaining about corporate immorality; it is only necessary to understand the operation of land enclosure, private property, the operations of economics and imposed scarcity—in short, the administrative and material possibility of capitalism itself, as a conceptual content that is then operated by the state, through policing. This means fundamentally shifting the way we understand what we fight against, the imposition of certain unities and concepts of unity into everyday life through a material operation. Or, in other words, the state.

The state always already only exists as a concept in a unitary sense, and thus as an impossibility. In the concept of the state there is an attempt to construct a constancy of particular moments, a permanence of impermanence. This is not where the problem arises. On this level the state is nothing but one of innumerable manifestations of the impossibility of philosophy, the attempt to speak of particular phenomena, and the moments these occur through transcendental and qualitative concepts. The paradox is this: the state occurs, yet the conceptual structure of the state prevents anything

from occurring. The conceptual framework defines time and space as a sameness, as inert space in which all objects and actions are isolated and infused with this conceptual content; people are citizens or not, actions are illegal or not. The action becomes removed from itself, the possibilities of existence become removed from themselves, but this means nothing if it only exists in the realm of particular concepts that are constructed by particular people. The question of the state is not a question of the concept of the state, it is nothing but another manifestation of the impossibility of speaking truth, and just as arbitrary as any other conceptual apparatus. The question must shift; it must be a question, not of the concept,<sup>1</sup> but of the attempt to take a particular concept—thought in a particular way by a particular person in a particular moment—and project this concept as a universal definition of existence and the possibilities of existence totally and materially. For these concepts to manifest entails a paradox. Particular actions have to be taken in particular moments, yet with the intention of depriving moments of this particularity and defining them through the framework of a material conceptual totality; particular things must occur, even though these things are impossible within the conceptual totality of the state. This projection must be material, even though the conceptual framework eschews all materiality; it must attempt to manifest this totality, even though this operation only occurs through particular actions, each of which have effects, and, therefore, fundamentally alter the dynamics of time and space. We call this attempt—to manifest totality through the dynamics of the particular—policing.

The state must occur, otherwise we are dealing with nothing but another conceptual construct, but at this point the state becomes something partial, historical, and based in the dynamics of

<sup>1</sup>To be able to make the determination of an incorrect concept is to also argue that one knows the correct concept, and thus truth.

conflict and moment. As such, the state remains an impossibility: the attempt to construct unity even though things are occurring—all moments are defined, but only to the degree that policing functions in time and space, and only to the degree that this operation is effective. For example, it is always possible to move in to an abandoned building, or take something off of a store’s shelf. These actions only become “resistance” in relation to policing. If the state were to function as a totality nothing could occur, everything would be defined, and if things did occur they would have to occur without cause, and arise randomly.

Schopenhauer explains this in his description of a nightmare in which the possibility of truth means that all existence ceases, but concepts continue to exist. For something to be true nothing could ever change, all moments would have to be irrelevant, and could not have any effects: events would just arise with no possible historical dynamics, if they could arise at all. But, if the concept of the state is separated from this concept of totality, of the definition of existence in a universal way, then the state manifests as something that occurs, an arbitrary deployment of organized force into moments—or warfare. To put this another way, if the state actually possessed some existential truth then action would be irrelevant, this truth would just structure all actions; but, to the degree that the state operates, exists as logistics, then action is being taken, and that action cannot possibly cover the totality of time and space—there will always be gaps in coverage, crises of logistics, and so on. This begins to construct the fundamental paradox of the state, as recognized in Foucault:<sup>2</sup> the state always operates as a mobilization of force and conflict in time and space in the attempt to impose peace, or the end of all possible action. We see this in Mussolini<sup>3</sup> when he discusses the state as both

given and practically tactile in a historical sense; implying a determinism that is indeterministic. He calls this the spiritual immanence of the state, that things somehow occur, but they are premised by the state as a material given.

Schmitt argues as much in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*<sup>4</sup>, where he draws a fundamental division between the universalized rationalism of the parliamentary structure and the irrationalism of the operations of the state. Parliamentary, or conceptual, discourse exists within a space that assumes the necessity of the conversation, and the ability to come to some agreement through it. But this is lacking and paradoxical on two different levels. Firstly, for this concept of the unitary state to function we have to assume that, somehow, there can be conflict, necessary for debate, within some ahistorical singularity, the eternal necessity of the conversation, making the assumption of the conversation the condition of possibility for all action. Secondly, this assumes that, within the conversation itself, the solutions generated are somehow universalized materially without any action. This leads to a basic separation between this concept of the (political, conceptual) conversation and the material attempts to operate this conceptual content in materially universal ways through particular actions. As such, what Schmitt terms “the state” is a separate, immediate, material, relationship of force, attempting to operate the content generated by these conversations. This immediacy moves the state outside of the framework of the total description, and moves its manifestation into the immediate and material—a space which cannot be theorized in any sort of direct way, outside of attempts to make sense of it.

This means, however, that the state cannot be seen as a unitary entity, or a static condition: its attempt at totality is always unfulfilled. The

<sup>2</sup>Foucault, 2003; *Society Must Be Defended*

<sup>3</sup>Mussolini, 1936; Mussolini discusses the state as an active totality. All existence is framed through the state and one’s value is in their role in maintaining a unity that is materially impossible. Hence the structure of the fasci, even before the March on Rome, the attempt to construct unity through force, through the elimination of all political contingency.

<sup>4</sup>Schmitt, 1988

attempt to construct the unity of time and space is disrupted by the emergence of events and actions, including the very functioning of the state, which has effects, constructs other possibilities and resistances through these effects, and so on. We cannot see the state as a unitary entity that makes things occur or imposes restrictions; rather these restrictions, these definitions of existence, cannot function outside of the particular actions taken, in the form of policing, which in themselves are always partial and generate effects and conflict in themselves by their very occurrence. In this partiality, in this operation, in this constant flux of history and its convergence into moments, the state (to the degree that it cannot impose total peace through the cosmic catastrophe, the end of all action) must always exist as nothing but the attempt to construct an impossible unity of time and space, while deploying force into time and space. It can be nothing but the more-or-less frantic attempt to impossibly operate transcendental concepts in particular moments, in all moments, in all spaces simultaneously. If this cannot actually function without causing a cosmic catastrophe in which all existence ceases to be relevant or ends all together, if it cannot freeze all dynamics and history, if actions continue to have effects, then this paradox becomes operational. So, we cannot think of the state as unifying its concept and its operation. The concept asserts a unity of time and space that the operation itself disrupts and makes impossible. The state only exists through this mobilization of force, and attempts to construct unity in each and every moment, as a form attempting to construct the operation of some conceptual content in all moments.

Not only is this partiality of operation, the ability to maintain operations in only some times and some spaces, but this also constructs the state as

a fundamentally different attempt from the construction of meaning that motivates and directs this operation. The state exists as an immediacy, rather than a unity, and can only be effectively confronted on this level. The constant war waged on our streets every day is potentially motivated by these concepts of the state, but the concepts are irrelevant. Rather, the question of the state, and of confrontation with the logistics of the state, is not a conceptual question. It is not enough to understand the state—there is no singular entity to understand—nor to grasp the operations of the police in a general sense—this is only the attempt to make sense of phenomena. Engagement, insurgency itself, is a material dynamic, completely outside of the realm of nice, neat, rationality. On this level, it is not a question of whether the state is right, or a desirable political concept, the only aspect we must focus on is this: that the unity of time and space is impossible to understand, and that the attempt to operate such a theoretical unity entails an impossibility that leads to a constant mobilization of force in everyday life.

Yet, as clear as it is that the state operates somewhere, at some time, this is often obscured in the narratives of resistance to the state. These narratives tend to attempt an inductive movement, to posit qualitative content to the particular and material. This accomplishes nothing but the reduction of policing to a singular conceptual object (much the way that pacifists do with all conflict) and fail to develop a framework of analysis for the actual dynamics that occur, preventing a more or less effective thought of resistance and disruption from emerging. In too much of the writings about police and policing, writers fall back into distracting and more-or-less irrelevant moralistic arguments about brutality and force. All too often, texts on the police are attempts to construct some

unitary narrative of policing as institutional, as the manifestation of some static institution that exists independent of history itself. We see this play out in all discussions of the police racism. It is not that the police are not racist, obviously. But stating it in this form, and limiting analysis to this form, implies assumptions that limit the possibility of analysis on an operational level. For this to be true we have to assume the unity of the institution of The Police, as an entity that is somehow separate from the particularities of its operation, of the internal conflicts within this logistical structure, and as separate from changes in historical dynamics that modify the manifestations of policing in time and space. On this level, we ignore the most important aspect of policing: it occurs somewhere, at some time, and is only existent on this plane of immediacy.

We see similar analyses play themselves out in ethical arguments about policing, whether policing is “right” or “wrong.” Just as in this sociological-historical reading, we must first generate a universal framework of qualitative analysis, then impart this into the analysis of a single object. Whenever someone argues that the police are racist or brutal, individual actions (taken in particular times and spaces) become isolated from their immediate dynamics as a separate manifestation of a specific qualitative characterization, and the action and the characterization are fused into one, single, universal statement. This is not a problem on the qualitative level of description; I think most of us would agree that police tend to be racist and brutal. Rather, this analysis is limited to the ways that we understand the concept that we call police in an ethical or politically conceptual way. As an immediate dynamic, policing operates with variance, in particular ways, in particular times and spaces. In the attempt to impart universal ethical,

emotional, or conceptually political content into these particular manifestations we obscure the immediacy of this deployment of force, the ways it is organized materially, and the gaps and crises in that operation.

This manifestation in a particular time and space is a material question. Removing the discourse of policing from the discussion of its immediate and material manifestations, its immediacy and the implications of this, moves an irrational relationship of force (mobilized in material moments) outside of its immediacy (attempting to relate to it as rationally coherent). This sort of removal of immediate dynamics from themselves is a common framework of tactical discussions, specifically ones centered around the question of violence (which plague so-called radical scenes). In this discussion, the action and its dynamics are removed from their immediacy, frozen in time as some specific moment to be analyzed, and then analyzed in reference to some arbitrary classification of ethics, such as the imparting of concepts of universal effectiveness of definitions of violence/non-violence to materially specific and immediate actions. This removal makes it impossible to speak of the dynamics of the action itself, forcing us to make sense of the action only in reference to universalized conceptual totalities, again assuming some over-riding rationality. By conflating the transcendental concept of policing as a conceptual object, and the material operations of police logistics, we end up reducing policing to a static concept in which no action occurs and we ignore the tactical manifestation of policing as a logistical and totalizing organization of cohesive force.

As a phenomenon, or series of phenomena grouped together under a single term, policing must occur in some time and in some place, otherwise we are speaking of phantasms. But for this

to be the case, policing cannot be reduced to an inert conceptual object: incapable of acting, being, moving, and so on. We can never group together the concept and the phenomena of policing into a single entity. Rather, we have to either speak of the conceptual object of policing, at which point we cease to analyze the phenomena of policing, or we have to form a different sort of analysis, to understand policing as a phenomena particular to a time and space, one that also shifts in form. This entails a fundamental change, away from the ethical and conceptually political, and into a grounding in tactical immediacy and logistical dynamics. We can see this in the rebellions of the “Arab Awakening.” In the initial phases discourse may be focused on utopian dreams. But when struggle becomes immediate, when it breaks out onto the streets, discourse grounds itself in tactical expediency. However, focusing on tactics presents its own theoretical difficulties. As Clausewitz<sup>5</sup> and Naveh<sup>6</sup> point out, tactical thought is impossible; one cannot think a particular moment in all ways without consequently positing that there is truth and that one could know it, making the effects of material actions irrelevant within some form of determinism. But strategic thought, or thought grounded in meta-contexts, is irrelevant; it is merely the way that we think about particular actions and dynamics, the immediate and material. As such, Naveh points to a place between strategic and tactical thought: operational theory. Operational theory is the attempt to think tactics, while recognizing its impossibility: if tactics are immediate and material dynamics, then there are no tactics to speak of, in a general sense. This will be the framework that we start from: the focus on the immediate and material, and on ways to make sense of this—but outside of the question of whether these frameworks are true, in the transcendental sense, or not. The

attempt here, therefore, is not to develop some total understanding of policing, but to develop a framework to evaluate the materiality of police operations and logistics, as they deploy in time and space (which will only be judged as to whether it is instrumentally effective or not).

In this, we can begin to reconstruct our understandings of resistance, fighting, insurgency, and warfare. There should be no question about this: insurgency and insurgent movements entail warfare. They exist as spaces, conceptual categorizations marking the space between friends and enemies, and in this they are the basis of politics.<sup>7</sup> This designation is an acknowledgement of both agonism and the immediacy of conflict. The acknowledgement of agonism is the understanding that conflict structures history, that everything that occurs does so in the midst of innumerable other dynamics that have effects on the trajectory of action, making outcomes impossible to determine, and infusing all operational theory with a foundation of calculated probability, impermanence, and uncertainty. Acknowledging immediacy separates the two formerly posed questions, the immediate dynamics of a moment and the conceptual meta-analysis of that moment, and focuses on immediacy as a point of departure. For too long we have been fooling ourselves, convinced that our politics, in the sense of theory, somehow lead to something called praxis, an impossible fusion of theory and action. Rather, we have to approach theory and analysis from a fundamentally different direction: as something that occurs and thus has effects—as something that is always either more or less effective.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Clausewitz, 1968

<sup>6</sup>Naveh, 1997

<sup>7</sup>Schmitt, 1996:  
*The Concept of the Political*

<sup>8</sup>Sorel, 2004

### *Policing as Projection and Capacity*

*To create architecture is to put in order.*

*Put what in order? Function and objects.*

—Le Corbusier

The police are an occupying force, but of an odd sort. When occupation is thought of it is usually as a blanket, total, form, one infecting all aspects of everyday life. But this is always an impossible totality. The concepts of the occupation are total, a space is occupied and defined by these operations, but occupation is never a total phenomena, it never actually enters into the possibility of actions to frame and determine actions. If it did, then resistance would be impossible. Rather, policing functions as a logistics of action, held together conceptually through logistical supply lines, uniforms, command structures, communications, and so on. This logistics enters into everyday life in a mythology of the unity of time and space as defined by the occupation, but this unity never actually functions, possibility is never actually defined. Policing is a deployment of force in a vain attempt to define actions, and in the process it must be positioned. It is not some ethereal force that exercises control over actions (although police violence definitely acts as a deterrent). All they can do is inject more or less organized action, which carries more or fewer consequences, in the attempt to control action, an attempt that is never fulfilled.

As Clausewitz argues, occupation always comes with two impossibilities.<sup>9</sup> The first is simply numerical. If policing ever became total, if the constructs of the state ever came to frame and determine existence, policing would be irrelevant, and all of existence would be nothing but a drab, defined, playing out of a teleological script. But, since this is not the case, since theft still occurs, resistance still happens, people still get into confrontations with the

police, refuse to snitch, and so on, it is simple to see that this totality does not exist. Therefore, we have to think of police, and the logistics of policing, as a limited and defined deployment of bodies and actions into space, and one that only covers a limited amount of space with a limited number of bodies. For example, take the G20 in Pittsburgh, which saw assembled the largest single police force in American history. If we line all of these cops up to the point where they could control all action in space in a direct way, without weapons, transportation or movement, they control a very limited amount of space in a city the size of Pittsburgh; add to this variances in terrain, which limit movement, the movements of the city and the density of actions that occur, and the security priorities that keep certain numbers of police pinned to a location, and that space shrinks further. In a more extreme example— US military tactical shifts after the War in Iraq—we see this even more clearly. When the US invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq, they did so under the fantasy that occupation was unnecessary, that somehow their very presence would construct some total capitulation. But, as was found quickly, a low concentration of troops in resistant terrains allows for the conditions for insurgencies to flourish, organize, and arm. As a result, they flooded these regions with troops, stretching their capacity to the breaking point, and not only still failed to cover the totality of the terrain, but also left open other terrain, Northern Africa and Yemen specifically. Their concentration of troops prevented their projection through space. So they shifted into low-concentration deployments, backed up by drone strikes and Special Ops raids, to attempt to cover as much space as possible, as consistently as possible, but this eliminated their ground presence and prevents them from holding any space. Literally, unless every

<sup>9</sup>Clausewitz, 1968

square inch is covered, all the time, there is still the possibility of resistance action against or outside of the logistics of policing, making occupation not total. There are always gaps in coverage.

Secondly, action always changes the conditions and dynamics of action, a process that can never stop. Actions are within a time and space, a particular convergence of the dynamics of history, that both forms the conditions of that action, and also forms through action. Contrary to Aristotelean concepts of production and action as creation, we never act within or on some inert object, rather the object presents resistances that fundamentally change the dynamics of that action. Within the construction of history, all action generates resistances, shapes the generated effects of actions coming into conflict with the dynamics of other actions, in a process that fundamentally shapes the terrain of action. The state, on the other hand, exists as a definition of existence in a smooth, total, atemporal way. This means that it functions only to the degree that it functions totally in every moment, in all space, all the time, eliminating resistances and effects, and constructing actions in a smooth, resistanceless environment. The logistics of policing, the material manifestation of the attempt to construct the unity of the state in time and space, as time and space, only functions to the degree that it generates this total coverage prevented by numerical limitation. If this totality functioned, if all actions were defined, then we would be faced with a tragic, dystopian world: the world of immanence. For that to exist we would have to assume that every action was defined before being taken, the conceptual definition of that action would have to be the actual condition of possibility for all action. No actions could have any effects that were undefined, everything would arise as if disconnected to anything that occurred prior, if

anything could occur at all. In other words, there would be no possibility of possibility, no ability to modify circumstance, only a total, metaphysically teleological definition of the totality of all existence, of which each and every existing thing is nothing but an expression. But, again, if this were the case then occupation, the logistics of policing, would be irrelevant. Therefore, we have to assume that the police act, and that these actions generate effects. Even in their deployment, even if nothing else occurred, the dynamics of action are changing, the terrain of action is being modified, and this is happening in ways that can never be determined. Conflict still occurs, even just in the relationship of bi-pedal movement and hard ground, let alone in the collision and friction that action itself generates. In their very deployment, police generate friction, conflict, and open up other possibilities of action; history does not cease in its dynamics. We see this every time a counterinsurgency plan solicits an ambush, every time police crack down on a neighborhood and something occurs in another neighborhood, away from their concentration of force. Their movements change the terrain of action, and collide with the movements and actions of all other things that construct that terrain: the degradation of infrastructure, the growing hatred and resistance to the police, basic “crime” carried out by the desperate to survive within capitalism, worker absenteeism, strikes, and so on. Unless, magically, the deployment of the police actually overcomes the effects of their own actions, and somehow comes to freeze history in a defined moment, terrain will always shift, and this shift makes total occupation impossible.

The impossibility of the totality of occupation constructs policing as an attempt to project through ever greater volumes of space, in ever more constant ways. The entirety of the history of police

<sup>10</sup>Williams, 2007

methodology and operations centers around the development of the methods of projection. From the use of the car to the use of the radio, from the development of the surveillance matrix (ever more pervasive) to the construction of task forces, from the move into paramilitary operations to the development of so-called community policing—these shifts are undertaken in order to further project through space in more and more consistent ways. But there are limits to this projection, as we see with the transition from counterinsurgency to counter-terrorism methodologies within the US military, where a strategic choice has been made to avoid long occupations with large force footprints in favor of maximum projection across space with minimal numbers. With limited numbers choices must be made: allocation of force, structuring of logistics, maintenance of supply lines and so on. This becomes more and more difficult the more resistant the terrain becomes. For example, within the team-policing structures in Pittsburgh, the police space themselves throughout a sector, with numerous sectors per zone and six zones within the city limits. Within a sector police within a team will space out as far as possible, patrolling streets alone, with one cop per car, and then converge on a site of response, for example a traffic stop. This methodology tries for the best of both worlds: spreading out through a limited amount of space while still being able to swarm a specific area. Capacity is sacrificed in this operational methodology. As force spreads throughout the city and is divided between sectors, whenever there is a point of response (for example in sector a) the entire team converges, leaving the rest of that sector open, unless force is pulled from sector b to the empty spots in sector a.

<sup>11</sup>Delanda, 1991

Projection exists in two forms: visual and material. Visual projection is the capacity to see space

and things in space, to develop what in modern military parlance is termed topsight. In the 19th Century, police had tended to march through streets in formation, largely so that they could communicate with one another.<sup>10</sup> This is an often misunderstood aspect of Napoleonic warfare, and the phenomena of soldiers marching into lines of gunfire. These formations existed in the absence of forms of communication that could cross distance. With the noise of combat, the smoke generated by gunfire, and the lack of radios, all commands were transmitted either through hand signal or some form of audible command, and early police forces were no different.

This column formation began to space itself out with the use of whistles or other noise-makers, but, even with this mild form of projection, the area that could be projected through was limited. Vision was also limited, and the ability to gather and transfer information. With the advent of the radio, then the car, and finally the helicopter and surveillance camera, policing was able to project through space at greater speed and communicate over wider distances, allowing for greater projection.<sup>11</sup> But, even with the total surveillance structure that cities like New York, Chicago and Cleveland are building, where private security cameras are linked into the police camera matrix and private, semi-official police begin to act as support for city police, this coverage is remarkably limited. Cameras, mechanical vision, cannot in themselves analyze information—yet. This means that, even with the most sophisticated tools of surveillance, and the most sophisticated, highly trained, human analysts, there is only a certain amount of information that can be processed—even though the amount of information generated multiplies exponentially with the addition of each new surveillance apparatus.

Even the most sophisticated surveillance agency, the National Security Agency, which pulls terabytes of information every hour, only has around 35,000 analysts to look into all this information: millions of phone calls, millions of emails, millions of websearches, library records, on the ground surveillance and so on. Analysis is the chokepoint, and this gets infinitely more complicated with the anonymity methods that are used by many of the internet generation. This gap between information and analysis becomes all the more stark when there is an attempt to analyze in realtime. At that point, to the degree that a command structure functions, information is being compiled, sent up the chain of command, analyzed, turned into orders, and communicated back to the ground. If actions are quick, even if this analysis becomes absurdly fast, there is still a gap, both temporal and interpretive, between action and the analysis of information about action within the command structure. Secondly, this is still limited to line of sight and information that can be combined with this vision. This is a primary difficulty when there is an attempt to crush any sort of insurgency; as David Galula<sup>12</sup> argues, insurgencies must become the terrain, meaning that they are incredibly difficult to differentiate from the “population” (of course assuming that these are not the same thing). Many experienced people know that it always helps to have a change of clothes at actions, especially if they make you look like a hipster. A quick change of clothes when dispersing means often the police will drive right past you—the simple change of clothes makes them blind. Anonymity isn’t what exists when our faces are covered, anonymity, as Baudelaire argued, is the condition that we are relegated to in the capitalist metropolis. The distance that vision can encompass can be elongated with helicopters, drones, surveillance planes, cameras

and satellites, but every time this distance multiplies the ability to pick out the micro-details of that space become more limited.

Material projection is the actual projection of force through space. Again, this occurs within a balance of concentration and projection. As policing began to spread out through space, and force concentration became more and more diffuse, the means of deploying a magnitude of force increased. Initially, police may have carried nothing more than night-sticks and sometimes cuffs. Combined with movement on foot, force could only be projected on a line of bodily movement, and only at the speed of a quick run, along with the range of movement of the human arm. As force spread out, through the use of the car and the radio, and then the helicopter and the armored personnel carrier, this became combined with the handgun and automatic weapon to increase that projection dramatically. While the arm may only reach a couple feet from the body, the gun can project a bullet on a straight line for hundreds of meters, and with lethal force. This ability to project through the projectile was again furthered by the grenade, and grenade launcher, pepper spray and now the Taser, to project different levels of force out from the body onto a target, with the LRAD able to project concentrated and targeted soundwaves over a quarter mile. These projections, along with increasing scales of force, are all ways of project force into space, to make the visibility achieved through topsight material and operative.

This reliance on the ground force is absolutely essential. Surveillance can act as a deterrent but not an actual material deployment of force as the US military found after the first phase of the invasion of Afghanistan. At the beginning of the war Special Operations and CIA were on the ground, acting as forward spotters. They would find a

<sup>12</sup>Galula, 1964

target, send coordinates to a drone overhead, which would send them to a base in Saudi Arabia, which would beam them to a satellite, and the satellite would send these to a B-52 that would drop a guided bomb on the area. This process would take 18 minutes.<sup>13</sup> However, for all the destruction that can be caused within this structure, the ability to hit targets evaporated when insurgents abandoned infrastructure and hid vehicles in mountain passes, making them impossible to spot. This made the US respond with the commitment of ground forces, which insurgents can track, which have supply lines, etc, that must be supplied, and so on, creating a plethora of targets. Even with huge numbers in an area, the US ability to control the space by physical presence and the projection of projectiles was incredibly limited. As is often witnessed within insurgencies, the movement of main force concentrations into an area meets little resistance, insurgents melting away only to reemerge after the main force moves on. Material projection is not just a spatial question regarding the amount of space covered, but also one of time, of the constancy of that ability to move through space. As Clausewitz argues, this ability to move through space becomes increasingly difficult, and force projects less, the more uncertain and resistant the terrain becomes.<sup>14</sup> Even a single attack can force an entire occupying force to shift into increasingly dense, defensive, concentrations, limiting their ability to project through space. The more they concentrate force physically the less able they are to project themselves across space as a seemingly constant presence.

Projection of force, visually and materially, is the attempt to construct a terrain that is conducive to the movements and operations of policing. We have seen numerous aspects of this within the tactical terrains that we inhabit: the

proliferation of surveillance cameras, the networking of private cameras into the police surveillance matrix, the proliferation of private security and semi-official police departments, and the growth of neighborhood snitch networks, also known as Neighborhood Watch, but also the leveling of vacant buildings, the mowing of vacant lots, and so on. Most innovative in the methods of projection is not a technology, but merely the construction of metropolitan space itself. The street grid developed in the 19th Century and the freeway systems in the early and mid-20th Century made movement through space easier and more efficient. Projection does not just involve the ability to latently hold space, even outside of immediate presence,<sup>15</sup> but the ability to move through space. However, like any technological innovation, the development of the road structure, standardizing space within Cartesian models, may have made movement easier, but also disperses concentrations of force and largely confines police movements to the roads themselves. As in Paris where Reclus suggested turning into gun turrets the row buildings lining the newly-built wide boulevards (that now characterize that city), this confinement to the road generates zones of elongated vision and projectile movement,<sup>16</sup> but also limits the vision of what occurs off these roads, in zones of indiscernability, whether Iraq's open desert plains, Afghanistan's mountains, or the "unbuildable" spaces on the sides of wooded hills in the middle of Pittsburgh. These zones of indiscernability, of invisibility and possibility, become wider the more resistance is waged within a space, the less that people snitch each other out, the more open space off the roads there may be within a terrain, and the density of the dynamics and physical objects (whether trees in a forest or barricades on streets) within the lines of flight within that terrain.

<sup>13</sup>Kaplan, 2013

<sup>14</sup>Clausewitz, 1968

<sup>15</sup>Many police tactics, including patrols, are meant to serve as a deterrent, to project their perceived presence outside of immediate presence. They may not be immediately present, but the altering of patrol patterns and the use of swarming tactics always make their presence possible.

<sup>16</sup>US Army *FM 3-19.15*: The development of the road grid was meant to make movement more efficient, but also allowed for bullets to be projected longer distances without hitting buildings, allowed vision to project further down wide straight streets, and made streets more difficult to barricade.

One can easily trace this trajectory of containing land for policing beginning with land enclosure and the standardization of naming and surveillance structures in the 16th and 17th centuries, of policing saturating space more and more thoroughly, as the dynamics of this space come to shape policing. The co-immanent dynamic between policing and space can be seen everywhere. In the suburbs we find the proliferation of private security, on every corporate campus, on every college campus, in every mall and shopping center, as well as the growth of increasingly fortified gated communities. In the core of the metropolis the street grid, the walls around the security buildings and precinct stations, the proliferation of private and public cameras, the deputization of pseudo-police forces at colleges and hospitals, the proliferation of non-police and “task forces” hired by development organizations, the rise of the community watch group, and the growth of the federal security apparatus have come to form spaces that are almost entirely framed around the movements and operations of police. With the enclosure of space, and the elimination of the commons, the “public” has become something to protect against. Surveillance saturates the workplace and the park. Police roll down the street looking for someone that looks suspicious; the streets in the poorest neighborhoods are cordoned off and Baghdad-style armed checkpoints are set up on the streets of LA. Paramilitary tactics are adopted by SWAT teams that increasingly become aspects of everyday police operations and the flip-side of the velvet glove of “community policing.” Everywhere we look the metropolis has become structured around the separation of space, the separation of bodies, the dispersal of the street<sup>17</sup> and the fortification of the private. This does not occur in a vacuum, or in the absence of the attempt to amplify projection

across space and time. As space becomes increasingly striated, increasingly operated upon, space itself begins to shift around a new series of imperatives. As static as many of us may feel built space is, the solidity of terrain is largely mythological. But just as space shifts in order to allow for the smooth operation of policing (or prevent it),<sup>18</sup> policing has been modified to operate in the post-WWII metropolis with the incorporation of ever faster forms of communication, ever more sophisticated forms of monitoring and surveillance, and ever heavier weapons and paramilitary tactics.

What we are witnessing is nothing short of a constant security operation, a constant attempt to eliminate these zones of indiscernability, structured not only to respond to actions but also to prevent actions from arising or becoming apparent. Every day this more defines the spaces that we exist within; it is nothing short of the expansion of the prison outside of the walls. As in the prison, a terrain conducive to police movements and operations necessarily involves an almost total vision, a complete ability to project across space, the ability to justify unlimited uses of force. But, along with this, we come into contact with the primary paradox of counterinsurgency (policing is necessarily a form of occupation, and thus a form of counterinsurgency). As policing becomes more and more all-pervasive, as the police become more and more able to mobilize overwhelming concentrations of force, their very movements generate resistance, resentment, conflict. As they project through space they become visible, and the methods of tracking their movements and avoiding their detection are becoming more and more effective. Even with this growth of the prison, to encompass all space to varying degrees, illegality<sup>19</sup> still persists. Every day, acts of economic disruption, like theft and worker absenteeism, are rampant. The state only functions

<sup>17</sup>“And he who becomes master of the city used to being free and does not destroy her can expect to be destroyed by her, because always she has as pretext in rebellion the name of liberty and her old customs, which never through either length of time or benefits are forgotten, and in spite of anything that can be done or foreseen, unless citizens are disunited or dispersed, they do not forget that name and those institutions...”;

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, as quoted by Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.

<sup>18</sup>In *Hollowland* Weizman recounts the debate around the rebuilding of Jenin after the invasion and destruction of the camp by the Israeli Defense Forces. The UN wanted to use the rebuilding process as an opportunity to rationalize the camp, by building permanent structures, widening roads, and imposing a grid pattern to the streets. Palestinians rejected the plan, arguing that permanence would sacrifice their claim to return to their previous land while the rationalization of the streets would make it easier for the IDF to invade in the future and easier to monitor, defeating the intentional chaos of the original development, built to resist invasion by structuring the space around dense winding streets (difficult for armor to move through and troops to maintain visual contact in).

in the space in which policing functions, and to more or less of a degree. In these gaps in coverage, generated by the sheer limitation of police spatial occupation and the limits of the range of vision and weapons, the concentration of state logistics is low, and the possibility of action proliferates; this becomes even more pronounced within spaces where there is an ethic of noncooperation or outright resistance.

<sup>19</sup>“Illegality” is a term that is only defined within the framework of law and the ability of the police to arrest, but all illegality presents a gap in police coverage

### *Policing as Social War*

*Activity in War is movement in a resistant medium. Just as a man immersed in water is unable to perform with ease and regularity the most natural and simplest movement, that of walking, so in War, with extraordinary powers, one cannot keep even the line of mediocrity.*

— Clausewitz, *On War*

This projection through space is evident on each and every city street, from the flashing blue lights of the cameras on the light poles to the threat of the undercovers. The movements of the gang task force mirror the movements of the SWAT team, which directly parallels the dynamics of “community policing” and the designation of some as “undesirable.” In some places this occupation is barely apparent, but in many it has very much taken on the aesthetics of an occupation. But, for as much as this occupation can increase the capacity of policing to contain crisis, and the ability to project through space, it can never be total. The impossibility of policing generates a mobilization of an armed apparatus, in which all moments are assumed to be the terrain of action, the tactical terrain. On this level, the aesthetic shape of the

<sup>20</sup>Schmitt, 1996

<sup>21</sup>Foucault, 2003: *Society Must Be Defended*

<sup>22</sup>Ranciere, 2004; “Whether the police are sweet and kind does not make them any less the opposite of politics.”

content being projected through policing is completely irrelevant. We can sit around and discuss politics in a conceptual sense, but this is meaningless. The political is a direct relationship of force and a dynamic of conflict, something that occurs within the immediate tactical movements of moments, something that happens.<sup>20</sup> Policing occurs within a tactical paradox: the attempt to mobilize politics (to differentiate between friends and enemies), to end politics, or to generate peace.<sup>21</sup> The concept of peace implies the end of conflict, and thus the complete determination of actions, the end of friction, the end of the possibility of mobilizing action, the impossibility of the historical: total occupation.<sup>22</sup>

Policing always exists as this attempt to operate peace, but through the mobilization of conflict. It is not that we could wish for more peaceful police, peace is impossible unless all action ceases or everything becomes determined, and as an action the logistics of policing are, like all actions, an imposition of certain dynamics in space. As such, policing is an impossible attempt, the attempt to mobilize conflict to end conflict, the attempt to mobilize the effects of actions to prevent actions from generating any possibility or effects. The impossibilities of policing necessitate a fundamentally different framework to analyze the logistics and movements of policing. Rather than the discussion of some institution, or some singular linear history, policing must be analyzed on the plane through which it occurs, the tactical, the immediate, and the material. To function necessarily implies a mobilization of force throughout space, as thoroughly as possible; or warfare in every moment in the impossible attempt to operate some conceptual totality in particular moments. The war of the state is a paradoxical war (not in the sense of a war between states, but the constant warfare waged on us in

every moment, a war that structures the space we live in, a total war, a perpetual war).

But, as much as we may be tempted to think this in a generalized, total, conceptual way, we are missing the underlying structure of warfare itself. A common fallacy in the analysis of tactics by radicals is the structuring of a dualistic concept of warfare focused on micro-tactics, fighting styles and so on; and the meta-structure of strategy, or generalized histories of battles. This way of thinking misses the dynamics of conflict. As Clausewitz argues, the war is a series of engagements that led to some result; the engagement is constructed from a series of combats, or immediate relationships of conflict, each of which necessarily changes the dynamics of the terrain of conflict, shaping future dynamics of conflict.<sup>23</sup> To think “the police” is neither to think the institution of the police, nor the immediate ways that they fight on a particular level. It is to understand the relationship between the conceptual methodologies of policing and the immediate actions that they take, as well as the terrain that these actions occur within, and the effects of these dynamics of conflict in the construction of a tactical terrain. We have to think of the concept of the police as a collection of particular people attempting to operate their own particular way of understanding, through the framework of some total conceptual content, and then taking particular actions that generate effects. We cannot approach the police as singular,<sup>24</sup> and their logistics as unified, but rather, must begin to understand the logistics of policing as the impossible attempt to not only construct the unity of time and space external to their operations, but also the attempt to construct their own coherence. There are numerous means through which this attempt occurs (specifically command and control as well as supply). But, as much as a force can be trained, as standardized

practices and uniforms can be, the immediacy of action and the particularity of those who act in moments can never be eliminated. This impossibility of internal definition, internal coherence, generates crisis—the possibility that this logistics could cease to function at any moment—and forces the constant desperate attempt to construct its own coherence as the condition of its functioning.

Projection occurs in relation to crisis, but in a complicated way. On the one hand, the projection of police logistics is always already deployed in the attempt to contain possible increases in crisis. Areas that are seen as ungoverned, areas that are “hotbeds for crime”—the neighborhoods of the working class, the workplace, the government building—these spaces, whether a single target is being protected or the general flow and dynamic of the street itself, always become the focus of police initiatives. When crisis appears, or becomes possible in a space, police logistics must stretch in order to address that gap in projection, this gap in presence, visibility, and deterrence. But, as this occurs, and the police enter more and more resistant terrains—areas where they are regarded as occupiers, where they are met with a wall of silence, where people defend themselves against police incursion—the amount of force that must be mobilized to enter these terrains multiplies, along with the uncertainty of their movement through that terrain. As a terrain becomes more and more potentially resistant the uncertainty of movement amplifies,<sup>25</sup> requiring more and more force to be concentrated there, if only to move through the area. This can escalate to a scale that pushes the police off the street entirely, requiring outside forces to come in, usually in the form of the National Guard and the Army. As the density and speed of action increases, the conflict becomes increasingly difficult to contain; if the terrain multiplies,

<sup>23</sup>Clausewitz, 1968

<sup>24</sup>Whenever liberals argue that the “police are people too” they are hitting on an important point, and then, as usual, completely misunderstand the implications. If the police are just expressions of a unit or definition then they are robotic and determined, but not responsible for the implications of action, while if they are people—particular existences in particular moments—they only exist as police to the degree that they attempt to mobilize force to operate their particular understanding of existence as a total limitation on the possibilities of existence, making them fascists.

<sup>25</sup>Clausewitz, 1968

further amplifying crisis, then it can become impossible to contain. Even in the face of the minor crises of the street on a normal day, a single point of response, a single point of convergence, can severely limit the ability of police logistics to project through space; as the police from one sector respond to a point and concentrate force, others have to be drawn from other sectors, potentially creating a cascading effect that rupture police logistics entirely, as we saw for a period of time in Greece in December 2008.

There is this mythology, born out of linear military histories, written by military scholars, mixed with a certain American machismo, that generates the idea that all military conflict becomes linear and frontal. Believing this myth is suicidal. Such a mentality is mirrored in pacifist attempts to engage in tactical discussion. They claim that “fighting the military on their level will never be successful,” of course assuming that linear symmetric conflict is the only form of fighting possible, and ignoring the military component of all revolutionary moments. To look beyond this absurd assumption of linear conflict means to engage on the level of crisis and its amplification. With the advent of the Napoleonic military<sup>26</sup> (characterized by mass numbers, intensive intelligence collecting, and fast movement) pursuit became a primary aspect of military conflict; many engagements were defined by pursuit of retreating defeated forces. As they retreated, troops would get lost, defect, desert, and walk home or become isolated from the main force. The opposing force broke down, not out of the magnitude of the attack, but out of the multiplication of terrain and the acceleration of action. As action accelerates, and as terrain widens, there are more points to respond too, stretching the ability of the opposing force to maintain organizational logistics and falling, increasingly, into

disorganization. This is the key to understanding all guerrilla conflict, all insurgency; it is never a calculus based on magnitude of attacking single points, but a multiplication of terrain, acceleration of speed, and amplification of crisis. This process used to take hold more quickly, with only minor modifications to the dynamics of conflict throwing entire forces into disarray, but this was before the advent of the radio. But even this history is not full proof. We only need to look as far as Syria to see the gradual effects of long, protracted, organizational crisis: regime soldiers relied on roads to transport supplies, but these were attacked, and covered too much space to defend, so they relied on helicopters ’til the airbases began to be attacked. Now many are isolated, able to communicate through the radio and cellular networks, but unable to move and now out of supplies. This is a central principle and the basis for the doctrine of parallel strike, a strategy used since the 1980s to strike multiple targets simultaneously (preventing the reinforcement of certain sites or the ability to cope with the rapid amplification of crisis). As troops have to spread out, as conflict occurs in intentional forms in more and more terrain, coverage becomes more and more difficult; troops have to either pull back to safe areas or risk complete disorganization, complete logistical rupture.

With the advent of the police cruiser, the radio, the helicopter, the surveillance matrix, and the standardization of space through the construction of private property, zoning laws, building codes, and the imposition of the grid pattern of streets, space has been saturated by the attempt to amplify the capacity to contain crisis. This is necessary for policing to function. Not only is the structuring of space made possible by the attempt to operate some sort of conceptual content as a definition of space, which is also latent in urban planning, rural

<sup>26</sup>Delanda, 1991; Napoleonic military structures were characterized by the breakdown of the aristocracy during the French Revolution and the advent of mass conscription. Before the French Revolution, European military tactics were based around largely mercenary armies led by aristocrats (expensive to train and small) and around highly regimented maneuver warfare, sieges, and negotiated battles, with neither side willing to risk their forces in frontal clash. With the rise of Napoleon the chain of command became meritocratic and the ranks of soldiers, compelled by nationalism and conscription, swelled, now numbering into the hundreds of thousands. This allowed battle fronts to stretch for miles, multiple fronts to be formed, grand maneuvers, and greater speed through charge and pursuit.

regulations, and resource extraction, but this terrain becomes, to the degree possible, an expression of the conceptual content being developed, both shaping the operations of police logistics and the space itself. But even with the structure of metropolitan terrain being shaped by policing, this does not prevent the crisis in policing, or even to keep it from increasing. This crisis is generated from two sites: the movements and dynamics of history itself (infrastructural decay, financial crisis... everything else that occurs), and the crisis latent in the very operations of policing itself, born from the impossibility of the coherence of police. In the very movements of policing, in the expansion of the terrain of policing, in the maximization of projection, the terrain in which this crisis occurs expands as well. Policing cannot be considered separate from crisis, just as the tactical manifestation of crisis cannot make sense outside of the attempt to generate unities of time and space; the impossibility of the attempt to construct these unities of time and space (crisis) cannot exist without the attempt to construct unity (policing) to begin with. As action occurs, as police logistics are deployed into space, these deployments generate effects. These can be the predictable amplification of conflict that is often generated by armed occupation, but could also be the more mundane actions within everyday life; everything has the potential to cause effects which are catastrophic to the attempt to define existence, and everything that occurs outside of deterministic immanence—which is everything—is necessarily a crisis for policing. This generates a crisis in the very disjunction, the infinite distance, which necessarily exists between conceptual totalities and the particularity of actions, and without this crisis resistance would be impossible. Yet, this also generates this more foundational crisis, the crisis of the impossibility of the police as

a coherence. Therefore, policing exists not as an institution that can be argued against within the realm of the philosophical, but rather is a logistics of the deployment of force in the attempt to construct the impossible, an absolute and total definition of the relations between things, people, space, and movement.

We cannot approach this question of the police as a static thing. Rather, as a logistics, policing is constructed in space, as something that occurs, complete with its own dynamics, sites of coordination and command, communications, supply lines, and the organization of movement within space. It is a deployment of organized content that attempts to move through the totality of space, as a form of limitation and definition of the dynamics between things, and can, therefore, only be understood as warfare waged in the social.<sup>27</sup> But, as with any logistical apparatus, the very mobilization of it also generates crisis within it. The impossibility of covering all space and time necessarily means that force is deployed unevenly, that it has to move to cover space, and that this movement entails further crisis. As units deploy through space they are met with resistances, equipment breakdowns and glitches, a lack of coherence, and so on, forcing the operation to remain in constant motion, generating constant crisis. As we have been able to witness through the ability to track dynamics of conflict in real time, through the help of live blogging and social media, the impact of crisis can be widely known. Every time resistance is mounted in a space, every time a logistical hub is cut off, every time a supply line is cut or force is concentrated in space, effects cascade, actions speed up. This speed of action, combined with the multiplication of the terrain in which action occurs, disrupts logistics, amplifies crisis internal to the attempt to construct the coherence of these logistics, which can enable

<sup>27</sup>The social here is not referring to some impossible, singular "Society," but rather to what occurs between things.

the crisis to become a point of rupture, a point in which this logistical attempt to construct the unity of time and space, as well as the coherence of logistics itself, ceases to function.

Crisis amplifies through the friction caused in action. As this logistics deploys force through space, and crisis is generated in this deployment, that crisis amplifies to the degree that friction is generated in that very movement through space. Barricades are an example, preventing police from moving through space—but not all examples are so geographically static. Friction is generated in the deployment itself, but is amplified through intentional action, through the intentional multiplication of the terrain and speed of action, the multiplication of contingency and the construction of resistant terrains, where the movement of police becomes increasingly uncertain. As the speed and terrain of action multiplies capacity is stretched, logistics are stretched, supply lines are stretched, and projection is disrupted. Insurrection is the term denoting this rupture of policing logistics, where the police are run off the streets and the possibilities of action multiply. But this is not some conceptual calculus, and there can be no concept of insurrection in itself. The mentality that has become popular lately—social war as something that we engage in and initiate, and insurrection as an ideal that can be theorized about—misses the point. When we discuss the dynamics of conflict, social war as something that is initiated has to be separated from any dynamics that were occurring before this magical point at which resistance coalesces. Rather, social war occurs, it is the deployment of policing in time and space, and insurrection is merely an amplification of this continual conflict. As with the logistics of policing, insurrection occurs, it is tactical, and is necessarily a dynamic relationship. Our choice is not a

conceptual one—one endorses or doesn't the thesis of police—but rather the positionality one takes in relationship to the impossibility of policing, to social war itself. It is not a question of whether social war occurs, it is only a question of how we relate to its materiality, to policing itself.

To engage in a fight against police is necessarily to engage in a material tactical struggle against the logistics of policing. No correct theory, proper motivation, or perfect analysis guarantees anything in material struggle. We must move beyond the idea that holds resistance to be transcendental, abstract, conceptual, and begin to embrace it for what it is, an intentional engagement in the immediacy of conflict, in the dynamics of conflict itself. At this point, the only determination we must make is how we conceptualize this war, who we choose to define as friends and enemies (although this is a secondary concern and only allows us to make sense of what is happening). The actual struggle is a material question, and therefore one that exists as separate from the conceptual question. It is not a question of why one chooses any particular form of engagement in social war, it is merely about conceptualizing the dynamics of social war itself, and whether this conceptualization effectively disrupts the dynamics of policing. Struggle or resistance is a material dynamic, something that occurs, and something that, at the end of the day, only matters to the degree that it is effective. The longer we persist in analyzing policing as institutional, inert, and as a conceptual object that can be argued against, the longer we will fail to consciously engage in a dynamic of conflict, an intentional amplification of crisis, and the longer that we will remain nothing but activists and fail to embrace the necessity of our role as insurgents.

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# Study Guide: Policing, Insurgency, Tactics

## *Key Concepts*

- **Police are the logistical infrastructure of the idea of the state.** The state is not a real force, but an imaginary idea that many real forces coordinate to bring into reality. Nomad reminds us that this coordination is imperfect, that the state is not a total reality. The text really highlights considerations of capacity and the simple fact that: The police cannot be everywhere. Therefore there is always space outside of the state. There is always space for rebellion. Nomad defines policing as the constant management of a crisis.
- **Force Projection** is the use of logistical tools to give the impression of policing as total. It's a pretty visual concept: Force projection creates the illusion, for example, that the police are always watching you—surveillance cameras are a form of force projection. Force projection does not belong to the police, though—it is a logistical tool that we can also use.
- **Tactics** means exploiting gaps in policing.
- Using the language of **victory** and **defeat** cuts off possibilities and creates a tactical dead end. If we believe we have lost, then our enemy is inherently stronger than us and we envision an endless cycle of defeat. Instead, tactics should be a fluid medium,

recognizing that conflict is ongoing, and we should be evaluating our power on a spectrum as it grows and weakens without the sense of finality that comes with language like “victory/defeat.”

- **Terrain** is always shifting, therefore tactics must consider **movement, speed,** and the **constant multiplication of possibilities.**
- Insurgents succeed by spreading **chaos** and **unpredictability.** The state can only succeed by creating **order** everywhere.

## *Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion*

- It is necessary to assess police operations immediately in each particular moment. We should choose tactics that relate to each particular moment, rather than choosing tactics for their affective qualities alone. Using tactics that you think are virulent or contagious doesn't actually make them virulent or contagious.
- We must outpace the police's capacity to police. When their resources are spent, they have to just react to what is in front of them. We should continually stretch them thin and amplify the crisis of policing.
  - One example of this is decentralization: When actions or events happening in multiple places stretches the police's resources more thinly.

Peacekeeping	Counterinsurgency
Grand Juries	Gang injunctions
Community Policing	House raids
Managing disorder to reduce or pre-empt conflict	Active conflict is the standpoint

- Insurrection illuminates gaps in policing. There is a particular image from Greece (after 2008) of some old ladies smoking in the train where they weren't supposed to, disregarding the police who told them to stop. This is **insurrectionary culture** in which everyone takes advantage of gaps in policing. (The terrain we exist in is also a social terrain!).
  - What are ways that we can share this kind of insurrectionary culture? Or in what ways do we already?
- Mutual aid, popular education, and other “positive” projects support the destabilization of the state and our ability to exploit gaps more frequently and more comfortably.
- The various recent actions at ICE detention centers as examples of interrupting material particularities. Note that smaller contractors are more vulnerable to pressure than large state agencies. Targeting infrastructure that allows ICE to function rather than ICE as an institution may be more productive.
  - What is the difference between **symbolic** pressure and **material** pressure?
  - Where do these types of actions overlap?
- The LA riots and the Ferguson uprisings were both moments when the police ran out of ammunition, which reduced their ability to act. Consider supply chains as tactical opportunities for interruption.
  - What do the police need to function, materially?
  - How are those materials produced, accessed, distributed?
- At the London riots in 2011, the police let everyone wreak havoc rather freely. After the fact, they used snitching, concerned neighbors, social media, and surveillance footage to make arrests. When the police wait to engage in this kind of way, we are reminded of Machiavelli's points on avoiding conflicts: Delaying engagement can be tactical, waiting until the terrain is more favorable.
  - What could have happened in those spaces when the police abandoned them to make them last more permanently as autonomous zones?
- **There is a difference between strategic approaches and ideological approaches.** One complicated example would be the recent conflict at the ZAD, over whether to fight to the bitter end or to compromise with the state in order to build up a long-term territory of resistance. Consider the difficulties of strategizing over a long time period. We note that discussions about strategies that are not ideologically “okay” are incredibly emotionally charged. How can we make difficult conversations like this possible?
- Affect should be linked with effect—we should not prioritize one over the other.
  - At what moments have we prioritized one over the other? And what happened?
- How can we move toward approaching questions from the perspective that things are possible?

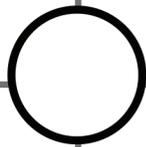
- This text may be dated, particularly as police and state power projection is changing with AI. Machine learning is more prevalent, more powerful and less visible than in the past.
  - Is AI a tool or a form of force projection?
  - What new information should be added to this conversation?

### *In Conversation with Spinoza*

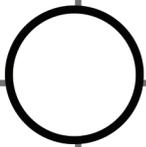
- The police are a body, composed of other bodies.
- Defeat draws us into ourselves, sadness is a decrease in our ability to act.
- Priests and rulers rely on the sadness of their subjects. This is included in force projection.
- Mixtures. We are going through the world with the state's complicated textures of control, and this generates friction.
- We should not ask the question of whether certain tactics are better than other tactics, but whether something creates a joyful affect in us and increases our power.
- Building infrastructure outside of the state increases our capacity to act. All things that are outside of capitalism, the economy, etc amplify movements, spaces, affects... These are the gaps we're looking for.
- Being predictable is sad.



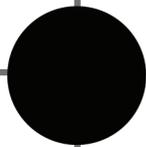
**DISTANCE,**



**MOVEMENT,**



**CUNNING**



GO



THE 36 STRATEGEMS

## Reading **The 36 Stratagems & The Go'ing Insurrection**

“GO” AND THE 36 STRATEGIES ARE BOTH FROM the area now known as China. Go is a game of cunning and the 36 Strategies is a text of cunning. Each have been used to provide critical insight into operational thinking not only in ancient China, but in the contemporary and all over the world. Both Go wisdom and the 36 Strategies embrace simultaneously a sort of immanent folk knowledge and a masterly and ancestral knowledge. Both utilize wise sayings to keep one thinking operationally with ease and both find a way for people to actively engage with complex unfolding situations. In Go and according to the 36 Strategies one must cut diagonally to victory. In Go this means a physically diagonal move and in the 36 Strategies this means going straight towards the effective cutting.

Go was played by emperors and peasants alike. Wise sayings that applied to the game of Go often permeated everyday life as well. It is an ancient game and has spread throughout Asia and the world. It is generally thought of as a game of clashing armies, but it is best read as what it is directly. Go is a game made up of pieces where your objective is to take territory and capture pieces and in turn not lose too much territory or too many pieces. Go is a game of envelopment, momentum, flows, and emergent cunning.

The 36 Strategies is a collection of historical and folkloric understandings of battles from 475-200 BCE (the Warring States Period) boiled down to pithy stratagems. The text falls into the same category as more famous texts like *The Art of War*, but it is less focused on Confucian virtues, like how

to properly behave as a general, and is more about providing tips to accomplish martial objectives using cunning. 36 is Yin, darkness, (referencing the I Ching) and its strategies embrace ruthless effectiveness. The title's 36 also denotes a large amount possible ways of both rendering complex, uncountable stratagems knowable while also conveying the large amount of possible ways that exist to accomplish goals in given situations. We can also read this text as a method of “red-teaming” or thinking like your enemy. We could read the stratagems and think of probable ways they could be employed against us.

# The 36 Strategies

THE 36 STRATEGIES PRESENTED HERE ARE THE RESULT of the oral folk tradition of ancient China; they are not the result of a single author, as is *The Art of War*. With a bit of creativity, many of them can be applied to nearly every situation, from guerrilla property destruction to public demonstrations, to outright insurrection; thusly, anarchists will find much to interest themselves with herein. We suggest that affinity groups sit down together to read each strategy in turn, and discuss how it can be applied to the various struggles they find themselves involved with. Of course, there are certain strategies that may seem to never be applicable to anarchist struggle, strategies that disgust, or simply seem misguided. But this does not mean that we shouldn't remain aware of all the 36 strategies; our enemies have discarded all sense of mercy and we can expect them to do anything in their power to stop us as we attempt to save the world.

## *Chapter 1: Winning Strategies*

### **1 DECEIVE THE SKY TO CROSS THE OCEAN.**

Moving about in the darkness and shadows, occupying isolated places, or hiding behind screens will only attract suspicious attention. To lower an enemy's guard you must act in the open, hiding your true intentions under the guise of common, everyday activities.

### **2 SURROUND WEI TO RESCUE ZHAO.**

When the enemy is too strong to attack directly,

then attack something they hold dear. Know that in all things they cannot be superior. Somewhere there is a gap in their armor, a weakness that can be attacked instead. You may try to attack the relatives or dear ones of the enemy to weaken them psychologically.

### **3 BORROW ONE'S HAND TO KILL. (KILL WITH A BORROWED KNIFE.)**

Attack using the strength of another (because of lack of strength or because you do not want to use your own strength). Trick an ally into attacking your enemy, bribe an official to turn traitor, or use the enemy's own strength against them.

### **4 MAKE YOUR ENEMY TIRE THEMSELVES OUT WHILE CONSERVING ENERGY.**

It is an advantage to choose the time and place for battle. In this way you know when and where the battle will take place, while your enemy does not. Encourage your enemy to expend their energy in futile quests while you conserve your strength. When they are exhausted and confused, you attack with energy and purpose.

### **5 USE THE OPPORTUNITY OF FIRE TO ROB OTHERS. (LOOT A BURNING HOUSE.)**

When a country is beset by internal conflicts, when disease and famine ravage the population, when corruption and crime are rampant, then it will be unable to deal with an outside threat. This is the time to attack.

**6 FEIGN AN ATTACK IN THE EAST AND ATTACK IN THE WEST.**

In any battle the element of surprise can provide an overwhelming advantage. Even when face to face with an enemy, surprise can still be employed by attacking where they least expect it. To do this you must create an expectation in the enemy's mind through the use of a feint.

*Chapter 2: Enemy Dealing Strategies*

**7 CREATE SOMETHING FROM NOTHING.**

You use the same feint twice. Having reacted to the first and often the second feint as well, the enemy will be hesitant to react to a third feint. Therefore the third feint is the actual attack, catching your enemy with their guard down.

**8 SECRETLY UTILIZE THE CHEN CHANG PASSAGE. (REPAIR THE HIGHWAY TO TAKE THE CRUDE PATH.)**

Attack the enemy with two convergent forces. The first is the direct attack, one that is obvious and for which the enemy prepares their defense. The second is the indirect, the attack sinister, that the enemy does not expect and which causes them to divide their forces at the last minute, leading to confusion and disaster.

**9 WATCH THE FIRES BURNING ACROSS THE RIVER.**

Delay entering the field of battle until all the other players have become exhausted fighting amongst themselves. Then go in full strength and pick up the pieces.

**10 KNIFE SHEATHED IN A SMILE.**

Charm and ingratiate yourself to your enemy. When you have gained their trust, you move against them in secret.

**11 PLUM TREE SACRIFICES FOR THE PEACH TREE. (SACRIFICE THE SILVER TO KEEP THE GOLD.)**

There are circumstances in which you must sacrifice short-term objectives in order to gain the long-term goal. This is the scapegoat strategy whereby someone suffers the consequences so that the rest do not.

**12 STEALING A GOAT ALONG THE WAY. (TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PILFER A GOAT.)**

While carrying out your plans be flexible enough to take advantage of any opportunity that presents itself, however small, and avail yourself of any profit, however slight.

*Chapter 3: Attacking Strategies*

**13 STARTLE THE SNAKE BY HITTING THE GRASS AROUND IT.**

When you cannot detect the opponent's plans launch a direct, but brief, attack and observe your opponent reactions. Their behavior will reveal their strategy.

**14 BORROW ANOTHER'S CORPSE TO RESURRECT THE SOUL. (RAISE A CORPSE FROM THE DEAD.)**

Take an institution, a technology, or a method that

has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it for your own purpose. Revive something from the past by giving it a new purpose or to reinterpret and bring to life old ideas, customs, and traditions.

**15 ENTICE THE TIGER TO LEAVE ITS MOUNTAIN LAIR.**

Never directly attack an opponent whose advantage is derived from their position. Instead, lure them away from their position, thus separating them from their source of strength.

**16 IN ORDER TO CAPTURE, ONE MUST LET LOOSE.**

Cornered prey will often mount a final, desperate attack. To prevent this, you let the enemy believe they still has a chance for freedom. Their will to fight is thus dampened by their desire to escape. When, in the end, the freedom is proven a falsehood, the enemy's morale will be defeated and they will surrender without a fight.

**17 TOSSING OUT A BRICK TO GET A JADE.**

Prepare a trap, then lure your enemy into the trap by using bait. In war the bait is the illusion of an opportunity for gain. In life the bait is the illusion of wealth, power, and sex.

**18 DEFEAT THE ENEMY BY CAPTURING THEIR CHIEF.**

If the enemy's army is strong, but is allied to the commander only by money or threats, then take aim at the leader. If the commander falls the rest of the army will disperse or come over to your side. If, however, they are allied to the leader through

loyalty, then beware; the army can continue to fight on after their death out of vengeance.

*Chapter 4: Chaos Strategies*

**19 REMOVE THE FIREWOOD UNDER THE COOKING POT. (REMOVE THE STICK FROM THE AXE.)**

When faced with an enemy too powerful to engage directly you must first weaken them by undermining their foundation and attacking their source of power.

**20 FISH IN DISTURBED WATERS.**

Before engaging your enemy's forces create confusion to weaken their perception and judgment. Do something unusual, strange, and unexpected; this will arouse the enemy's suspicion and disrupt their thinking. A distracted enemy is thus more vulnerable.

**21 SLOUGH OFF THE CICADA'S SHELL. (FALSE APPEARANCES MISLEAD THE ENEMY.)**

When you are in danger of being defeated, and your only chance is to escape and regroup, then create an illusion. While the enemy's attention is focused on this artifice, secretly remove your people, leaving behind only the facade of your presence.

**22 SHUT THE DOOR TO CATCH THE THIEF.**

If you have the chance to completely capture the enemy then you should do so, thereby bringing the battle or war to a quick and lasting conclusion.

To allow your enemy to escape plants the seeds for future conflict. But if they succeed in escaping, be wary of giving chase.

**23 BEFRIEND A DISTANT STATE WHILE ATTACKING A NEIGHBOR.**

It is known that nations that border each other become enemies while nations separated by distance and obstacles make better allies. When you are the strongest in one field, your greatest threat is from the second strongest in your field, not the strongest from another field.

**24 OBTAIN SAFE PASSAGE TO CONQUER THE KINGDOM OF GUO.**

Borrow the resources of an ally to attack a common enemy. Once the enemy is defeated, use those resources to turn on the ally that lent you them in the first place.

*Chapter 5: Proximate Strategies*

**25 REPLACE THE BEAMS WITH ROTTEN TIMBERS.**

Disrupt the enemy's formations, interfere with their methods of operations, change the rules that they are used to following, go contrary to their standard training. In this way you remove the supporting pillar, the common link that makes a group of people an effective fighting force.

**26 POINT AT THE MULBERRY AND CURSE THE LOCUST.**

To discipline, control, or warn others whose status or position excludes them from direct

confrontation; use analogy and innuendo. Without directly naming names, those accused cannot retaliate without revealing their complicity.

**27 PRETEND TO BE A PIG IN ORDER TO EAT THE TIGER. (PLAY DUMB.)**

Hide behind the mask of a fool, a drunk, or a madman to create confusion about your intentions and motivations. Lure your opponent into underestimating your ability until, overconfident, they drop their guard. Then you may attack.

**28 REMOVE THE LADDER WHEN THE ENEMY HAS ASCENDED TO THE ROOF. (CROSS THE RIVER AND DESTROY THE BRIDGE.)**

With baits and deceptions lure your enemy into treacherous terrain. Then cut off their lines of communication and avenue of escape. To save themselves they must fight both your own forces and the elements of nature.

**29 DECK THE TREE WITH BOGUS BLOSSOMS.**

Tying silk blossoms on a dead tree gives the illusion that the tree is healthy. Through the use of artifice and disguise make something of no value appear valuable; of no threat appear dangerous; of no use appear useful.

**30 MAKE THE HOST AND THE GUEST EXCHANGE PLACES.**

Defeat the enemy from within by infiltrating the enemy's camp under the guise of cooperation, surrender, or peace treaties. In this way you can discover their weakness and then, when the enemy's guard is relaxed, strike directly at the source

of their strength.

### *Chapter 6: Defeat Strategies*

#### **31 THE BEAUTY TRAP. (THE TENDER TRAP, USE A WOMAN TO ENSNARE A MAN.)**

Send your enemy beautiful women to cause discord within their camp. This strategy can work on three levels. First, the ruler becomes so enamored with the beauty that they neglects their duties and allows their vigilance to wane. Second, other males at court will begin to display aggressive behavior that inflames minor differences hindering co-operation and destroying morale. Third, other females at court, motivated by jealousy and envy, begin to plot intrigues further exacerbating the situation.

#### **32 EMPTY FORT. (MENTAL TRAP; EMPTY A FORT TO MAKE THE ENEMY THINK IT IS FILLED WITH TRAPS.)**

When the enemy is superior in numbers and your situation is such that you expect to be overrun at any moment, then drop all pretense of military preparedness and act casually. Unless the enemy has an accurate description of your situation this unusual behavior will arouse suspicions. With luck they will be dissuaded from attacking.

#### **33 LET THE ENEMY'S OWN SPY SOW DISCORD IN THE ENEMY CAMP. (USE ENEMY'S OWN SPY TO SPREAD FALSE INFORMATION.)**

Undermine your enemy's ability to fight by secretly causing discord between them and their friends, allies, advisors, family, commanders, soldiers, and population. While they are preoccupied settling internal disputes their ability to attack or defend

is compromised.

#### **34 INFLICT INJURY ON ONE'S SELF TO WIN THE ENEMY'S TRUST. (FALL INTO A TRAP; BECOME BAITED.)**

Pretending to be injured has two possible applications. In the first, the enemy is lulled into relaxing their guard since they no longer consider you to be an immediate threat. The second is a way of ingratiating yourself to your enemy by pretending the injury was caused by a mutual enemy.

#### **35 CHAIN TOGETHER THE ENEMY'S SHIPS. (NEVER RELY ON BUT A SINGLE STRATEGY.)**

In important matters one should use several strategies applied simultaneously. Keep different plans operating in an overall scheme; in this manner if any one strategy fails you would still have several others to fall back on.

#### **36 IF ALL ELSE FAILS, RETREAT.**

If it becomes obvious that your current course of action will lead to defeat then retreat and regroup. When your side is losing there are only three choices remaining: surrender, compromise, or escape. Surrender is complete defeat, compromise is half defeat, but escape is not defeat. As long as you are not defeated, you still have a chance.

## The Go'ing Insurrection: Thoughts on Social Revolt and the Game of Go

THE GAME OF GO ORIGINATED IN CHINA OR TIBET at least 3500 years ago, and in its simplicity and complexity, it remains the greatest strategic game that exists. Part of its interest is that it is quite abstract, just stones on a grid, and so it lends itself well to interpretation. The most obvious analogy for the game is war, but Go is not chess, where the pieces have military names and are lined up facing each other, making the war analogy inescapable. In fact, in many ways, the traditional image of war as opposing nation states advancing on each other is not applicable to Go. The lines are not so clearly drawn, and rather than starting with a full army that gets picked apart, the Go board begins empty and the players create the geography of the game together. Through its simplicity, Go can become a metaphor for thinking about conflict and struggle more generally. In modern North American society, conflict is everywhere, and overwhelmingly it is a one-sided battle constantly waged by the economic and political elites against everyone else. This conflict is visible in the spread of security cameras and other technologies of surveillance; in the growth of prisons and the expansion of police forces; in the ongoing wars of occupation waged by imperialist nations to secure access to resources; in the ongoing colonization carried out against Indigenous Peoples to undercut their resistance and steal their territories; in the threat of being fired or evicted if we aren't subservient enough; in the mass media that teaches us to submit; and in

our relationships where we exploit each other, mirroring the systems of domination we were raised to identify with.

As an anarchist, I seek to see this society for what it is: a permanent state of war. And I seek to join into that conflict to attack the systems of domination and create territories where new kinds of relations and affinities become possible. In this, I have found the game of Go to be a valuable tool for reflection on how to skillfully fight back. The purpose of this text is to apply some strategic concepts of Go to anarchist resistance. I have been playing Go for more than five years, and have reached the rank of 1 kyu in online play. This level, with the kyu ranks almost behind me but looking out over the wide gulf to shodan, is enough to truly appreciate how little I really know about Go. It is not my purpose to speak authoritatively about Go or even to teach the game here – there are many excellent resources available, and I'd suggest starting at Sensei's Library, [senseis.xmp.net](http://senseis.xmp.net) or at [gogameguru.com](http://gogameguru.com). If you do not know how to play Go, I hope you will still find this text enjoyable, but to really understand it, you definitely need to learn Go and play a few games.

The diagrams and analysis in this book rely heavily on resources produced by stronger players, professionals wherever possible, and I have simply tried to curate and interpret them. I do offer my own analysis of positions and do use examples from my own games, but those instances will be clearly indicated. In my examples of struggle, I have tried to use examples as local and as recent as possible, so there is a lot of discussion of the ongoing campaign against Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline that would move Tar Sands oil through Southern Ontario. This text is divided into three parts. First, continuing from the paragraphs above, I will offer my reasons for why I feel Go is useful

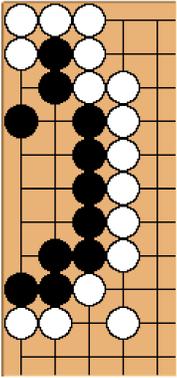


Illustration 1: An endgame position. The obvious move is to atari (reduce to one liberty) the two stones in the top left, but does better technique offer us a better outcome?

in strategizing for how to confront power. In the second section, I will offer a series of proverbs from the rich body of Go lore that apply as well to social struggle as to the game (there are also some anarchist sayings that can be mirrored on the Go board). Finally, we will look at how to fight in handicap games, where one player begins with a material advantage and the other player has to use special techniques to catch up.

*Go is a system for describing struggle.*

Above, I wrote Go's power in making analogies with conflict comes from its simplicity and complexity. By simplicity, I mean that Go has very few rules and the equipment is uncomplicated – just stones and a grid. This simplicity comes with a certain abstractness – Go resists being forced into any single interpretation. Go is so simple that it can be learned in about ten minutes, but it is so complex that even the most powerful computers in the world still cannot match the strongest amateur players (and the professional levels remain totally out of reach). It has been said that there are more possible games of Go than there are subatomic particles in the visible universe – its potentials are amazingly vast. Go is also a non-zero-sum game, which means that the outcome is not simply win/lose, like chess. Every game of Go ends in a score, with each player having a certain number of points, and the game is considered to be won by the player with the most points. However, the score precedes the idea of victory, so in interpreting the game, we can set aside the binary idea of win/lose and consider the outcomes in other ways. For instance, an insurgent force stealing 25 points away in a high handicap game could be thought of

as a victory of sorts. Even if black still leads overall, 25 points for white is still way better than the nothing they would have had if they never entered into conflict.

Because Go is based around points, it means that sequences can be quantified – it is possible to look at different ways of playing in a given area and provide a quantitative analysis of why one sequence is better than another, because they result in different scores. This can be useful for seeing that small shifts in tactics, when repeated in several encounters, can be decisive over the whole board. Similarly, in our real world struggles against power, a hopeless situation can often be transformed by a minor shift in tactics that succeeds in generalizing to different regions, rather than by inventing a whole new strategy. There are also many aspects of Go that are not easily quantified, as we will see. These are what give Go its artistic, stylized flare – they give humans an advantage over machines similar to the one that passionate rebels have over lumbering bureaucracies.

Go is a territorial game – it is about controlling space. The analogy to armies taking land is obvious here. To my knowledge, the only other text comparing Go to real-world conflict is *The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy*, very much within the tradition of seeing Go as a contest between two armies facing off on a battle field. However, the idea of taking territory in Go does not need

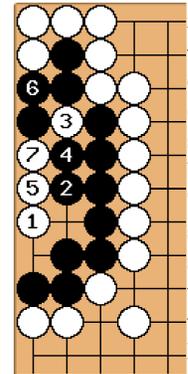


Illustration 2: The placement at 1 and the sequence through 7 give a seki. Black has zero points locally, compared to seven with the usual move.

to be reduced to the shifting border lines of nations at war. In *The Coming Insurrection*, territory is presented as being densely textured with fluid meanings and relationships, not the flat, regular representation given on a map:

“Every practice brings a territory into existence – a dealing territory, or a hunting territory; a territory of child’s play, of lovers, of a riot; a territory of farmer, ornithologists, or flaneurs. The rule is simple: the more territories that are superimposed on a given zone, the more circulation there is between them, the harder it will be for power to get a handle... Local self-organization superimposes its own geography over the state cartography, scrambling and blurring it: it produces its own secession.”

In Go, the word “territory” has a technical meaning: an area of the board that one side has surrounded so securely that it is almost certain to count as points for them at the end of the game. An area that is not yet territory is referred to as a framework, or a moyo (the Japanese term). This is a section of the board that one side has begun surrounding and where it would be challenging for the other side to invade. Even looser than this,

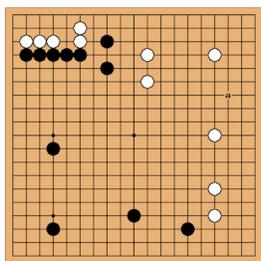


Illustration 3: White has territory in the top left, and a moyo in the top right. Black has a moyo on the left side and the bottom is their area of influence on them.

we have ‘area of influence’, where a few stones sketch out a potential moyo early in the game. The difference between these three kinds of areas (territories, moyos,

areas of influence) is the relationships between the stones that make them up and the kinds of strength those relationships possess. *The Coming Insurrection* presents space as being relational, and Go is precisely this way. The empty space on the Go board crackles with potentials, with hidden threats and opportunities, and complicities in the form of connections between groups and stones. These webs of power shift with every move, and a single play can utterly transform the meaning of a position.

The board has deep layers of meaning and potential that shift and manifest with each play. What starts out as my area of influence is not very likely to end as my territory. My strong positions may be sacrificed to strike a blow against my opponent – stones that appeared captured may gain new life as the position evolves.

There are clearly some ways, too, that Go is far from a precise model for the kinds of conflicts we’re engaged in. The board is finite, there are only two parties, there is a clear beginning and a clear end, players alternate turns and draw from equal pools of resources. And obviously, it’s a board game, not real life. It is far easier to play Go well than it is to effectively confront power, because Go is much simpler. However, I believe that Go is a powerful enough system that we can draw important conclusions from it that can guide us through situations that are much less, well, black and white.

### Proverbs

There is a tradition of applying proverbs from martial theory to Go. The most well known of these is “*The 36 Strategems Applied to Go*” by Ma Xiaochun, and many people cite the *Art of War* in

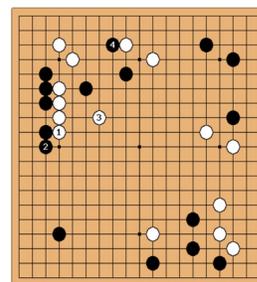


Illustration 4: The geography of the Go board is the constantly shifting relationships between the stones, cocreated by both players. After 1 and 3, white might have felt their position on the top was secure and the two black stones were almost captured. However, black plays 4, the relationships between the stones shift, and suddenly it is white’s two stones that are under attack.

their thinking about the game. However, it's much less common to go the other way, to take proverbs from the world of Go and to apply them to real-world conflict. Proverbs are not rules – they are intended to instill in a person the fundamentals of good strategy, to improve our instincts so that making strong moves becomes natural and obvious. Rather than memorizing patterns in order to mechanically replay them, proverbs ask us to become someone in whom these strategic truths are alive.

I'm drawn to insurrectionary anarchism because it encourages us not to wait, to live in revolt now. It takes struggle beyond being simply something that I do, by going to meetings or putting up posters, and makes it an extension of who I am, how I engage with the world on a fundamental level. The fault lines of power are everywhere, and moments of rupture are both constant and unpredictable. If I want to effectively engage these moments of rupture, I need to internalize strategic thinking, so that I can quickly recognize and respond to them.

Some of the Go terms used below take a fair bit of work to properly understand. It's easy to say the word "attack" but it's not obvious to beginners the difference between playing moves that actually encourage your opponent to strengthen their position and moves that actually threaten to capture enemy groups. In general, attacking involves three phases in order: splitting your opponent's groups apart, sealing them in so they are confined, and

finally undercutting their base and stealing their eye-space. It's similar in struggles against the powerful – are we dividing them from their allies, reducing their ability to control the terrain, and delegitimizing and undercutting their power? Or are we forcing them to simply fix defects in their position, allowing them recuperate our struggles by

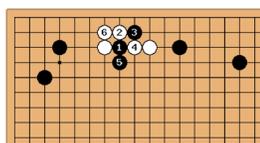


Illustration 5: This is not an attack on white. White solidifies their position while black creates a weak group with 1 and 5.

appointing police oversight boards and ministries of the environment? An attack in this case would be a campaign where the state could not survive the campaign's

success without a real material loss, while it's a false-attack if the state can claim to adopt the goals of the campaign as its own.

Now that it's come up, *Don't peep where you can cut* is a go proverb describing this perfectly. Why make a move whose goal is to force the opponent to fix their shape? The opponent shares the goal of the peep, they would like to play just where you are forcing them to. There is also a proverb from chess that the threat is stronger than its execution – sometimes, leaving a dangerous move like a cut on the board unplayed can shift the terrain, those relationships between the stones, in powerful ways. The term 'aji', literally taste, refers to the subtle, latent potentials that exist in a position, and leaving an opponent with the bad aji of a potential cut can force them to play guardedly elsewhere, or to eventually spend a move to deal with it. Alright, now that we've begun, let's get into some more proverbs!

#### TAKE AND MAINTAIN THE INITIATIVE!

A key concept in Go is 'sente'. Roughly, sente means 'leading the play', and its opposite is gote, 'following the play'. You win in Go by taking and holding sente, by finding ways to do what you need to do (for instance, protecting a cut point) in sente, even if it involves a sacrifice. Conversely, you can't win if you're always responding to your

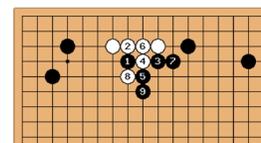


Illustration 6: This is also not an attack on the white stones. White secures their position on the top and is out towards the centre with 8.

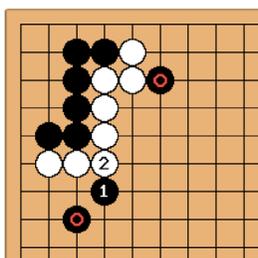


Illustration 7: Black 1 peeps on the cutting point at 2. By forcing white to connect, black deactivates the aji of their own marked stones. It is best to just cut immediately and go on the attack.

opponent's moves, no matter how safe and secure the positions you create are.

When fighting a powerful enemy like the state, we cannot afford to fight only on its terms, to be content to defend ourselves when it attacks us. We need to be able to strike

and force responses of our own, and then strike again without being bogged down by responding to their response. To put it more concretely, campaigns against political repression, most anti-gentrification and anti-development struggles, and of course the innumerable “hands off where/whoever” campaigns are hopelessly gone. If we are not choosing where and how to fight, how can we expect to do anything other than fall behind?

Usually, gaining sente means attack (or at least threatening attack). One of my favourite writers of any kind, and certainly my favourite Go writer, is Toshiro Kageyama, a 7-dan professional, wrote “This may be human nature, but if you save your own stones first, you have to postpone attacking your opponent's stones. That cannot be allowed.” But this is not an argument towards haste or thoughtlessness. There is a proverb that says *Take care of oneself when attacking the other*. This is from a text called *The Ten Golden Rules*, written during the Tang Dynasty sometime between 618-907 CE. A related saying is *Make a Fist Before Striking*. We cannot attack if our position is not secure. This means that securing our own position can be a form of attack – if securing our position exposes our opponent's weakness, forcing them to defend, then

our defensive move was double-purpose. A recent example of this in Southern Ontario (Sept 2013) is the large rally against the Line 9 pipeline reversal that took place on the final day of a regulatory hearing. A large, family-friendly rally at first seems like the furthest thing from attack. However, it brought people from across the region together, allowed for many meetings and exchanges of information and materials, and to do a lot of public outreach. It undoubtedly strengthened the movements opposing the pipeline, including the combative elements who see the campaign as an opportunity to expand and escalate. And even though the rally was a defensive/strengthening move, it was in fact sente. In response to opposition movements consolidating their strength, the industry and regulatory bodies cancelled the last day of the hearings – by playing solidly, building strength that might allow for attack, the rally forced a defensive response as well. This brings us to....

#### USE THICKNESS TO ATTACK!

A thick position is one that contains no defects and is rich in eye-making potential. This means that it cannot easily come under attack itself, and so is ideal for attacking your opponent. But how do we use thickness to attack? Do we push out from the thick position towards the opponent's weak stones? No! We force the opponent towards our thick position, crush them against our walls.

When deciding on which extension to make in relation to thickness, there is a second proverb, *Play away from thickness*. This means both *Don't use thickness to make territory* and, when dealing with an opponent's thick position, it's better to keep away from it, or to neutralize its influence

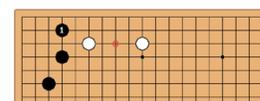


Illustration 8: Make a fist before striking -- black reinforces with 1, taking territory and aiming at the cutting point in the centre of white's position

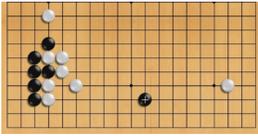


Illustration 9: White is thick in the lower left. From which side should white approach the marked black stone?

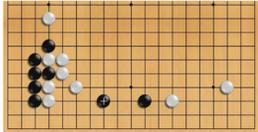


Illustration 10: White extends from the corner stone, squeezing black against the strong white wall. Use thickness to attack!

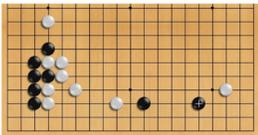


Illustration 11: White approaches from the wall, wasting the wall by making a small territory and allowing black an ideal extension.

from a safe distance. Instead of black's initial splitting move on the lower side in the diagrams, an approach to the white stone on the right side would be a better move, denying white the chance to attack using the wall.

In our conflicts with power, it seems we rarely get the chance to build thick positions and that no matter where we look, the enemy is already strong. Even in this situation, the proverb to play away from thickness still applies. We should avoid committing ourselves to conflict where the powerful have built up positions to attack us. Summit protests are an example of the bad habit of throwing our stones right into where the enemy is strongest. However, sometimes we can't hope to win unless we enter our opponent's strong positions (especially in handicap games, where the opponent has a material advantage, as we will see in the third section). So when we have no other choice, we should approach the thickness gradually, to neutralize its strength.

Go is a surrounding game, and in life and struggle, we want to avoid being outflanked – let us then advance from our own strong positions wherever possible. Continuing to consider summit protests, it's common to begin with a strong position (a mass and, usually, avowedly “peaceful” rally) and use that as a starting point to extend towards the opponent's thick position (by launching a confrontational breakoff march).

Another way to do this is to play away from thickness is to maintain anonymity – we advance from the darkness, from the faceless and undifferentiated mass. When we are identified, we are cut off from that mass and can be surrounded by our enemies.

We need to maintain our connections, whether those be relationships or material supply chains (a blockade is most effectively broken by isolation). We play away from thickness, approach it from our strong positions, and are always sure to *maintain our connections!*

Often, liberals violate this proverb by spending their time building a strong position, only to immediately try to convert that strong position into territory – *Don't use thickness to make territory, use thickness to attack!* The obsession with building contact lists, raising funds, recruiting members, doing endless outreach, only to sell out their demands to the first politician or business leader who condescends to them. If we are going to use tactics like that, let's keep our goal clear that we build a strong position in order to attack, not to inefficiently cash in for too-little territory. When I advocate a more conflictual approach to this sort of liberal person, I am told that attacking is no way to make gains. But there is a proverb in Go that disagrees...

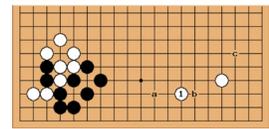


Illustration 12: White needs to be cautious of black's thick position. The play at 1 or 'b' is perfect. 'a' would be too far, black would counter attack at 1. If it were black's turn, the approach move at 'c' is best, playing away from thickness and pushing white towards it.

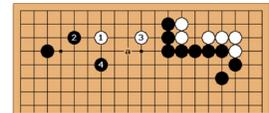


Illustration 13: Black secures the corner with 2 while pushing white towards the wall, then launches a powerful attack with 4.

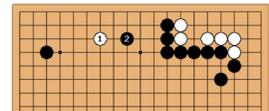


Illustration 14: Black uses thickness to make a cramped, tiny territory.

## MAKE TERRITORY BY ATTACKING!

Kageyama once said to his opponent, during a game where he had stayed relentlessly on the attack: “I’m starting to feel sorry for you. Considering that I never asked for any territory, it’s surprising how much I’ve gotten. That’s one of the benefits of attacking.”

This might seem to be a contradiction to the proverb against using thickness to make territory. But by attacking an opponent’s weak position, we can play stones that build large moyos towards a different part of the board, or that help turn moyos into solid territory.

A related principal is the leaning attack – if you are having trouble building a strong position to attack (making a fist before striking), consider pressing on one of your opponent’s positions. Make an exchange that lets you build up thickness, towards a different group of your opponent’s stones, and then crush them against your wall using moves that build territory for you as well!

This brings to mind that tactics of anarchists who insert themselves into groups like solidarity networks. The goal of these anarchists is not simply to convince “bad” bosses or landlords to obey the relevant laws – they are trying to build up their strength by leaning on those capitalists in order to launch a larger attack against the social order.

A common pitfall in leaning attacks is to get distracted by the stones we are leaning on, to believe that, since we have been pressing on them, we should try to capture them. But then we have forgotten that our goal in leaning is to build up a strong position – trying too hard to capture will leave us with cutting points, a position that’s thin (many defects, little eye-making potential) instead of thick.

If we engage ourselves in strategies like leaning

on slumlords or the owners of sleazy restaurants to build capacity, let’s not forget that gaining concessions from them is not the goal of the manoeuvre – we are gaining strength to strike elsewhere, in an attack that can gain us some real ground. We can see what a leaning attack looks like, but what does it look like in our struggles to gain territory by attacking? The concept of territory from Go, a secure area that is likely to count as points at the end of the game, defies a simple analogy into life. One way of understanding it could be actual liberated space, or incremental liberation of space.

Remember how The Coming Insurrection understands territory as being primarily social?

The territorial question isn’t the same for us as it is for the state. For us, it’s not about possessing territory. Rather, it’s a matter of increasing the density of the communes, of circulation, and of solidarities to the point that the territory becomes unreadable, opaque to all authority. We don’t want to occupy the territory, we want to be the territory.

A campaign that uses the capacity built pressuring landlords to begin self-managing other parts of local life: tenants committees that can run the building during a rent strike, hold barricades during an uprising, or in the absence of these situations of over struggle, undercut the authority of the landlords and police and act as a hub for a local

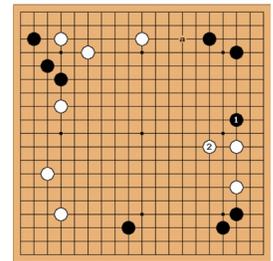


Illustration 15: This long extension from the black enclosure in the upper right is sente because it is also an attack on white’s two stones -- white would like to invade above 1, but they must get out into the centre with 2.

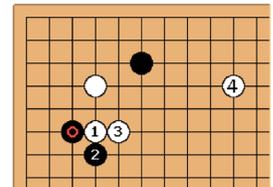


Illustration 16: White 1 and 3 lean on the marked stone, building strength to attack on the upper side with 4. If we imagine that white has a stone in the upper right, then 4 is also building a moyo while attacking.

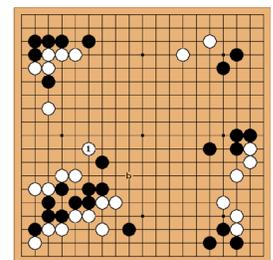


Illustration 17: White 1 attacks the black stones while securing territory on the left. A play at ‘b’ would allow black to destroy white’s territory while escaping.

underground economy. It can even be as simple as anarchist graffiti that no longer gets painted over, or as subtle as seeds of rebellion left in the heart of someone for whom the state has lost legitimacy. In Indigenous struggles, “territory” can often be literal land. Building capacity through protests, blockades, and outreach campaigns builds capacity for a community like Six Nations of the Grand River to take and hold contested land permanently.

### ASK YOURSELF THREE QUESTIONS

The Go board is very large and there are usually any number of area calling for attention during our turns. Figuring out what area to play in is often as challenging as finding the right move in one of those areas. To determine priorities, Go players are encouraged to ask themselves three questions each turn:

- **Are any of my groups vulnerable to attack?** If so, defend.
- **Are any of my opponent’s groups vulnerable to attack?** If so, attack it.
- **If no groups are vulnerable, what is the biggest point?** Identify the area that is worth the largest number of points and play there.

These questions are similar to the three-phase strategy famously employed by revolutionaries in China and Vietnam:

the first was based on survival and the expansion of revolutionary networks; the second was guerrilla warfare; and the third was a transition to conventional

engagements to decisively destroy enemy forces.

The third question, finding the biggest point, is perhaps the most challenging to analogize. I believe it is similar to seeking “conventional engagement”, because it involves taking and holding large areas of territory such that open conflict with the opponent, if they are actually to contest you, becomes inevitable.

Most of us participating in resistance are not dreaming of a day when we can organize into armies and openly confront the state. As it says in *The Coming Insurrection*, “Against the army, the only victory is political.” But the idea of taking and holding ground still appeals, as writers like Seaweed elegantly articulate:

If having a reciprocal relationship with a natural environment is inherently healthy because this creates habitats, which in turn sustain their living inhabitants, then a focus on occupying a land base would seem always positive. Local or regional undertakings in acquiring these bases seem the most sensible. Actions around re-appropriating land, because they undermine the state and the market’s control over our shared environment, help destroy the global institutions which prevent us from having land in the first place. Isn’t it likely that the planetary network of authority and economics can only be defeated through multitudes of local and regional uprisings, ruptures and

occupations, coalescing in an organic way?

The overall lesson is that we should rank our priorities. First, to build networks, increase our capacity, and gather intelligence. Then, we can identify points of intervention, levers (times, places, and means that increase our strength), and bottlenecks (critical points in infrastructure or social mechanisms that, if obstructed, have a cascading effect). Finally, we can let our communes manifest themselves visibly – this may be less determined by our ability to resist militarily than by broadbased political support, the threat of solidarity attacks (as is the case in Indigenous land reclamations), or by a general weakening of centralized authority, perhaps due to climate change or fuel scarcity, as described in the excellent text, *Desert*. As well, there is the time-honoured practice of making our autonomous zones temporary. Remember that in an insurrectionary view, the terrain is not merely physical, but is made up of relationships. Those relationships and networks can often be flexible as to their physical location, making the defense of this or that building or piece of land an unnecessary burden (build light positions that are flexible and can be sacrificed if need be...) And remember to pose those three questions in order!

Even if there is a very big point, make sure it's the right time to play it: Don't go fishing when your house is on fire! Urgent moves before big moves.

## FIGHT TO WIN!

This is a proverb from social movements that I've often applied to Go. Do not adopt a strategy that, even if it were totally successful, would still lead to defeat overall. Kageyama illustrates this point in his book *The Fundamentals of Go*:

Provided it does not put him behind in the game, the move black wants to make is the 'correct' one at 1. Any true professional would feel this way. [...] a condition is that it not put Black behind, and if it does, then he can only try to enlarge his framework with some move like 'a', whether it be correct or not. The point of all this is that moves have to be chosen with regard to the balance of the whole board. To be overcome with admiration for the superficial correctness of Black 1 is to miss the real professional attitude.

Black could play safely because they were confident that it would not put them behind. The ability to play the correct move thus depends on three things: a knowledge of the fundamentals to identify the correct move among many possible moves; to not be trailing in points; and the ability to properly assess the whole board position to know that you are not behind. Many players still feel threatened by the potential gains of their opponents even when their leads are iron-clad. To make dangerous overplays (like 'a' in Kage's diagram) even when you are ahead will just give your opponents

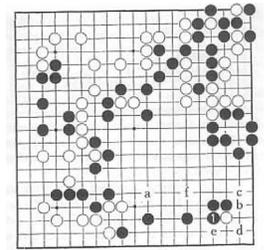


Illustration 18: Kageyama's diagram. 'a'-'f' represent possible plays in the area, but 1 is the solid play in line with the fundamentals.

the opportunity they need to create complications and catch up.

In our struggles against power, we are undoubtedly behind on points. But, if it happened that in a particular place or time we were not, would we even know it? How can we assess our gains? How can we tell if we're fighting to win if we are unable to tell if we're winning? And have we studied the fundamentals of good strategy, so that even if we can't afford to make solid moves, we at least know what they are?

A lot has been written elsewhere about fighting to win. It variously involves setting impossible demands ("Steven Harper has to get ACAB tattooed on his forehead and his band has to play our victory party") or refusing to have demands. It can involve a strictly revolutionary approach that seeks to overthrow the current elites or it can be a strategy based on demanding reforms and concessions until it bankrupts the system (for instance, OCAP's use of "fight to win" is reminiscent of the American welfare rights movement of the 70's, seeking reforms to welfare that were intended to bankrupt the state).

The essential thing is that when we fight, we choose fights that will allow us the possibility of actually achieving our bigger goals. In the current campaigns against the Tar Sands, for instance, does focusing on government oversight actually bring us any closer to our desires, even if it was totally effective? Is urging the prosecution of killer cops actually doing anything to break the power of the police or the courts? In an insurrectionary analysis, freedom is closest during the times of uprising, so "winning" is to create a permanent state of ungovernability, where the questions shift from how to build the barricades to how to supply them once all the stores have been looted. Fight to win then can be understood as, when you're behind or in

a handicap game, make situations dangerous and uncontrollable, because victory lies in the leading player losing control of the game.

### MY OPPONENT'S MOVE IS MY MOVE

When a move is urgent for your opponent, there is a good chance that it's urgent for you as well. This is true of vital points in life or death situations, where the life or death of a group of stones depends on who first plays on the vital point of the shape in question.

There is also a proverb that says *Play double sente sequences early!* Double sente means a move there is sente for either player, so the one who plays there first will profit locally and retain the initiative to turn elsewhere afterwards. This means that if a move is sente for both players, it should be played at the earliest opportunity. (There is also a proverb that says "*Do not passively respond to your opponent's sente moves*". Sometimes delaying a response to an opponent's sente move by playing a sente move of your own, even if it potentially risks a local loss, is the biggest way to play, because you do not concede

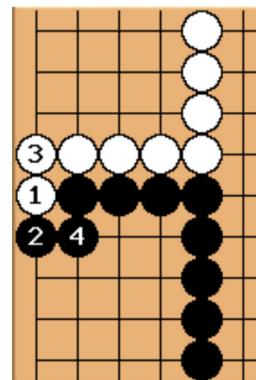


Illustration 19: White 1 is on the vital point of black's shape. Black wants to play there to make an eye and avoid being cut, but when white gets it, it's called the eye-stealing tesuji (skillful tactical move).

early! Double sente means a move there is sente for either player, so the one who plays there first will profit locally and retain the initiative to turn elsewhere afterwards. This means that if a move is sente for both players, it should be played at the earliest opportunity. (There is also a proverb that says "*Do not passively respond to your opponent's sente moves*". Sometimes delaying a response to an opponent's sente move by playing a sente move of your own, even if it potentially risks a local loss, is the biggest way to play, because you do not concede

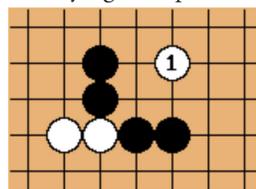


Illustration 20: This area on the side is doublesente. White 1 is sente and so would be a black move at 3 if black played first.

the initiative.)

In Southern Ontario, there are many urgent

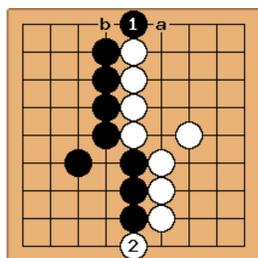


Illustration 21: White applies the strategy of mutual damage, taking one of the double-sente points in response to black taking the other. This is the only way to play here.

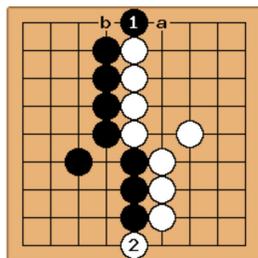


Illustration 22: Here, white passively responds to black's sente move on top, allowing black to get the other double-sente point on the bottom—a disaster for white.

**LEARNING JOSEKI LOSES TWO STONES  
STRENGTH ...BUT STUDYING JOSEKI GAINS  
TWO STONES.**

Joseki are established lines of play based around the corners of the Go board that have been shown to provide an even result for both players. The seemingly paradoxical statements above refer to the difference between merely memorizing these joseki patterns as opposed to delving in to them

ecological and social issues, but many radicals have made organizing against Line 9 a priority because getting a Tar Sands pipeline to a port for export is urgently important for the political and economic elites of Canada. The Line 9 pipeline is an urgent move for our enemy, so it is urgent for us to prevent it. Although these same elites are advancing other related agendas, few are as critical to the overall economy and power structure as the Tar Sands pipelines, so fighting it on the local terrain is crucial.

and understanding the meanings of the moves.

The moves in a joseki are considered by a consensus of the world's best players to be the best available move in the local position, but if one doesn't understand why a move in the joseki is best, one will be at a loss when a player deviates from the pattern.

When joseki are approached with an eye to understanding each move, these simple patterns suddenly reveal a huge depth of lore about exactly why it is right to play this way. Then, one can accept or reject those moves as you please, because it is better to play a move that you understand and that excites you than one you have just been told is right.

The world of "activism" is often hopelessly formalized. People's passions are funnelled into a small number of channels (oh, you're concerned that people are going hungry? Then pack boxes in the food bank until that feeling goes away, and if that doesn't work, see how many names you can get on this petition). I want to reject formalized modes of behaviour, but I also want to look at exactly why those ways of engaging became established, so that I can reject them rationally, rather than just out of revulsion at such a mindless way of living life (although the purpose of studying proverbs is to build up your instincts, so a reaction like revulsion is also a valid way of knowing).

Activist josekis like petitioning or lobbying are heavily critiqued, but the tendency to adhere to patterns turns up elsewhere too. The "break window, write communique" joseki, the "block up at the demo and try not to get kettled", the "newspaper boxes in the street" joseki... These may well be useful and appropriate forms of struggle, but how to what extent are we taking those actions

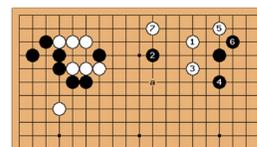


Illustration 23: White mindlessly follows the joseki, playing 7 in gote and leaving black 2 in a perfect position erasing any white moyo

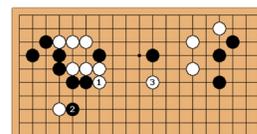


Illustration 24: Now white chooses instead to play a forcing move at 1, building thickness to cap and seal in the black pincer stone with 3. The difference between this and the previous diagram is huge.

because they seem to us the best moves versus how much are they just valorized within our scenes by an “established consensus”? Again, like, josekis in Go, these patterns emerged after years of experimentation and fine-tuning, and I’m not advocating against throwing them out all together. What I want is to understand the meaning of each move in the pattern (and of course the anticipated response by authority) so that I can be flexible and have access to a wide range of special plays depending on the circumstance.

### *Lessons from Handicap Games*

One of the aspects that gives Go its enduring appeal is its system of handicaps, which allow players to compensate for different skill levels to be able to play mutually challenging and rewarding games. The player receiving the handicap always takes black, as black traditionally goes first. Above, I described my rank as being 1 kyu. The ranks in Go begin at around 30 kyu and work downwards towards 1, after which one becomes 1 dan and begins counting up towards 9 dan, which is the highest attainable rank. The difference between each rank is a one stone handicap. If I were to play a game with a 5 dan player, I would accept a five-stone handicap (and be very grateful for the opportunity to play such a strong player).

In the local club, I commonly give handicaps ranging from four stones to nine stones (sometimes with an additional fifty points to black on top of that). In fact, I give a handicap in almost all of the not-online games I play, and I would say I’m fairly experienced in them.

I have left some of the most crucial and relevant elements of Go strategy to this third section. I believe handicap games mirror the situation we find

ourselves in when we seek to struggle against the systems of domination – surrounded on all sides before we even begin, disadvantaged in every area, struggling to build positions and take territory, always in the enemy’s area of influence. The key ideas I want to explore here are *light play*, *invasion*, and *sabaki*, and to generally build a sense of the attitude required to approach a handicap game. Taking white in a handicap game is a recognition of superior skill, so it is black who trembles when white makes a seemingly impossible invasion.

In his book about handicap Go, Kageyama wrote:

Amateurs’ playing strength is so unstable that even a slight shift in mood can affect them considerably. To stabilize that instability, you must make people regard you as strong at handicap go. If you are needlessly afraid of a stronger player, that fear will paralyze your hand and deaden your game. I have good news, however, for those many of you who tend to yield to the stronger player’s moves and give in the instant he tries anything rough. Read this book thoroughly and say farewell to those days of submission.

When taking white in a handicap game, the usual

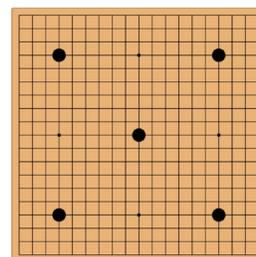


Illustration 25: If I were to play with a 5 dan, I would place five handicap stones before the game began.

patterns simply won't do. Because a joseki by definition is a pattern that gives an even result, in a situation where we start at a disadvantage, even results guarantee a loss. This analogy extends to social struggle quite exactly. We could say that traditional protests are a form of joseki, where the state is content to follow the established pattern for as long as the usual outcome does not put them at any risk of losing control.

From *The Coming Insurrection*:

...henceforth a real demonstration has to be "wild", not declared in advance to the police. Having the choice of terrain, we can, like the black bloc of Genoa in 2001, bypass the red zones and avoid direct confrontation. By choosing our own trajectory, we can lead the cops, including the unionist and pacifist ones, rather than

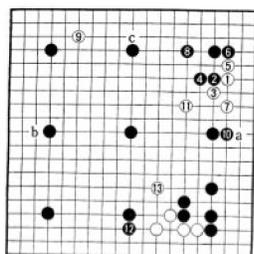


Illustration 26: Nagahara Yoshiaki provides this illustration of the hopeless situation of following josekis as white in a high handicap game.

being herded by them. In Genoa we saw a thousand determined people push back entire buses full of carabinieri, then set their vehicles on

fire. The important thing is not to be better armed but to take the initiative. Courage is nothing, confidence in your own courage is everything. Having the initiative

helps.

Typically, it is to white's advantage to complicate the game, because, as white is the stronger player, they can usually read further ahead, meaning they can see the outcome of more complicated sequences than can black. Our ability to be unpredictable, to deviate from established patterns, is our strength – but let's not be chaotic. When we make our moves, let it be that we've read out several responses and know our follow-up plays.

A typical strategy of black in handicap games is to make the white stones *heavy*, so that they come under attack. White on the other hand wants to keep their positions *light* until there is a chance to build a moyo or attack some black stones.

This distinction between heavy and light play is thus vital to handicap Go and social revolt. A heavy group is one that has poor eye shape, cannot easily be connected to another group, and is too big to sacrifice. A light group on the other hand is flexible. The stones within it can develop in different directions, and some or all of them can be comfortably sacrificed. Light play has been summarized as "don't connect two stone solidly unless you are sure you won't want to sacrifice one."

Before I continue, I want to say a bit about this idea of "sacrifice". I'm obviously not imagining turning to our imprisoned comrades and saying, "Don't worry, you were light". This is a situation where the abstractness of Go is particularly important. Stones aren't soldiers the way chess pieces are. When we talk about sacrificing a group, we are talking about letting something we created be destroyed. In this sense, a light group is more like a Temporary Autonomous Zone – it is a position we've created within hostile territory for a purpose,

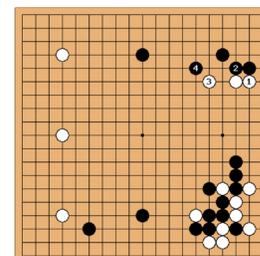


Illustration 27: White's play is heavy, leaving them with a bulky group deep in enemy territory that it would be disastrous to sacrifice.

and once it has achieved that purpose, why should we fight to hang on to it?

The quote above from TCI continues:

Everything points, nonetheless, toward a conception of direct confrontations as that which pins down opposing forces, buying us time and allowing us to attack elsewhere – even nearby. The fact that we cannot prevent a confrontation from occurring doesn't prevent us from making it into a simple diversion.

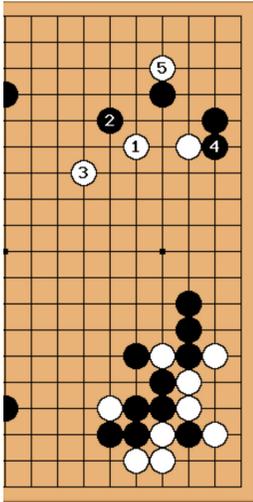


Illustration 28: Same position as above, but now white's light play skips into the centre and maintains sente for an invasion of the corner.

In practice, occupations tend to become heavier the longer they continue. The first few days are very dynamic – the action grows and shifts unpredictably, easily keeping the initiative and leaving corporations, police, and government off balance. But as time passes, the position is slowly surrounded – both physically and in the public narrative – and the group becomes heavy. Rather than a dynamic *movement* of people and energy, it becomes a static position that had to be defended in itself, because it is perceived as too important to lose. At Swamp Line 9 for instance, although there were other construction sites on the pipeline nearby that they could have shifted to, the group chose to attempt to hold the pump station, even though police controlled all the access points and the site was under an injunction.

It's true that the pump station was the most critical site, but by allowing the group to become heavy, the position could be surrounded and ultimately captured. (However, one could argue

that we were able to trade the captured stones for outside influence.)

An example of light play occurred in the 2012 Quebec student strike, when people responded to new police powers targeting protests by decentralizing the movement into neighbourhoods. By staying light during the conflict in the centre of the board (downtown), radicals were able to shift their focus to the sides (the southwest and east, mostly) and take territory there. Here, lightness looked like being willing to sacrifice some parts of their position in order to gain over all.

Another example (I'm drawing from way back in 2008 simply because it illustrates the point well) was the defense of the Guelph wood squat. Rather than stay on the site and wait to be evicted,

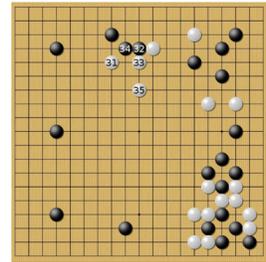


Illustration 29: This is a sequence from one of my games. My opponent had a four stone handicap and black just jumped out in the top right corner, splitting my two weak groups. 31 and 35 are light moves out into the centre.



Illustration 30: I left a lot of cutting points in the previous diagram, but my shape was light so it was hard for black to find a way to attack. Black 36 peeps where they could cut, and after forcing moves at 39 and 41, all my stones are joined up.

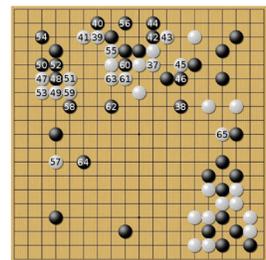


Illustration 31: The fighting continued with my taking sente to both attack the upper left corner, invade the left side with 57, and then finally, thirty moves later, return to the right side to begin saving two stones with 65. At the risk of bragging, this is one of the better examples of light play I've ever personally managed.

the squatters called for a surprise march on the city's core, targeting the police station and city hall with vandalism before establishing a presence in the middle of the downtown instead of out in the woods. This shift of emphasis both gave a boost to the struggle and also allowed people to continue living on and using the woodsquat site more quietly into the future. In this case, they sacrificed a permanent, physical presence on a site for a more diffuse and unpredictable presence throughout a larger part of the city. When we choose to resist, we are often making unsupported invasions inside our enemy's area of influence. A common way to begin an invasion is with a probe. This is a stone played inside the opponent's area just to see how they respond. Will they choose to prioritize the corner or the outside? Once we know which areas they are valuing most, we can choose our strategy accordingly. Sometimes we might use the probe stone to live in the corner, or we might treat the probe as light. By analogy, a probe is perhaps some combination of provocation and reconnaissance – put a bit of pressure on your enemy and force them to commit to their position so that you can attack more forcefully. If they have chosen to value a certain area, then that is precisely the area you want to deprive them of.

In the Line 9 campaign, an interesting probe was made by anonymous comrades in Kingston, who distributed a leaflet and sent around a press release advising that an oil spill had occurred. There was no spill, but it forced Enbridge to adopt a defensive posture with respect to the risk of spills and how they would notify the public. When Exxon spilled diluted bitumen in a suburb in Arkansas, Enbridge's commitment to their existing processes became heavy – the processes were simply not strong enough to stand up to the level of scrutiny that followed images of oil covered

suburban lawns, but Enbridge had invested too much in them to sacrifice them. They had to stick to the line that their processes were just fine. These obvious weaknesses made it easier for other communities to mobilize grassroots outrage against the pipeline.

Similarly, in Hamilton, folks probed the local

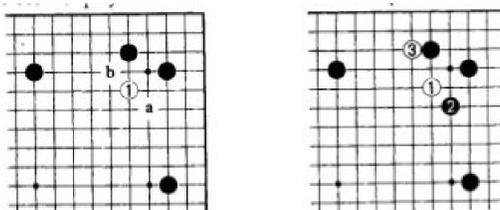


Illustration 32: White probes with 1 then begins to make sabaki with 3. Sequence continues below...

police by symbolically blockading a highway for an hour while they were really planning a full-scale occupation of an Enbridge facility. By seeing that Hamilton police and OPP didn't want to be perceived as taking sides in pipeline politics, Hamilton radicals attacked them for taking donations from Enbridge, depriving them of the air of neutrality they had already committed to cultivating. These tactics made it more difficult or politically expensive for the police to intervene forcefully once Swamp Line 9 got under way a month later.

One of the key strategic elements of Go, and one of its most elusive, is sabaki. Roughly, sabaki means handling a tricky situation skillfully and lightly, usually in the context of invading an opponent's area or settling your stones. I admit, this

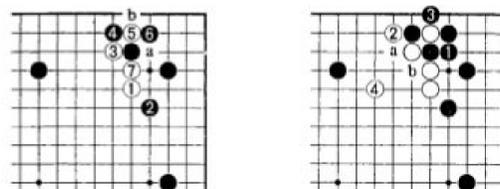


Illustration 33: White goes on to make sabaki and a successful invasion of a corner where black had invested four stones already. Note that white isn't worried about the cuts at 'a' or 'b' in the second diagram -- the position is light.

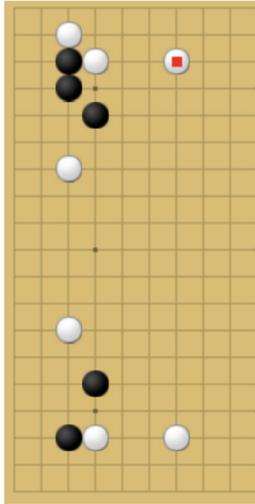


Illustration 34: White's way of playing in these two corners is currently popular in Korea. It treats the stones in the corner as light. If black adds another move, wrapping around the white stone at the top or bottom, white would make another twospace extension along the side of the board -- white invites black to force them to expand.

remains something I struggle to understand, but I want to offer it here as a point of discussion. How do we quickly establish a flexible position inside enemy territory? How do we leave weaknesses in our opponent's position as we do so, so that we can exploit the bad aji (dangerous potential) left behind? How do we establish these positions in sente, so that our hand is free to initiate a similar invasion elsewhere, before our opponent has a chance to add a stone to close off

the possibility? Can inviting our opponent to cut our position or capture a stone be a way of getting them to force us to play where we wanted to anyway?

Asked a different way, these questions might be: How do we organize ourselves to free territory from police control? How do we create fissures in the alliances that support existing power structures? How do we maintain the initiative in these encounters, so that we are free to begin another elsewhere, before the state has a chance to crack down? Can we provoke responses from power that escalate or expand situations in ways that we want them to, or that provide context for us to fight back in the ways we might have desired to all along?

This text only scratches the surface of how Go can help us build up our strategic thinking as radicals and insurgents. I hope it motivates anarchists to take the little time required to learn this fascinating game and that folks will be able to have fun with it. I hope other Go playing anarchists (I know you're out there) take this zine as a starting point and add their own ideas and analysis. I hope for waves of decentralized uprisings that break the hold of the systems of domination over the territory, opening up new possibilities for freedom and resistance.

See you in the streets and at the Go board.

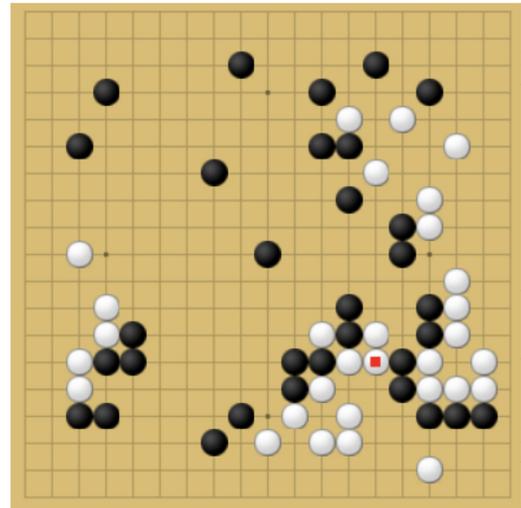


Illustration 35: Takemiya Masaki, 9 dan, giving a five stone handicap to Zen, currently the world's strongest computer go program. With the marked stone, Takemiya kills the lower right corner.

## Study Guide: **Distance, Movement, Cunning—The 36 Strategems**

### *Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion*

- There is a difference between tactics and strategy. Tactics are immanent and micro, the actual means, whereas strategies are transcendent, big goals, macro. A stratagem, separately, is about cunning, cleverness and deception.
- Chaos is both state making and state breaking.

#### “SURROUND WEI TO RESCUE ZHAO.” (2)

- What is symbolically or emotionally important to our enemies?
- This reminds us of the tactic of home demos. What else?
- Infighting is a form of this strategy, because we hold our relationships to one another so dear. How can we be more resilient to this? And how can we facilitate infighting in our enemies?
- Is there a way to use the production and consumption of things as a site of confrontation? We consider workplace struggles, looting, *gasolina* uprisings, communist measures. We see that dispersed flows, fossil fuels, are all weaknesses.

#### “BORROW ONE’S HAND TO KILL.” (3)

- What does it mean to use the state’s own strength against them?

- We imagine this could mean embarrassing the police. Making them come out in full force when there is not a threat that is appropriate to that. For example: the trick of celebrating May Day on May 2nd. How else can we send them headlong into mockery?
- What are ways to use their force against them?
- If the enemy’s strength is that they are everywhere, then they can be attacked anywhere. This also refers to getting someone else to fight your enemies. How can we get our enemies to fight each other so that they come out weaker and not stronger?

#### “CREATE SOMETHING FROM NOTHING.” (7)

- This reminds us of a certain tactic in street confrontations. When the crowd counts down to charge the police, but does not actually move at the expected time. A crowd can count down three times but actually charge on the third countdown. This is disorienting for the police.
- What are other ways of achieving the same effect?

#### “STARTLE THE SNAKE BY HITTING THE GRASS AROUND IT.” (13)

- One interpretation is to hold a small demo to see what will happen. It should be planned in such a way to be controlled as an experiment.

- In both “**Borrow another’s corpse to resurrect the soul**” (14) and “**Watch the fires**”

**burning across the river” (9), we agree that one form of escape is to be relentless, to always be able to wait out attacks.**

“BEFRIEND A DISTANT STATE WHILE  
ATTACKING A NEIGHBOR.” (23)

- Who should we ally with?
- Unite with those who we are not rivals with or not directly clashing with even if they are distant from our ethical positions against our natural enemies and rivals in a strategic sense?
- Is this about if we should befriend liberals and NGOs or not?

“PRETEND TO BE A PIG IN ORDER TO EAT THE  
TIGER. (PLAY DUMB.)” (27)

- Infiltration as a good way of getting information. You can find out what kind of emotional creatures your enemies are.

“EMPTY THE FORT”. (32)

- At the eviction of the first train blockade in Olympia, WA, people fought the police. At the eviction of the second train blockade, people deserted the fort. The police had no idea that the encampment was empty, and spent an entire day wasting energy and resources to empty it. This is not to mention their fear and anxiety which they eventually discovered was misplaced. It’s a good trick.

“CHAIN TOGETHER THE ENEMY’S SHIPS.  
(NEVER RELY ON BUT A SINGLE STRATEGY.)”  
(35)

- This reminds us of the importance of coordination. We should know who else is organizing, what their goals are, etc.
- In street confrontations, this could mean coordinating with other marches on the same day.
- This also reminds us of the compounding nature of stratagems. Not only because we can have contingent plans if some fail, but the more tricks at play the more the enemy is confused and the more reactive they will become having to respond to new conditions once the ruses are discovered.

### *Activities for Engagement*

Write each strategy on a piece of paper, put them in a bowl. As a group, choose a particular enemy, use the OODA loop or something else to hash out some of their infrastructure and qualities. When you’ve got a reasonable list/information, go around pulling strategies from the bowl. Discuss how each strategy could be employed.

# Study Guide: **Distance, Movement, Cunning—The Go’ing Insurrection**

## *Key Terms & Concepts*

- The game of Go reveals that there are always many possibilities, there are many ways to play. In Go as in reality a person must overcome the dizziness that accompanies such freedom of action. Being good at the game is a lot about **feeling, intuition, and adaptability**. This suggests that strategic wisdom and action in complex situations is about the ability to improve instincts.
- **It is not a zero sum game.** Each person’s gain is not equivalent to the other person’s loss. Instead of focusing on winning or losing, one should focus on making advances. There is no final victory, but rather a constant bettering of play which is perhaps analogous to the real world.
- Handicap games, in which one side starts with a serious material advantage, provide space for outnumbered opponent to overcome their adversary through cunning.
- One way of imagining **victory** is that the leading player **loses control of the game**.
- **Prioritization is crucial**; make urgent moves before making big moves.
  - Know how to prioritize but don’t always prioritize defense
- Choose fights that can help reach **specific goals**.
- Referencing the Coming Insurrection, the text says that **territory** is fluid, social, and textured. The suggestion is to not aim for the absolute acquisition of territory, but a concentration of communes. This would make territory unreadable, or opaque to authority. The text suggests that a player should scramble and blur territory do not “occupy” territory, but “be” territory.
- Go incorporates connection between the pieces that can be read both as a form of **networked logistics** (supply lines, communication lines, etc) or **formation strength** (shield walls, being in arms length of comrades in the street to prevent kidnapping or boot parties, etc).
- **Thickness** is a Go term referring to the strength of shapes and stones. It refers to the tight defensive attributes of shapes that don’t allow stones to get captured, but also do not allow for easy offensive momentum.
- **Shape Cutting** in Go is a method of splitting a formation of your opponents stones by discovering and cutting through a weak point. It breaks up the shape, making the stones easier to envelope.
- Go is a game that is best learned through doing, while supplementing your learning with wisdom, particularly in the form of memorable quips, from experienced players.

- There are theoretical limits to Go as a tool for us (and to game theory in general). We don't actually live on a grid. We have to consider weather, moods, many other dimensions. Not to mention that in real life there is no taking turns, and there are usually more than two players.
- Go has shown how it's hard to switch up strategies or tactics when one is losing momentum because putting strategies or tactics into practice requires building off of "good plays" to gain positive momentum.

*Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion:*

- Before the Go'ing Insurrection was written, AI had yet to defeat a human Go player, but that has changed. Studies indicate that the recent AI master of Go would always win because it would always move to ensure its own survival. The AI also played unfathomably differently than humans, making its moves harder to predict or imagine. The trick was the AI was no longer told how to play go by humans, but was set loose to learn how to accomplish the objectives of Go through trial and error on its own. Which begs the question, have we taken AI seriously in our thinking?
- What if you're training for a boxing match or a Go match and you study your opponent in order to win, but then they act completely differently during the fight? How is

this applicable to your own engagements?

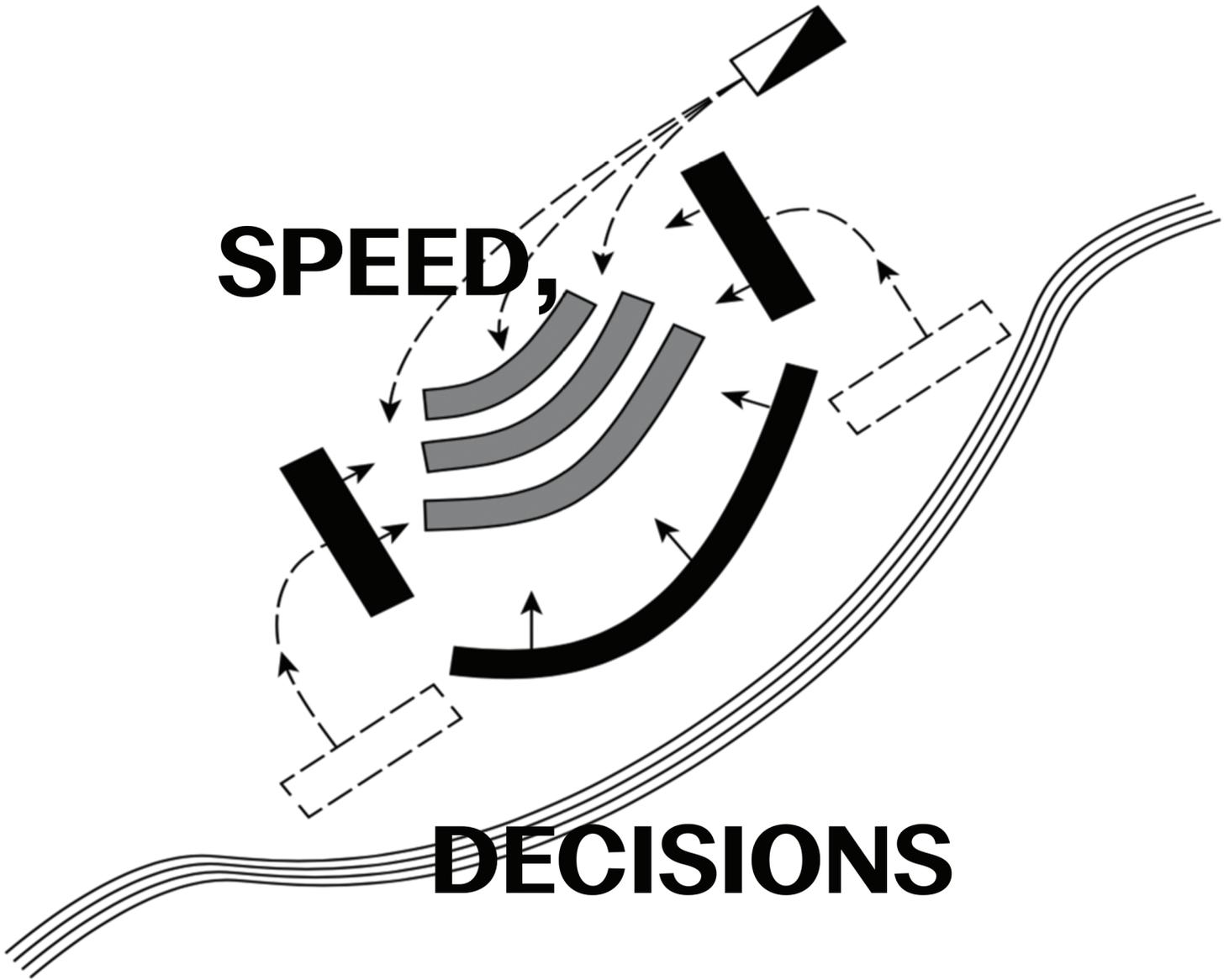
- A player should turn their **losses into lessons**, or else spiral into negativity. The aspiration is not to win, but to get better.
  - What do we do when it feels like we keep losing?
- We see a connection with Tom Nomad's ideas about movement and strategy. For example: Viewing strategy as a way of understanding the terrain rather than as a particular set of tactics.
  - The game says to avoid thickness or to play away from thickness. This reminds us of gaps in police coverage from Tom Nomad.
- How does thickness apply to summit protests or mass demonstrations?
- The state is always leading in defensive struggles (anti-gentrification, antifa, etc.).
  - How can we set the tone, take initiative, push conflict into a certain direction?
- Shape cutting: How do bodies actually move in the street.?
- How are nodes shaped and connected?
- Take inventory of your own vulnerabilities and of your enemies.



# PATTERNS,

# SPEED,

# DECISIONS



FRANS OSINGA ON **JOHN BOYD**

## Reading Frans Osinga on **John Boyd**

JOHN BOYD (1927-1997) WAS AN AIR FORCE PILOT and a Pentagon consultant. His ideas were directly responsible for the development of the F-16 and F-18 fighter planes. He wrote very little, but delivered lectures on strategy over the course of his career that heavily influenced the Air Force, Pentagon, and military strategy and theory generally. He was directly responsible for developing the military strategy for the US invasion of Iraq in the first Gulf War.

Before diving into the bulk of it, it should be emphasized that these frameworks, while developed in the context of “war”, are applicable to conflict in general. We should challenge ourselves to apply them to situations beyond simply street conflicts with fascists and the police. One of Boyd’s key takeaways is to subdue the enemy and undermine their network, and to engage in physical confrontation only as the last resort.

We highly recommend reading and going through all of Boyd’s original slides in *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*, but especially recommend the longest section, “Patterns of Conflict”.

However, since it is a series of slides and lecture notes, it’s not easy to fit within the form of a book. We’ve taken, instead, a narrative description and summary of “Patterns of Conflict”, from *Science, Strategy, and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* by Frans Osinga. Osinga nicely summarizes Boyd’s arguments from “Patterns of Conflict,” while retaining much of Boyd’s language and idiosyncratic approach to organizing information

## Patterns of Conflict

Frans Osinga

*PATTERNS OF CONFLICT* IS A MASSIVE SLIDE SET OF 193 pages. In one sense it can be read as an exercise to apply his arguments developed in *Destruction and Creation*. Indeed, the way Boyd constructs *Patterns of Conflict* is informed by the inductive–deductive approach. Here, as well as in subsequent presentations, Boyd offers an initial suggestion, argument or insight, which he then sets out to illustrate, to substantiate, to refute or to affirm, albeit then in modified form, taking into account the additional findings this exercise has generated.

In fact, *A Discourse* can be regarded in this light. The essay forms the inductive part, after which *Patterns of Conflict* seeks to affirm/refute these findings through a survey of military history and existing strategic theories. Having found sufficient grounds for accepting the validity of his initial arguments, he then proceeds to take the theory further into related questions – *Organic Design for Command and Control* – and to extrapolate the conceptual implications and possible generalizations – *Strategic Game of ? and ?*. On the other hand, *Patterns* must be read as an argument in its own right, but one that is informed by and entirely consistent with the abstract argument from the essay. In *Patterns of Conflict* Boyd develops and substantiates his main arguments concerning war-fighting – or rather operational art and strategy.

The first twelve pages contain the core of his theory, or what he calls ‘an impression’. Taking off with some notes from ‘A New Conception of Air-to-Air Combat’, he sets out on a survey of military history in a series of historical snapshots. It proceeds in a generally chronological fashion and

focuses on the evolution of war fighting. Gradually the ‘impression’ is expanded to become the key for grand strategy, but by then the concept of ‘fast transients’ has gained in dimensions and layers. From this broad survey he distills three distinct categories of conflict as well as a synthesis of the essence – the core elements – that characterizes these categories.

In the first half of the presentation Boyd takes his audience first through the exploits and ideas of Sun Tzu, Alexander, Hannibal, Belisarius, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. He also discusses the eighteenth century French theoreticians Saxe, Bourcet, Guibert and Du Teil. His study of Napoleon and his interpreters brings him to the disastrous developments in the nineteenth century. This investigation then leads him to World War I and German infiltration techniques, T.E. Lawrence’s theory of guerrilla warfare, the revolutionary warfare theories of Marx, Lenin and Mao, J.F.C. Fuller’s work on maneuver warfare, the German Blitzkrieg doctrine, and modern guerrilla and finally to counter-guerrilla and counter-blitz methods, indicating his view on strategy as a dialectic interactive process. Boyd recognized a fundamental similarity among the processes that produced success at the tactical level and at the grand tactical level (what we would call the operational level) in guerrilla warfare, in the swarms of Genghis Khan that raided Europe, and in the Blitzkrieg concept. Regarding these concepts as superior he uses them as contrasts to the developments in the nineteenth century and World War I, the ‘attritionist’ era.

In the second half of the presentation he moves from the descriptive into the prescriptive/suggestive sphere and attempts to condense his thoughts in a more universal model. Altogether it is an interesting tour de force, a great survey of military history and strategic theory. On the other hand,

it is also a biased approach to military history. Boyd wants to convey a message, an argument. This agenda becomes evident in the first pages of *Patterns* when he outlines the mission of the presentation.

### Mission

The mission of *Patterns of Conflict* is fourfold:

- to make manifest the nature of Moral-Mental-Physical Conflict;
- to discern a Pattern for successful operations;
- to help generalize Tactics and Strategy;
- and to find a basis for Grand strategy.

And the intent is nothing less than ‘to unveil the character of conflict, survival and conquest’. He starts with presenting his audience with a number of impressions. First, he introduces his point of departure, which is the ‘fast transients’ of fighters as discussed in ‘A New Conception of Air-to-Air Combat’. Next he introduces the OODA loop for the first time. The idea of ‘fast transients’, according to Boyd, suggests that

In order to win we should operate at a faster tempo or rhythm or, better yet, operate inside adversary’s Observation-Orientat-ion-Decision-Action time cycle or loop.

He then incorporates a section of the slide *a new conception* from this slightly older presentation. The goal is to have the adversary’s system collapse into confusion and disorder by causing him to over or under-react to activity that appears

simultaneously menacing as well as ambiguous, chaotic or misleading. The mechanism for creating this situation is by creating a rapidly changing environment, thereby either effecting a compression of his available decision time or creating many mismatches in his normal decision cycle, thus inhibiting his capacity to adapt to such an environment. Figure 5.1 shows how Boyd made this point in graphic form.

Human nature is the subsequent topic he introduces, which reveals his somewhat Darwinian (or Hobbesian) take on life, revealing the influence of both Heilbroner and Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. The goal of organisms, according to Boyd, is:

- To survive, survive on own terms, or improve our capacity for independent action. The competition for limited resources to satisfy these desires may force one to:
- Diminish adversary’s capacity for independent action, or deny him the opportunity to survive on his own terms, or make it impossible for him to survive at all.

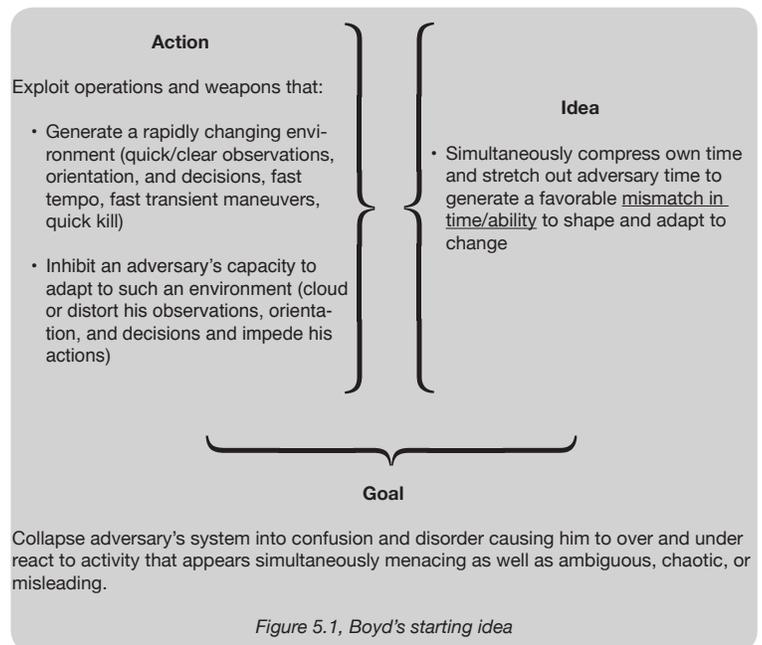


Figure 5.1, Boyd's starting idea

## *Historical snapshots*

The implication for Boyd is that life is conflict, survival, and conquest. And ‘naturally’ leads him to ‘the Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection and Conduct of War’ (J.F.C. Fuller’s book), since ‘both treat conflict, survival conquest in a very fundamental way’. Boyd then offers the notion, not more than that, that:

- It may be advantageous to possess a variety of responses that can be applied rapidly to gain sustenance, avoid danger and diminish an adversary’s capacity for independent action.
- Organisms must also cooperate and harmonize their activities in their endeavors to survive as an organic synthesis.
- Furthermore to shape and adapt to change, one cannot be passive, but instead one must take the initiative.
- Thus variety, rapidity, harmony and initiative seem to be the key qualities that permit one to shape and adapt to an ever-changing environment.

The entire presentation that follows is an elaboration of these ideas. He explains the working of the mechanism, the process and, using history as illustration and as a source for credibility, he applies it to several levels: the individual, the tactical, the operational (or grand tactical) on to the grand strategic level. So in a very few slides Boyd unfolds the basic contours of his entire strategic theory. And from here on he proceeds with a long section containing historical snap-shots aimed at revealing patterns of winning and losing.

### FROM SUN TZU TO NAPOLEON

The fundamental influence of several key theorists, most notably of Sun Tzu becomes evident right away. In Sun Tzu Boyd discovered an idiom and themes that reflected his own thoughts. Comparing the classical commanders Alexander, Hannibal to Tamerlane (all of whom he calls Eastern commanders) with the Western commanders, he states that the philosophy of the Eastern commanders seems more consistent with ideas of Sun Tzu in their attempts to shatter the adversary prior to battle. The approach advanced by Sun Tzu thus amounts to a distinct pattern in military history, and one which serves to contrast the pattern of attrition warfare. The following themes, taken from Sun Tzu, characterize this pattern:

- harmony, deception
- swiftness of action, fluidity of action
- dispersion/concentration, surprise
- shock

According to Boyd, Sun Tzu advocates a strategy with four key elements:

- Probe the enemy’s organization and dispositions to unmask his strengths, weaknesses, patterns of movement and intentions.
- ‘Shape’ the enemy’s perception of the world to manipulate his plans and actions.
- Attack enemy’s plans as best policy. Next best disrupt his alliances. Next best attack his army. Attack cities only when there is no alternative
- Employ Cheng and Ch’i\* maneuvers to quickly and unexpectedly hurl strengths

\*Cheng and Ch’i are concepts from Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*. Translations vary, but they are often contrasted as *orthodox/unorthodox*, *frontal attacks/lateral movements*, *active/passive*, etc. It is important to note, though, that a Cheng maneuver can be made to look like a Ch’i, and vice versa; the important theme here seems to be unpredictability, a theme which will clarify itself throughout this chapter.

against weaknesses.

And the desired outcome for Sun Tzu is, in Boyd's words, 'to subdue the enemy without fighting and avoid protracted war'. Western commanders by contrast, Boyd argues, have been more concerned with winning the battle. In order to make the argument that the approach of Sun Tzu has often been superior to this Western approach, he then explores several selected examples which not only bolster his argument but also illustrate in some detail what such an approach entails in terms of force structure, the employment of maneuver, movement, mass and shock. He described the battles of Marathon (490BC) of the Greeks against the Persians, the Battle of Leuctra (371BC) which saw combat between the Thebans and the Spartans, the Battle of Arbela (331 BC) in which the Persian King Darius was defeated by Alexander, and the Battle of Canae (216 BC).

The forces available to commanders such as Hannibal consisted of light troops, heavy troops and cavalry. The successful commanders combined these in patterns of maneuver with the light troops to 'unmask the enemy's disposition and hide one's own real strength and confuse the enemy'. Heavy troops in turn and in synergetic fashion would 'charge and smash thinned-out/scattered or disordered/bunched-up enemy formations generated by the interaction with light troops'. Alternatively, they would 'menace enemy formations to hold them in tight, or rigid, arrays thereby make them vulnerable to missiles of swirling light troops'. Thus, according to Boyd, 'light and heavy troops in appropriate combination pursue, envelop, and mop-up isolated remnants of enemy host'. The idea underlying this pattern for winning was to 'employ maneuver action by light troops with thrust action of heavy troops to confuse, break

up, and smash enemy formations'. An additional idea, also in line with Sun Tzu, was the deliberate employment of unequal distribution of forces, as the basis to achieve local superiority at the decisive point, and for decisive leverage to collapse adversary resistance.

However, Boyd notes, these battle arrangements and maneuvers do not provide insight into how they play upon 'moral factors such as doubt, fear, anxiety'. For this he turns to Genghis Khan's Mongol hordes and Napoleon's mass armies. Genghis Khan's established four 'key asymmetries':

- superior mobility
- superior communications
- superior intelligence
- superior leadership.

Guarding and exploiting these asymmetries to the fullest enabled the widely separated strategic maneuvers, the baited retreats, the hard-hitting thrusts and swirling envelopment he is remembered for. These movements uncovered and exploited an adversary's vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Rapid unexpected threatening movements in conjunction with propaganda and terror produced fear, anxiety and superstition. This in turn undermined an opponent's resolve and will to resist. The outnumbered Mongols were capable of creating the impression of being everywhere and coming from nowhere. Mobility, swiftness and terror combined to produce collapse by draining the opponent's moral fiber. Thus he makes the connection between physical movement and the moral factors:

- Subversive propaganda, clever stratagems, fast breaking maneuvers, and calculated terror not only created vulnerabilities and

weaknesses, but also played upon moral factors that drain-away resolve, produce panic, and bring about collapse.

Indeed, he asserts, in doing so ‘the Mongols operated inside adversary observation-orientation-decision-action loops’.

#### THE LOSS OF FLEXIBILITY: NAPOLEON AND HIS INTERPRETERS

In contrast, Boyd finds fundamental faults in the nineteenth century style of warfare. It is the beginning of the costly and wasteful attrition style of warfare that characterized World War I and the strategic mindset ever since in the West, with some exceptions that he does not fail to highlight. Within the Napoleonic campaigns he discerns a shift in approach from the flexible to the rigid, from the unpredictable to the stereotype, from maneuver and focus on enemy weakness to set piece battles, which pit strength against strength. And this is remarkable in light of the fact that the French theoreticians, such as de Saxe, Bourcet, Guibert and Du Teil, who were of great influence on Napoleon, stressed flexible planning ‘with several branches, mobility and fluidity of forces, cohesion, dispersion and concentration’. Furthermore, they stressed operating ‘on a line that threatens alternative objectives’. At the tactical level these theorists prescribed ‘to concentrate direct artillery fire on key points to be forced’.

He explains that in the early campaigns Napoleon used the ideas of the theorists about variety (as in ‘unexpected ways’), ambiguity, deception and rapidity in movement, to surprise and defeat fractions of superior forces. In addition, Boyd also recognized that these ideas are also at home with

guerrilla warfare, for American colonists, Spanish and Russian guerrillas ‘exploited variety and rapidity associated with environment background (terrain, weather, darkness, etc.) and mobility/fluidity of small bands with harmony of common cause against tyranny/injustice as basis to harass, confuse, and contribute toward the defeat of the British and the French under Napoleon’. Here too he addresses the nexus of movement, ambiguity, rapidity, variety, mobility, fluidity on the one hand with their impact on the moral factor on the other.

Boyd shows how Napoleon was handed an inspired army with citizen-soldiers and new leaders generated by the revolution. This army was organized along self-contained, but mutually supporting units (divisions) and could travel fast by living off the countryside without extensive baggage or supply trains. It could disperse and concentrate faster than opponents. The general features of Napoleon’s way of employing these were:

- planning process which included variations and contingency plans;
- extensive information gathering operations which reduced uncertainty and simplified the planning process;
- the use of flexible and confusing configurations of units,
- that combined with screening operations masked his real intentions and movements thus ensuring security;
- the use of strategic dispersion and tactical contraction to create strategic confusion;
- which led to tactical dislocation of units,
- which by rapid concentration of one’s own troops could be overwhelmed;
- and finally by a rapid succession and ever-shifting kaleidoscope of (strategic)

moves and diversions which upset the enemy's actions, unsettle his plans and unbalance him psychologically which combined ensure a constant level of initiative.

Napoleon furthermore used unified lines of operations as the basis for mutual support between units. He threatened enemy communications to isolate the opponent. He forced the opponent to fight under unfavorable conditions through operations that held or diverted the enemy (feints, pinning maneuvers) and by attacks against exposed flanks or through weak fronts. All the while he maintained freedom of maneuver by setting up centers of operations and alternative lines of communications and keep these (at least some) open. As for command and control, Napoleon initially used a centralized concept with a low degree of tactical variety, which created strategic success to produce tactical success. So higher-level confusion within the enemy camp must make up for lower level uniformity of Napoleon's units and their operations.

In later campaigns Napoleon exchanged variety, rapidity and surprise for rigid uniformity and massed artillery fire, dense infantry columns and heavy artillery against regions of strong resistance. He de-emphasized loose, irregular methods at the tactical level. And in the end he thus failed. Boyd sees in the early victories a substantiation of his own views, and in the latter of Napoleon's less victorious campaign he finds fault with the loss of variety and flexibility.

Next, he turns his critique on Clausewitz and Jomini, the premier analysts of Napoleon's art of war. In Boyd's view, Clausewitz proposed a strategy along the following lines:

- Exhaust the enemy by influencing him to

increase his expenditure of effort.

- Seek out centers of gravity upon which all power/movement depend and, if possible, trace them back to a single one.
- Compress all effort, against those centers, into the fewest possible actions.
- Subordinate all minor or secondary actions as much as possible.
- Move at the utmost speed.
- Seek a major battle (with superiority of number and conditions) that will promise a decisive victory.

The aim for Clausewitz was to 'render the enemy powerless', which strongly implies 'the destruction of the opponent's armed forces'. And whereas Boyd, with Sun Tzu, regarded friction, uncertainty as fundamental and unavoidable but also a potential crucial tool, Clausewitz is thought to have considered uncertainty, fear, anxiety and other moral factors as an impediment. These ideas were in obvious contradiction with Boyd's views, and he captures his critique on one slide, asserting that:

- Clausewitz over-emphasized decisive battle and under-emphasized strategic maneuver.
- Clausewitz emphasized method and routine at the tactical level.
- Clausewitz was concerned with trying to overcome or reduce friction/ uncertainty and failed to address the idea of magnifying adversary's friction/uncertainty.
- Clausewitz was concerned with trying to exhaust adversary by influencing him to increase his expenditure of effort. He failed to address, or develop, the idea of trying to paralyze adversary by denying him the opportunity to expend effort.

- Clausewitz incorrectly stated: ‘a center of gravity is always found where the mass is concentrated most densely’ – then argued that this is the place where the blows must be aimed and where the decision should be reached. He failed to develop idea of generating many non-cooperative centers of gravity by striking at those vulnerable, yet critical, tendons, connections, and activities that permit a larger system’s center of gravity to exist.

Boyd blames Clausewitz for not seeing ‘that many non-cooperative, or conflicting, centers of gravity paralyze the adversary by denying him the opportunity to operate in a directed fashion, hence they impede vigorous activity and magnify friction’. And the likely result of the Clausewitzian approach, with its lack of variety, so he argues, would be operations that ‘end in a bloodbath via the well regulated, stereotyped tactics and unimaginative battles of attrition suggested by Clausewitz’.

Turning his attention to Baron Henri de Jomini, he discerns some interesting ideas. Jomini stresses free and rapid movements, which carry the bulk of the forces successively against fractions of the enemy. He advises to strike in the most decisive direction – that is to say against the center of one wing or the center and one wing simultaneously. If possible, one should seize the adversary’s communications and force him to fight on a reverse front, by using the bulk of the forces to hit the flank and attack him in the rear. Detachments can be employed, if necessary, to block the arrival of reinforcements as well as for drawing the opponent’s attention elsewhere. If the enemy’s forces are too much extended, one should pierce his center to divide and crush his fractions separately.

However, Boyd parts ways with Jomini’s

‘preoccupation with the form of operations, spatial arrangement of bases, formal orders of battles and tactical formations while showing a lack of appreciation for the use of loose, irregular swarms of guerrillas and skirmishers for masking one’s own operations and for confusing and disrupting the enemy’s operations’. For Jomini also asserts that one should divide the theater of war and its subordinate components (zones, fronts, positions, etc.) into three subdivisions – a center and two wings – to facilitate envelopment of the opponent. In addition one should approach the opponent with one’s forces aligned in an oblique order. Such an approach, like the one proposed by Clausewitz, could not but lead to stereotyped, predictable operations.

Summarizing his critique on Napoleon, Clausewitz and Jomini, Boyd returns to the theme of adaptability. None of the three ‘appreciated the importance of loose, irregular tactical arrangements and activities to mask or distort own presence and intentions as well as confuse and disorder adversary operations’. The main flaw according to Boyd was the fact that they ‘viewed the conduct of war and related operations in essentially one direction – from the top down – emphasizing adaptability at the top and regularity at the bottom’. And this set the scene for the slaughters of the nineteenth century and World War I.

#### THE CURSE OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Boyd lists six key military ‘ingredients’ of the nineteenth century that only served to reinforce tendencies of the Napoleonic era:

- railroad
- machine gun
- barbed wire

- quick fire artillery
- repeating rifle
- trenches

He observes an ‘emphasis toward massed firepower and large armies supported by rail logistics; an increased emphasis on holding defense and flanking or wide turning maneuvers into the adversary’s rear to gain a decision; and a trend of continued use of frontal assaults by large stereotyped infantry formations (e.g. regiments, battalions) supported by artillery barrages, against regions of strong resistance’. Not only were tactics now stereotyped. Strategy too had lost the elements of flexibility and surprise, and Boyd puts emphasis on this element of stereotyped operations at both levels in several slides. As he noted:

huge armies, and massed firepower and other vast needs supported through a narrow fixed logistics network, together with tactical assaults by large stereotyped formations, suppressed ambiguity, deception, and mobility hence surprise of any operation.

The legacy of Napoleon, Clausewitz, and Jomini’s tactical regularity and the continued use of large stereotyped formations for tactical assaults, together with the mobilization of large armies and massing of enormous supplies through a narrow logistics network, ‘telegraphed’ any punch hence minimized the possibility of exploiting ambiguity, deception,

and mobility to generate surprise for a decisive edge.

In this sense, technology was being used as a ‘crude club’ that generated frightful and debilitating casualties on all sides. Evolution of tactics did not keep pace with the increased weapons lethality developed and produced by nineteenth-century technology. The failure to evolve mentally and tactically in parallel with the technological (r)evolution, resulted in the massacres of the American Civil War (1861–65), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), the Boer War (1899–1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and of World War I.

For Boyd World War I is the highlight of the attritional style of warfare. Here he sees offensives conducted on wide frontages, emphasizing few (rather than many) harmonious yet independent thrusts. The advance was maintained in an even way to protect flanks and to provide artillery support as the advance made headway. Reserves were thrown in whenever an attack was held up, against regions or points of strong resistance. The defense was organized in response to this type of operation. It was organized in depth, consisting of successive belts of fortified terrain. Attackers would be stopped and pinned down by massed artillery and machine-gun fire. Any ground that would still be lost would be won back through counter-attacks. The predictable result was ‘stagnation and enormous attrition since advances were generally made along expected paths of hardened resistance which in turn were dictated by both the dependence upon railroads and as well as the choice of tactics of trying to reduce strong points by massed firepower and infantry’.

He thus gave his audience something to think about. First he introduced Sun Tzu and some

other (Eastern) practitioners of strategy. These strategists all succeeded not by concentrating large numbers of forces in an attritional battle, but by movement, speed, surprise, variety and creating, and subsequently attacking, weaknesses instead of enemy strengths. Having described an ideal type he proceeded with criticizing the very masters of modern strategic thought and practice that had been taught about, and had been hailed, in most war colleges in the West, thus delivering a fundamental critique of the traditional Western style of warfare.

#### REDISCOVERING FLEXIBILITY

Boyd proceeds with the argument that during Western wars in the twentieth century there have been ideas and concepts that resembled the Eastern style of warfare, and which, an important point, had produced astounding success. He notes that the founding fathers of Communism such as Marx, Lenin and Stalin actually have some important lessons to teach, for they too think along the lines of Sun Tzu.

According to Boyd the solution to the enduring stalemate in the trench warfare during World War I came in the form of infiltration and guerrilla tactics. And in both methods the same processes seem to be at work. Infiltration tactics as practiced by the Germans under Ludendorff consisted of brief but intense artillery bombardment, that included gas and smoke shell, to disrupt and suppress defenses, to obscure the assault. Small, light teams of troops without any linear formation followed the barrage and spread out along the front in depth and in width. They did not attempt to maintain a uniform rate of advance or align formations. Instead, as many tiny, irregular swarms

spaced in breadth and echeloned in depth, they seeped or flowed into any gaps or weaknesses they could find in order to drive deep into the adversary's rear. These small shock troops would be followed by small battle groups consisting of infantry, machine-gunners, mortar teams, artillery observers and field engineers. These groups were better equipped to deal with remaining exposed enemy flanks and to mop up isolated centers of resistance. Subsequently, reserves and stronger follow-on echelons moved through newly created breaches to maintain momentum and exploit success, as well as attack flanks and rear positions to widen the penetration and consolidate gains against the expected counter-attack. The idea behind this was to:

Hurl strength (echeloned in great depth) via an irruption of many thrusts, thru weaknesses along (many) paths of least resistance to gain the opportunity for breakthrough and development.

However, such a focus on maneuver did not sufficiently address how and why infiltration fire and movement schemes work. Again Boyd addresses the way physical movement, artillery fire, gas and smoke and size and mode of operation of the attack units affected enemy perception and psyche. The key points to note about infiltration tactics concern this relation between one's own actions and the enemy's mental processes:

- Fire at all levels by artillery, mortars, and machine-guns is exploited to hold adversary attention and pin him down hence –
- Fire together with gas and smoke (as well as fog and mist) represent an immediate and

ominous threat to capture adversary attention, force heads down and dramatically obscure view, thereby cloak infiltration movements.

- Dispersed and irregular character of moving swarms (as opposed to well defined line abreast formations) permit infiltrators to blend against irregular and changing terrain features as they push forward.
- Taken together, the captured attention, the obscured view, and the indistinct character of moving dispersed/irregular swarms deny adversary the opportunity to picture what is taking place.

The result of this dynamic is that

- Infiltration teams appear to suddenly loom-up out of nowhere to blow thru, around, and behind disoriented defenders.

In more abstract terms, Boyd defines the essence of infiltration tactics as:

- Cloud/distort signature and improve mobility to avoid fire yet focus effort to penetrate, shatter, envelop, and mop-up disconnected or isolated debris of adversary system.

The intent of this is to:

- Exploit tactical dispersion in a focused way to gain tactical success and expand it into a grand tactical success.

This in turn implies, in yet more abstract terms that:

- Small units exploiting tactical dispersion in a focused way – rather than large formations abiding by the ‘Principle of Concentration’ – penetrate adversary to generate many non-cooperative (or isolated) centers of gravity as basis to magnify friction, paralyze effort, and bring about adversary collapse.

Up to the latter part of World War I, commanders had not been able to develop such a tactic due to various organizational and cultural obstacles. According to Boyd

the aristocratic tradition, the top-down command and control system, the slavish addiction to the ‘principle of concentration’ and the drill regulation mind-set, all taken together, reveal an ‘obsession for control’ by high-level superiors over low-level subordinates to evolve the indistinct-irregular-mobile tactics that could counter the increase in weapons lethality.

These ingrained features also prevented Ludendorff from capitalizing on the tactical successes of his platoon, company and battalion level infiltration units. Ludendorff violated his own novel concept by his tendency to use strategic reserves to reinforce against hardened resistance. Thus, at the strategic level, he seduced himself into supporting failure and not success. Moreover, the logistics set-up was not flexible enough to support rapid/fluid penetration and deeper exploitation of breakthroughs. Communication technology was still too immobile to allow command to quickly identify and reinforce successful advances. This caused

infiltration units to end up operating beyond the reach of their own artillery support, exposing them to enemy artillery fire and flank attacks. Boyd thus highlights the nexus between strategy and tactics on the one hand, and organization and culture on the other.

He nevertheless advances the idea that conceptually, 'infiltration tactics of fire and movement can be viewed as Napoleon's multi-thrust strategic penetration maneuvers being transformed into multi-thrust tactical penetration maneuvers to the lowest operational/organizational level – the squad'. And infiltration tactics à la Ludendorff also seemed to be similar in nature to irregular or guerrilla tactics à la T.E. Lawrence, for both stress 'clouded/distorted signatures, mobility and cohesion of small units as basis to insert an amorphous yet focused effort into or thru adversary weaknesses'. According to Boyd, Lawrence developed several key principles of guerrilla warfare that stood in stark contrast to the attritional style of warfare as taught and practiced during the nineteenth and early twentieth century:

#### **Action**

- Gain support of population. Must 'arrange the minds' of friend, foe and neutral alike. Must 'get inside their minds'.
- Must 'be an idea or thing invulnerable, without front or back, drifting about like a gas' (inconspicuousness and fluidity-of-action). Must be an 'attack-in-depth'.
- Tactics 'should be tip-and-run, not pushes but strokes', with the 'use of the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place'.
- Should be war of detachment (avoiding contact and presenting a threat

everywhere) using mobility/fluidity-of-action and environmental background (vast unknown desert) as basis for 'never affording a target' and never on the defensive except by accident and in error.

#### **Idea**

- Disintegrate existing regime's ability to govern.

#### **ADVANCES IN THE INTERBELLUM: LENIN, GUDERIAN AND MAO**

The themes of infiltration tactics and Lawrence's guerrilla warfare doctrine resurface in three major conceptual developments of the Interbellum: Soviet Revolutionary Strategy, Lightning War (or Blitzkrieg) and Maoist Guerrilla War. In introducing these three developments, he offers what for him are one or two key features of each concept. Soviet Revolutionary Strategy, as developed by Lenin, and after him, Stalin, exploited the idea of crises and vanguard that arise out of Marxian contradictions within capitalism. This resulted in a scheme that emphasizes moral/psychological factors as a basis to destroy a regime from within. Lightning War (Blitzkrieg) arose from the mating of infiltration tactics of 1918 with technological advances in the tank, motorized artillery, tactical aircraft, motor transport and communications. It aims to generate a breakthrough by piercing a region with multiple narrow thrusts using armor, motorized infantry, and follow-up infantry divisions supported by tactical aircraft. Mao Tse-Tung, finally, synthesized Sun Tzu's ideas, classic guerrilla strategy and tactics, and Napoleonic style mobile operations under an umbrella of Soviet

Revolutionary Ideas to create a powerful way for waging modern (guerrilla) war. This resulted in modern guerrilla warfare, which has become a comprehensive political, economic, social and military framework for 'total' war. In all Boyd recognized similar elements such as a focus on disrupting enemy cohesiveness, use of small shock elements, the exploitation of surprise, the importance of timing and tempo and a focus on enemy weaknesses. And in all again he sees the direct logical connection between actions and the psychological dimension of war.

Boyd next provides a brief introduction on Blitzkrieg, and only briefly addresses Mao's version of guerrilla warfare, leaving a more detailed discussion for later when he describes modern guerrilla warfare developments. Before embarking on a twenty-page exposé on Blitzkrieg, Soviet Revolutionary Strategy is dealt with in only three pages. Boyd defined the communist task Lenin and Stalin had set as the destruction of capitalism, as well as its offspring imperialism, and its replacement with dictatorship of the proletariat. Then he lists the unique features marking their brand of strategic teaching, citing Lenin frequently. This starts with a phase in which the public mood is the target and the aim is to create, magnify and exploit seams in the societal fabric:

- Employ agitation and propaganda in order to exploit opposing tendencies, internal tensions, etc. Object is to bring about a crisis, to make revolution ripe as well as convince masses that there is a way out. This is accomplished when the vanguard is able to:
  - Fan discontent/misery of working class and masses and focus it as hatred toward existing system.
  - Cause vacillation/indecision among

authorities so that they cannot come to grips with existing instability.

- 'Confuse other elements in society so that they don't know exactly what is happening or where the movement is going'.
- Convince 'proletariat class they have a function – the function of promoting revolution in order to secure the promised ideal society'.
- Select 'the moment for the decisive blow, the moment for starting the insurrection, so timed as to coincide with the moment when the crisis has reached its climax, when the vanguard is prepared to fight to the end, the reserves are prepared to support the vanguard, and maximum consternation reigns in the ranks of the enemy'.

He refers to quotes from Lenin for describing when this moment – a 'tipping point' in modern parlance – has been reached:

- 'All the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled, are sufficiently at loggerheads, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle which is beyond their strength';
- 'All the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements – the petty bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeois democrats as distinct from the bourgeois – have sufficiently exposed themselves in the eyes of the people, have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy';
- 'Among the proletariat a mass sentiment in favor of supporting the most determined, supremely bold, revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has arisen and has

begun to grow vigorously. Then revolution is indeed ripe. Then, indeed, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions indicated above . . . and if we have chosen the moment rightly, our victory is assured’.

When the revolution has already become ripe, perseverance is in order. And again Boyd quotes Lenin at length: ‘Never play with insurrection, but, when beginning it, firmly realize that you must go to the end’. The decisive condition of success then is ‘concentration of the main forces of the revolution at the enemy’s most vulnerable spot at the decisive moment, when the offensive is going full-steam ahead, when insurrection is knocking at the door, and when bringing the reserves up to the vanguard’. Considering the limited resources you must try to ‘take the enemy by surprise and seize the moment when his forces are scattered’. Such concentration and maintenance of the offensive is crucial, for the enemy ‘has the advantage of better preparation and organization. The defensive is the death of an armed rising’. ‘You must strive for daily successes even if small and at all costs retain the moral ascendancy’.

### *The Blitzkrieg concept*

#### DISCOVERING SIMILARITIES

Boyd next makes the conceptual connection between guerrilla strategy and Blitzkrieg which, he states, lies in the mutual conceptual foundation in the ideas of Sun Tzu. Both Blitzers and guerrillas ‘infiltrate a nation or regime at all levels to soften and shatter the moral fiber of the political, economic and social structure. Simultaneously, via

diplomatic, psychological, and various sub-rosa or other activities, they strip-away potential allies thereby isolate intended victim(s) for forthcoming blows’. To carry out this program, à la Sun Tzu, Blitz and guerrillas:

- Probe and test adversary, and any allies that may rally to his side, in order to unmask strength, weaknesses, maneuvers, and intentions.
- Exploit critical differences of opinion, internal contradictions, frictions, obsessions, etc., in order to foment mistrust, sow discord and shape both adversary’s and allies’ perception of the world thereby:
- Create atmosphere of ‘mental confusion, contradiction of feeling, indecisiveness, panic,’ . . .
- Manipulate or undermine adversary’s plans and actions.
- Make it difficult, if not impossible, for allies to aid adversary during his time of trial.

The purpose of this is either to ‘force capitulation when combined with external political, economic, and military pressures, or to weaken the adversary to minimize his resistance against military blows that will follow’.

Entering a long discussion on Blitzkrieg, he distills the elements that produce shock and confusion within the opponent and those that ensure that cohesion in one’s own actions is maintained. The central idea behind actions designed according to guidelines of the Blitzkrieg concept is to:

- conquer an entire region or defeat an armed force in the quickest possible time by gaining initial surprise and exploiting the fast tempo and fluidity of action of armored

teams combined with air support, as basis to repeatedly penetrate, splinter, envelop and roll-up/wipe-out disconnected remnants of an adversary's organism in order to confuse, disorder and finally shatter his will or capacity to resist.

The mechanism that makes Blitzkrieg an effective method consists of four interdependent elements, and although Boyd does not list them as such, the elements of observation-orientation-decision-action can easily be discerned in his short description. Boyd also succeeds in pointing at the linkage with infiltration tactics.

First is the novel idea (in the 1930s) of employing numerous air and ground reconnaissance actions, which together with other intelligence actions probe and test the adversary before and during combat operations both to uncover and to shape changing patterns of strengths, weaknesses, moves and intentions. The observed patterns of movement and actions, changes, etc., of the opponent are weighed against one's own situation to expose attractive, or appropriate, alternatives that exploit the adversary's vulnerabilities and weaknesses and thus help shape mission commitment and influence command intent.

The second element consists of deriving a mission from the correct assessment of the patterns in enemy behavior and, based on the mission and the observed patterns in enemy behavior, of selecting and nominating a 'Schwerpunkt' (center of gravity). This Schwerpunkt serves as the focus of the main effort. The Schwerpunkt can be shifted during actual operations to bypass the enemy's strength and strike at weaknesses. Related or supporting efforts are also established. As discussed above, Boyd labeled these 'Nebenpunkte'. These are threats, movements, combat actions, feints,

etc. that tie up, focus or drain the attention of the enemy and his strength.

A plan having been formulated, the third element of the Blitzkrieg mechanism comes into play. From observation, orientation and decision, Boyd moves to action. Small teams are inserted into the enemy rear area from the air or through rapid ground infiltration. Aided by agents already present, these teams seize critical objects such as bridges, they destroy railroad crossings and communications, incapacitate or blow up power stations and generally generate confusion in the rear by their mere presence and by disseminating false messages and fake orders. Meanwhile, air power and artillery are used to impede (or channel) enemy movement, to disrupt communications, to suppress forward defensive fires, to mask one's own advance and to divert attention. Shock troops and leading armored columns advance rapidly from least expected regions and infiltrate the enemy's front to find the path of least resistance. Breaches are opened by fire and movement of air, armored and infantry-units. This will enforce a breakthrough, through which relatively independent mobile/armored units rush forward at high speed to penetrate the enemy's interior, in close coordination with air support, air reconnaissance and/or air transport. The object is to cut lines of communication, disrupt enemy movement, paralyze enemy command and control and envelop the enemy. Finally, follow-on infantry and armored units pour in to overwhelm isolated pockets of resistance, widen the breaches and secure the conquered territory.

Blitzkrieg disrupts the connections between and within units, thereby removing cohesion. The enemy system that relied on the combination of centers of gravity (constituting strengths, capabilities, objects or geographical features) and linkages

between those centers of gravity is severely hurt by the disruption or destruction of these linkages. Or in Boyd's words,

Blitzkrieg generates multiple non-cooperative centers of gravity, as well as undermines or seizes those that adversary depends upon, in order to impede vigorous activity and magnify friction, thereby paralyze adversary by denying him the opportunity to operate in a directed way.

#### OPERATING PHILOSOPHY

The obvious question is of course 'how do Blitzers simultaneously sustain rapid pace and abruptly adapt to changing circumstances without losing cohesion or coherence of their overall effort?' To avoid collapse itself, Blitzkrieg employs, as the last element of the mechanism, a concept for command and control in which each unit at the different levels of organization, from simple to complex, has its own specific OODA time cycle. The cycle time increases commensurate with an increase in the level of organization, as one tries to control more levels and issues. As the number of events increase, the longer it takes to observe, orient, decide and act. Thus

- the faster rhythm of the lower levels must work within the larger and slower rhythm of the higher levels so that overall system does not lose its cohesion or coherency.

Considering this issue essential – referring to it as the first element of the 'Blitz Operating Philosophy' – he elaborates on it here, as well as

in the subsequent presentation *Organic Design for Command and Control*. According to Boyd, the tension between the maintenance of control and cohesion on the one hand, and the demands of fluid tactical situations is resolved by giving the

- lower level commanders wide freedom 'within the overall Mind-Time-Space scheme', to shape/direct their own activities so that they can exploit faster tempo/rhythm at the tactical levels yet be in harmony with the larger pattern/slower rhythm associated with the more general aim and larger effort at the strategic level.

The 'Mission concept ensures subordinate commanders stay within the boundaries of acceptable initiative, it fixes responsibility and shapes commitment at all levels and through all parts of the organism'. Likewise, Boyd advocates the use of a 'Schwerpunkt concept through all levels to link differing rhythms/patterns so that each part or level of the organic whole can operate at its own natural rhythm – without pulling the organism apart – instead of the slower pace associated with a rigid centralized control'.

Quoting the World War II Blitzkrieg practitioner General Gunther Blumentritt, this scheme, 'presupposes a common outlook based upon a body of professional officers who have received exactly the same training during the long years of peace and with the same tactical education, the same way of thinking, identical speech, hence a body of officers to whom all tactical conceptions were fully clear'. This in turn presupposes 'an officer training institution which allows the subordinate a very great measure of freedom of action and freedom in the manner of executing orders and which primarily calls for independent daring,

initiative and sense of responsibility’.

This goes some way in explaining Boyd’s insistence on the primary role of a *common outlook* or orientation pattern and the element of ‘previous experience’ in the OODA loop graphic. Indeed he makes it a point that ‘without a common outlook superiors cannot give subordinates freedom-of-action and maintain coherency of ongoing action’. In this one page Boyd thus highlights the crucial relations between action and effectiveness during combat, command and control philosophy, organizational culture and peace time training and education and shows how the one is predicated upon the other. However, at this point, neither the Schwerpunkt concept nor the Mission concept have been sufficiently explained and Boyd therefore takes his audience deeper into the Blitzkrieg philosophy.

#### MISSION, SCHWERPUNKT, AND GETTING INSIDE THE OODA LOOP

The mission concept can be thought of as a contract, he argues,

hence an agreement, between the superior and subordinate. The subordinate agrees to make his actions serve his superior’s intent in terms of what is to be accomplished, while the superior agrees to give his subordinate wide freedom to exercise his imagination and initiative in terms of how the intent is to be realized. As part of this concept, the subordinate is given the right to challenge or question the feasibility of his

mission if he feels his superior’s ideas on what can be achieved are not in accord with the existing situation or if he feels his superior has not given him adequate resources to carry it out’.

While this explains one element required for maintaining cohesion at higher levels as well as adaptability at the lower level, it actually only gives form and expression to what is expected between an individual superior and subordinate. It does not suggest ways to coordinate or harmonize activities among many superiors and subordinates as a collective group. Here the Schwerpunkt concept comes in view. As Boyd explains it, the

- Schwerpunkt acts as a center, or axis or harmonizing agent that is used to help shape commitment and convey or carry-out intent, at all levels from theater to platoon, hence an image around which:
    - maneuver of all arms and supporting elements are focused to exploit opportunities and maintain tempo of operations,
- and
- initiative of many subordinates is harmonized with superior intent.

In this sense Schwerpunkt can be thought of as:

- a focusing agent that naturally produces an unequal distribution of effort as a basis to generate superiority in some sector by thinning out others, as well as
- a medium to realize superior intent without impeding initiative of many subordinates, hence a medium through which

subordinate initiative is implicitly connected to superior intent.

Schwerpunkt thus represents

a unifying concept that provides a way to rapidly shape focus and direction of effort as well as harmonize support activities with combat operations, thereby permit a true decentralization of tactical command within centralized strategic guidance – without losing cohesion of overall effort. Or put in another way, it represents a unifying medium that provides a directed way to tie initiative of many subordinate actions with superior intent as a basis to diminish friction and compress time in order to generate a favorable mismatch in time and in the ability to shape and adapt to unfolding circumstances.

Here Boyd introduces the effect of the Mission concept and the Schwerpunkt concept on the dimension of time. Before, these concepts were explored as essential elements for maintaining cohesion and harmonizing effort. Now they take on a different role, indeed, they become crucial advantages in themselves, for they allow swifter tempo of operations. Because the German operational philosophy was based upon a common outlook and freedom-of-action, which they realized through their concepts of Mission and Schwerpunkt, ‘it emphasized implicit over explicit communication’.

This suggests, according to Boyd, that ‘the secret of the German Command and Control System lies in what’s unstated or not communicated to one another – in order to exploit lower-level initiative yet realize higher level intent, thereby diminish friction and reduce time, hence gain both quickness and security’. Again he quotes Blumentritt to make an important point flowing from this:

- The entire [German] operational and tactical leadership method hinged upon . . . rapid concise assessment of situations, quick decision and quick execution, on the principle: ‘each minute ahead of the enemy is an advantage’.

Boyd translated this in the more abstract but now well-known observation that they were able to ‘repeatedly operate inside their adversary’s observation-orientation-decision-action loops’. Not surprisingly, Boyd’s OODA loop graphic includes the elements of implicit guidance and control.

#### TOWARDS THE ESSENCE OF BLITZKRIEG

A final point concerning Blitzkrieg Boyd addresses, as in his discussion of the dynamics of infiltration tactics, is the connection between – the rationale for – the pattern of employing ‘multiple thrusts, bundles of multiple thrusts or bundles of thrusts insides bundles of thrusts’. One can see how he draws his audience into a conversation with him, for he formulates this theme about the rationale as a question for the audience. Boyd provides the answer: multiple thrusts (etc.) ‘present many (fast-breaking) simultaneous and sequential happenings to generate confusion and disorder – thereby stretch out time for [the] adversary

to respond in a directed fashion'. Moreover, they must be regarded as 'multiple opportunities to uncover, create, and penetrate gaps, exposed flanks and vulnerable rears'. They also 'create and multiply opportunities to splinter [the] organism and envelop disconnected remnants thereby dismember [the] adversary thru the tactical, grand tactical, and strategic levels'. This leads him to reveal the essence of Blitzkrieg:

- Employ a Nebenpunkte/Schwerpunkte maneuver philosophy to generate ambiguity, realize deception, exploit superior mobility and focus violence as the basis to quickly:
  - Create many opportunities to penetrate weaknesses in the form of any moral or mental inadequacies as well as any gaps or exposed flanks that open into adversary's vulnerable rear and interior, hence –
  - Create and exploit opportunities to repeatedly penetrate adversary organism, at all levels (tactical, grand tactical, and strategic) and in many ways, in order to splinter, envelop, and roll-up/wipe-out isolated remnants, thereby generate confusion and disorder, hence –
  - Create and exploit opportunities to disrupt his system for communication, command, and support, as well as undermine or seize those connections or centers that he depends upon, thus shake his will or capacity to decisively commit his back-up echelons, operational reserves, and/or strategic reserves, thereby magnify adversary's confusion and disorder and convince him to give up.

Note how he connects physical, spatial, temporal, informational, moral and mental dimensions into a logical causal chain and has moved slowly to a higher level of abstraction. This culminates in the formulation of the conceptual implication (which is of a yet higher level of abstraction) of this approach. He asserts that 'Blitzers, by being able to infiltrate or penetrate or get inside adversary's system, generate many moral-mental-physical non-cooperative (or isolated) centers of gravity, as well as undermine, or seize those centers of gravity adversary depends upon, in order to magnify friction, produce paralysis, and bring about adversary collapse'.

To actually execute such an approach six inter-related conditions (all of which by now he already had addressed) must be met. While taking his inspiration from World War II he concludes this list with a slide, which mentions twelve successful Blitz campaigns versus five lost ones, so as to suggest that indeed, the keys to success he advances have proven their worth. The process of OODA is constantly present at the background, and in particular the cognitive elements.

First, there must be an 'emphasis on a common outlook and freedom-of-action that are exploited by the Mission and Schwerpunkt concepts to fix responsibilities as well as to rapidly shape, focus and shift operations and support at all levels'. Second, there must be flexibility in command, 'based on a common outlook and freedom-of-action that are exploited by Mission and Schwerpunkt – that encourages lower-level combat leaders (forward) to exploit opportunities generated by rapid action within a broad loosely woven scheme laid down from central command'. The third condition also relates closely with the command (or better: the cognitive) function: 'intelligence, reconnaissance (air and ground) and stratagem emphasized before

and during combat operations to unmask and shape patterns of adversary strengths, weaknesses, moves, and intentions’.

Only the fourth condition relates to physical movements in space and time, but even here he includes the idea that these are tied to the enemy’s function of perception and his morale: ‘Broad use of Schwerpunkt concept coupled with fast-tempo/fluidity-of-action of armored teams and air support permit Blitzers to repeatedly reshape strength and rapidly shift it against, or through, weaknesses thereby generate doubt and uncertainty which magnify into panic and chaos’. These actions require (as a fifth condition) ‘superior mobile communications to maintain cohesion of overall effort and to enable higher command levels to allocate reserves and support and to reshape as well as shift focus of main effort’. Again, the processes of observation and orientation take central place. The final condition is a small logistics tail (using airlift when appropriate and necessary) to support high-speed movement and rapid shift among routes of advance. This section demonstrates that Boyd’s OODA loop idea includes more elements than the notion of outpacing the opponent’s decision cycle, which it is often equated with.

### *The modern guerrilla campaign*

#### A SIMILAR DYNAMIC

Boyd thus introduced infiltration tactics and Blitzkrieg warfare and has advanced the idea that in essence they ‘work’ because of similar dynamics at play. In his discussion of both he continuously emphasizes how actions work upon the enemy’s processes of perception. He shows how the physical, the temporal and the mental dimensions

interrelate, and that this connection actually provides the rationale for the physical actions. Already he has briefly suggested that in the revolutionary warfare concept developed in the Interbellum, such a dynamic could also be discerned. His next topic, which aims to further bolster his argument, is an exploration of modern guerrilla campaigns. Reaching back to his previous discussion of Lenin and Mao, he follows the by now familiar didactic structure. First he describes what in practical terms constitutes a guerrilla campaign, and the idea underlying it. From this he distills the essence and abstract intent, implications and the keys for success for his discussion concerning patterns of winning and losing.

The main idea, the logic behind the guerrilla warfare approach, is to

Defeat the existing regime politically by showing they have neither the moral right, nor demonstrated ability to govern and militarily by continuously using stealth/fast-tempo/fluidity-of-action and cohesion of small bands and larger units in cooperation with political ‘agitprop’ (agitation/propaganda) teams as basis to harass, confuse and ultimately destroy the will or capacity to resist.

According to Boyd, guerrillas capitalize on discontent and mistrust which is generated by corruption (real or imagined), exploitation, oppression, incompetence, and the unwanted presence of the existing regime. Thus they can evolve a common cause or a unifying theme as a basis to organize and maintain mass support through a militant political program. They build an administrative

and military organization, create a sanctuary, and a communications network under the control of the political leadership of the guerrilla movement. They take care not to arouse the reigning regime's intelligence and security apparatus. A shadow government is created, with parallel hierarchies, in localities and regions that can be made ripe for insurrection/revolution by infiltration cadres (vanguards) who cannot only subvert the existing authority but also convert leaders and people to the cause and organizational way of the guerrillas. Based upon this structure, they attempt to subvert the government and convert people. This will create an alien atmosphere of security and intelligence in order to 'blind' the regime to the plans, operations and organization of the guerrilla movement, while at the same time the regime's strengths, weaknesses, moves and intentions become visible.

The next phase comes in the form of propaganda, inspiring civil disorder (such as rallies, demonstrations, strikes and riots). Selected acts of terrorism and sabotage will be conducted. The resulting misinformation can be exploited to expand mistrust and sow discord, which in turn magnifies the appearance of corruption, incompetence, etc., and the inability of the regime to govern. Tiny cohesive bands can then be employed for surprise hit-and-run raids against lines of communications to gain arms and supplies as well as to disrupt the communication, coordination and movement of the government. When superior government police and armed force do appear, these guerrilla bands should not engage in battle but instead retreat and melt into the environment. This scheme can be expanded. Such tiny bands can scatter across the country to arouse the people (and gain recruits) as well as to harass, wear out, and spread out government forces. When indeed government forces are thinly spread and operate not in superior

force sizes but in small units, they can be engaged through ambushes and sneak attacks by larger bands, or mobile formations which concentrate to wipe out these dispersed, isolated and relatively weak fractions.

Meanwhile the effects of propaganda, re-education and selected military successes should be exploited. The grievances and obsessions of people should be played upon. The government must be encouraged to indiscriminately take harsh reprisal measures against the people in order to associate the government with the expanding climate of mistrust, discord and moral disintegration. Simultaneously and in stark contrast to the government, guerrillas should exhibit moral authority, offer competence, and provide desired benefits. This will assist in further eroding the government's influence, gaining more recruits and multiplying the base areas. Subsequently, the political infrastructure can expand, as well as the influence and control exerted by the guerrilla movement over the population and the countryside. This will culminate with the visible demonstration of the disintegration of the regime, which is effectuated by strikes of small fluid bands and ever-larger formations in a Cheng/Ch'i fashion, to split-up, envelop, and annihilate fractions of major enemy forces.

The essence of the modern guerrilla campaign, according to Boyd, is thus to:

- Capitalize on corruption, injustice, incompetence, etc., (or their appearances) as basis to generate atmosphere of mistrust and discord in order to sever moral bonds that bind people to existing regime

#### Simultaneously

- Share existing burdens with people and

work with them to root out and punish corruption, remove injustice, eliminate grievances, etc., as basis to form moral bonds between people and guerrillas in order to bind people to guerrilla philosophy and ideals.

The intent of guerrilla activities is to:

- Shape and exploit crises environment that permits guerrilla vanguards or cadres to pump-up guerrilla resolve, attract the uncommitted, and drain away adversary resolve as foundation to replace existing regime with guerilla regime.

The conceptual implication of this is that:

- Guerrillas, by being able to penetrate the very essence of their adversary's moral-mental-physical being, generate many moral-mental-physical non-cooperative (or isolated) centers of gravity, as well as subvert or seize those centers of gravity that adversary regime must depend upon, in order to magnify friction, produce paralysis, and bring about collapse.

Yet,

- Guerrillas shape or influence moral-mental-physical atmosphere so that potential adversaries, as well as the uncommitted, are drawn toward guerrilla philosophy and are empathetic toward guerrilla success.

## STRATEGIC PHILOSOPHY

The strategic philosophy underlying modern guerrilla warfare, as well as Soviet Revolutionary Strategy and the impact of nineteenth-century capitalism on Insurrection/revolution can now be discerned. It is only a slightly different rendering of the short essence laid out above. According to Boyd, guerrilla vanguards employ a variety of means to play upon internal frictions within the regime, obsessions, etc., as well as stimulate discontent and mistrust of the people. In this way, vanguards sow discord that in turn magnifies the internal frictions within the regime. This paralyzes the regime's ability to come to grips with crises that further fan the atmosphere of mistrust and discord that feed the crises. This self-amplifying process pushes the regime out of control. The guerrilla vanguards on the other hand share the burden as well as help the people to cope with the turmoil – that the vanguards themselves keep fanning and enmesh people into – in order to demonstrate the ability to deal with surging crises as well as to shape the image that only guerrillas offer a way out of existing unpleasant circumstances.

Now he slowly peels away more layers to get to the core dynamics of modern guerrilla warfare. The discussion above offers the insight, so Boyd suggests, that the 'insurrection/revolution becomes ripe when many perceive an illegitimate inequality – that is, when the people see themselves as being exploited and oppressed for the undeserved enrichment and betterment of an elite few. This means that the guerrillas not only need an illegitimate inequality but they also need support of the people, otherwise insurrection/revolution is impossible'. The message to be derived from this insight is that:

- Guerrillas must establish implicit connections or bonds with people and countryside.

In other words

- Guerrillas must be able to blend into the emotional-cultural-intellectual environment of people until they become one with the people.

In this sense

- People feelings and thoughts must be guerrilla feelings and thoughts while guerrilla feelings and thoughts become people feelings and thoughts; people aspirations must be guerrilla aspirations while guerrilla aspirations become people aspirations; people goals must be guerrilla goals while guerrilla goals become people goals.

The result is that

- Guerrillas become indistinguishable from people while government is isolated from people.

A survey of twelve successful and five failed guerrilla campaigns of the past 200 years reveals, according to Boyd, the four keys to success, which again amount to a description of the dynamics of guerrilla warfare, from yet a slightly different angle and in more general terms: first, an ability to continuously demonstrate government weakness, to erode government influence and to cause the government to alienate itself from the people; second, the support of people (both psychological

and physical) for intelligence, recruits, shelter, transportation, refuge, food, money and medical aid; third, access to (more or less permanent) safe sanctuaries or base areas and/or fluid bases that can be shifted from place to place, away from enemy forces – in order to rest, recuperate, repair materiel, etc., as well as to indoctrinate, train and equip recruits; and finally, the use of stealth/fast-tempo/fluidity-of-action coupled with cohesion of guerrilla bands as a basis for:

- dispersion, to arouse people, to avoid adversary strength, and to force government to thin-out, or disperse, its strength;
- concentration, to hit and wipe-out isolated fractions;
- shifting of effort (in these as well as other activities), in order to gain and keep initiative.

*The nucleus of victory: the themes of Blitzkrieg and guerrilla warfare*

It is significant the way Boyd describes that guerrillas blend in with the environment just like infiltration units did, how he focuses on bonds and connections, as well as on the theme of the creation of isolation, which also appeared in his description of infiltration tactics and the Blitzkrieg concept. Also the choice of words for describing the keys to guerrilla warfare success is not coincidental. On the contrary, his particular formulation makes readily apparent the connection with other styles of warfare. Indeed, he claims that the elements that made Blitzkrieg successful can also be recognized in guerrilla warfare as theorized by

T.E. Lawrence, Soviet Revolutionary Strategy and Mao's guerrilla warfare concept, which combined ideas of Sun Tzu, Napoleon and Lenin. At an abstract level the processes and core concepts are similar, Boyd suggests. All revolve around maintaining cohesion among one's own units, creating confusion and disrupting cohesion in the enemy camp. By concentrating on processes and core concepts instead of other characteristics that give form to a particular style of warfare, such as technology, he uncovered similarities between these different styles.

Wrapping the essences of guerrilla warfare and Blitzkrieg together, he concludes that in both styles battles are avoided. Instead the essence of both is to:

- penetrate an adversary to subvert, disrupt or seize those connections, centers, and activities that provide cohesion (e.g., psychological/moral bonds, communications, lines of communication, command and supply centers, . . .).
- exploit ambiguity, deception, superior mobility and sudden violence to generate initial surprise and shock, again and again and again.
- roll-up/wipe-out, the isolated units or remnants created by subversion, surprise, shock, disruption and seizure.

These actions aim to:

- exploit subversion, surprise, shock, disruption and seizure to generate confusion, disorder, panic, etc., thereby shatter cohesion, paralyze effort and bring about adversary collapse.

The reasons for the extraordinary level of success, or in Boyd's words, 'the message', lies in the fact that in both concepts:

- One operates in a directed yet more indistinct, more irregular and quicker manner than one's adversaries.

This enables one to:

- Repeatedly concentrate or disperse more inconspicuously and/or more quickly from or to lower levels of distinction (operational, organizational and environmental) without losing internal harmony.

For the same reason one is able to:

- Repeatedly and unexpectedly infiltrate or penetrate adversaries' vulnerabilities and weaknesses in order to splinter, isolate or envelop and overwhelm disconnected remnants of adversary organism.

Or, put in another way, one can:

- operate inside the enemy's OODA loops or get inside their mind-time-space as a basis to penetrate the moral-mental-physical being of one's adversaries in order to pull them apart and bring about their collapse.

Such amorphous, lethal and unpredictable activity by Blitz and guerrillas make them appear awesome and unstoppable, which altogether produces uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic and ultimately collapse. They affect the connections and centers that provide cohesion,

as Boyd explains in yet another slide on the same theme. This notion was already implied by Sun Tzu and more recently by the analysis J.F.C. Fuller had made of Ludendorff's infiltration tactics in 1918. Indeed, then, for Boyd there is continuity from Sun Tzu to the Vietnam War, from the early campaigns of Napoleon to the 1973 war in the Middle East.

Not surprisingly, he also attempts to uncover the counter to such successful stratagems: how can we defend against or counter the Blitz and the guerrilla movement? The answer follows directly from his analysis of the essence of both types of warfare. The difficulty with an enemy Blitz is to maintain cohesion while sustaining fast tempo when the enemy is forced to repeatedly and rapidly shift the concentration of strength against weaknesses. The counter to the Blitz thus lies in the same keys of success for Blitzkrieg, in addition to avoiding linear defense. Instead, defense should be in depth, with armored teams as mobile reserves in echelon behind reconnaissance parties, which try to locate the enemy thrusts. The defense should have better intelligence, operate faster, be more mobile, move even more inconspicuously, also with small combat teams operating according to the Schwerpunkt/mission concept, and maintain a higher level of cohesion to shatter the opponent's cohesion with counterstrokes on the enemy flanks and rear. It implies an acceptance of 'gaps' and 'risks'. The idea is a mirror of the idea underlying the Blitz:

Smash Blitz offensive by inconspicuously using fast-tempo/fluidity-of-action and cohesion of counter-Blitz combat teams as basis for shifting of forces and quick focus of air and ground effort to

throttle momentum, shatter cohesion, and envelop Blitz in order to destroy adversary's capacity to resist.

The Achilles heel for the guerrilla movement lies in its need for popular support. Guerrilla vanguards need a cause, the support of people and a crisis. The crisis and the vanguards represent the marriage of instability and initiative that create and expand guerrilla effort. Without support of people, the guerrillas have neither a vast hidden intelligence network nor an invisible security apparatus that permit them to see into the adversary's operations yet blind the adversary to their own operations. This automatically suggests that in order to dry up a guerrilla upsurge, one should strike at those root causes or illegitimate inequalities that generate and exacerbate crises as well as provide a favorable climate for vanguards to form and operate in. Thus the idea behind a counter-guerrilla campaign is to 'break guerrillas' moral-mental-physical hold over the population, destroy their cohesion, and bring about their collapse via political initiative that demonstrates moral legitimacy and vitality of government and by relentless military operations that emphasize stealth/fast-tempo/fluidity-of-action and cohesion of overall effort'.

### *Categories of conflict*

#### THREE KINDS OF CONFLICT

Based on his 'panorama' of military history, Boyd argues that one can imagine three kinds of human conflict:

- Attrition Warfare – as practiced by the

Emperor Napoleon, by all sides during the 19th Century and during World War I, by the Allies during World War II, and by present-day nuclear planners.

- **Maneuver Conflict** – as practiced by the Mongols, General Bonaparte, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson, Union General Ulysses S. Grant, Hitler’s Generals (in particular Manstein, Guderian, Balck, Rommel) and the Americans under Generals Patton and MacArthur.
- **Moral Conflict** – as practiced by the Mongols, most Guerrilla Leaders, a very few Counter-Guerrillas (such as Magsaysay) and certain others from Sun Tzu to the present.

Boyd subsequently provides the essence of each kind of conflict. This synthesis offers novel aspects,

for he often recombines and rephrases the terms or puts them in a different context. And in particular the category of moral conflict offers new material.

#### ATTRITION WARFARE

In just one slide (Figure 5.2) he captures the dynamics of attrition warfare, and this stands in marked contrast with his dealing with maneuver and moral conflict. Firepower as a destructive force is king. Protection (trenches, armor, dispersion, etc.) is used to weaken or dilute effects of enemy firepower. Mobility is used to bring firepower to bear or to evade enemy fire. Measures of success are ‘body count’ and targets destroyed. Seize and hold terrain objectives replace Napoleon’s dictum: destroy enemy army.

#### MANEUVER CONFLICT

While covering just four slides, his summary of maneuver warfare offers new insights, describing it in new terms, allowing him to make a leap to a characterization that transcends the historical connection to World War II Blitzkrieg. He deliberately raises the level of abstraction and inserts his theme of adaptability to recast maneuver warfare in yet another mold, giving new meaning to his previously discussed key elements. He offers three observations regarding maneuver.

First ambiguity, deception, novelty, and violence (or threat thereof) are used to generate surprise and shock. Second, fire and movement are used in combination, like Cheng/Ch’i or Nebenpunkte/Schwerpunkt, to tie-up, divert or drain-away the adversary’s attention and strength in order to expose as well as menace and exploit vulnerabilities or weaknesses elsewhere. A final point is that

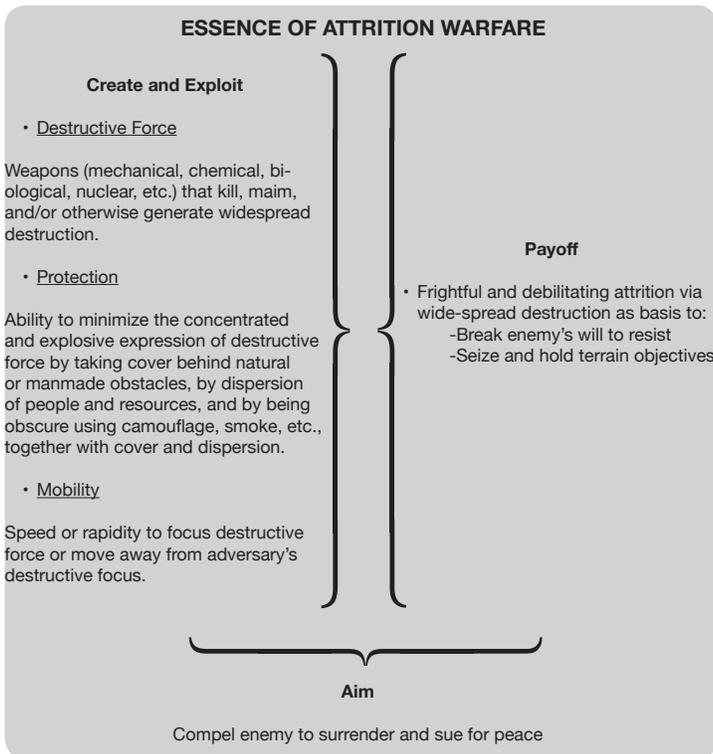


Figure 5.2 Dynamics of attrition warfare

indications of success tend to be qualitative and are related to the widespread onset of confusion and disorder, frequent envelopments, high prisoner counts or any other phenomena that suggest inability to adapt to change.

Again in one slide (Figure 5.3) he paints an impression of the essence of maneuver conflict: In light of his previous observation on the importance of adaptability, it is a noteworthy slide for it lists effects, which show an increasing level of erosion of the state of mental/moral coherence with the subsequent decreasing capability to cope and respond adequately. In addition, he returns to the theme of fast transients and the Darwinian perspective with which he started *Patterns of Conflict*.

In Figure 5.4 these terms have been arranged so as to depict the causal chain that is formed by the induced effects, according to Boyd's slide. The dotted boxes indicate the desired ultimate effects, the ultimate aim.

For Boyd, this still does not sufficiently capture the essence of maneuver conflict. He increases the emphasis on adaptability when he states next that 'shock and surprise can also be regarded as an overload caused by a welter of threatening events beyond one's mental or physical ability to respond and adapt or endure'. This results in a slightly amended version of the slide above. It contains two notable differences. It no longer regards disorientation as the only element affecting adaptability, but now also the element of overload due to 'a welter of threatening events'. So adaptability is affected not only by ambiguous information and uncertainty, but is also compounded by fear due to threatening events.

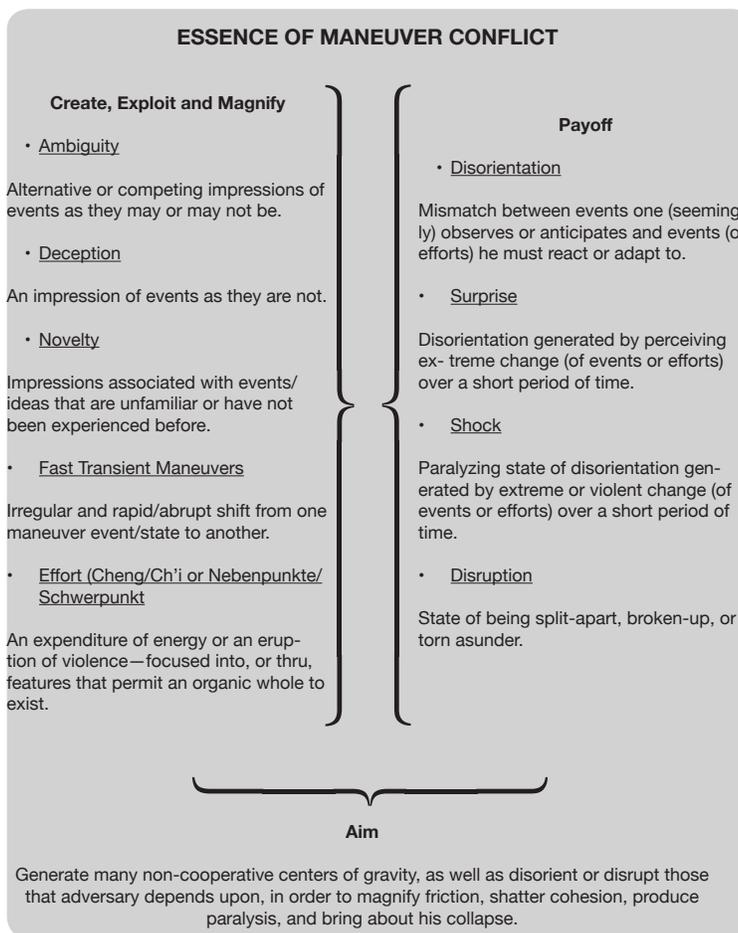


Figure 5.3 The Essence of Maneuver Conflict

Moreover, Boyd modifies his aim. The employment of the various elements of maneuver conflict may not directly result in collapse, as one may have interpreted his statement on the 'aim of maneuver conflict'. Instead, he considers it equally valuable to aim for the creation of many isolated remnants

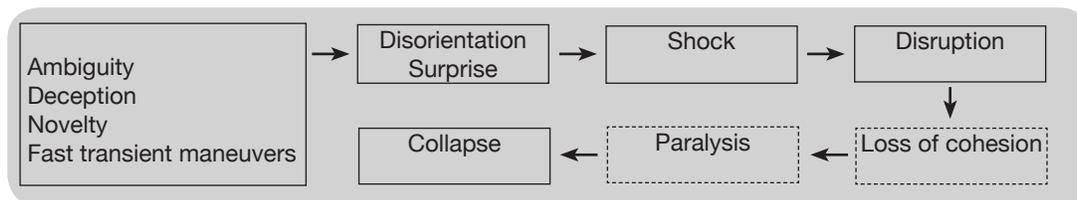


Figure 5.4 Causal chain of effects in maneuver conflict

of enemy forces that can later be mopped up. In light of the critique that Boyd, like Sun Tzu, expects victory through merely going through OODA cycles more rapidly, this is not a trivial transition.

### *Moral conflict*

This category is novel for two reasons. Although it suggests that it equates with revolutionary war or guerrilla warfare, it includes but transcends those types. It is also novel in the discussion Boyd had up to this point with his audience. He had not alluded to it before. Therefore he starts his discussion with an examination of morale, aiming to uncover the nature of moral strength and the causes for losing it using the German Blitzler Hermann Balck and Cyril Fall's 1961 book *The Art of War from the Age of Napoleon to the Present Day* as examples.

Balck emphasized the importance of leadership in creating moral strength among troops. Leaders

allowed subordinates freedom to exercise imagination and initiative, yet harmonize within the intent of superior commanders. Cohesion during combat relied more on moral superiority than on material superiority. Leaders must create this. This requires them to create a bond and breadth of experience based upon trust. They must also lead by example, demonstrating requisite physical energy, mental energy and moral authority to inspire subordinates to enthusiastically cooperate and take the initiative within the superior's intent. Leaders must be willing to share danger and discomfort with the troops at the front. They must show a willingness to support and even promote (unconventional or difficult) subordinates that accept danger, demonstrate initiative, take risks, and come-up with new ways towards mission accomplishment. Finally, they must manifest a dedication and resolve to face-up to and master uncomfortable circumstances that fly in the face of the traditional solution.

From Cyril Falls' book Boyd extracts insights concerning the reverse issue: when does moral strength evaporate? Boyd tells how during World War I in East End London air raids caused a tendency to panic in the latter part of 1917. Moreover, whether there was an air raid or not, some 300,000 people crowded each night into the underground railway stations and slept on the platforms. Although a single German airship did cause £1 million worth of damage in a raid, the success of airship attacks was mainly moral and measured in terms of absenteeism in factories and sensational drops in production of warlike material. A similar effect was noted by German Blitzlers in their employment of dive-bombers, to which the German armies owed much in their victories in Poland, Belgium and France. Acting in close support to the armor and infantry, they often put hostile artillery out of action, not through

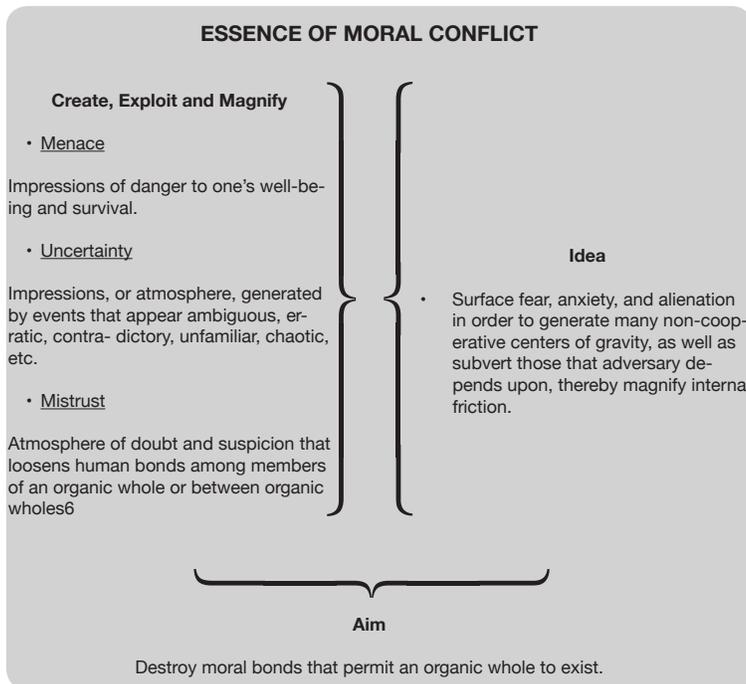


Figure 5.6 The Essence of Moral Conflict

destruction but by driving the detachment from their guns. Those successes were won for the most part by moral rather than material effect. To troops unused to them, these dive-bomber attacks proved extremely unsettling.

Cyril Falls' comments suggest, according to Boyd, that moral effects are related to the menace posed by the Zeppelins and dive-bombers, and the uncertainty associated with not knowing what to expect or how to deal with this menace. Put simply, moral effects are related to menace and uncertainty. This also offers a preliminary suggestion that moral strength represents mental capacity to overcome menace and uncertainty.

One element is still missing, however: the element of trust. As was discussed above, guerrillas stress the use of propaganda, civil disorders, selected terrorism, etc., as the basis to generate mistrust and discord. Balck emphasized the importance of trust for cohesion. And as both guerrillas and Blitz commanders work in a hostile environment (of menace and uncertainty), which naturally breeds mistrust, it is clear that moral effects must include this factor. This suggests that moral strength represents mental capacity to overcome menace, uncertainty and mistrust. From these insights Boyd develops five notions related to moral conflict:

- Moral strength: mental capacity to overcome menace, uncertainty, and mistrust.
- Moral victory: triumph of courage, confidence, and esprit (de corps) over fear, anxiety, and alienation when confronted by menace, uncertainty, and mistrust.
- Moral defeat: triumph of fear, anxiety, and alienation over courage, confidence, and esprit when confronted by menace, uncertainty, and mistrust.
- Moral values: human values that permit

one to carry on in the face of menace, uncertainty, and mistrust.

- Moral authority: person or body that can give one the courage, confidence, and esprit to overcome menace, uncertainty, and mistrust.

This leads to two wrap-up slides on the essence of moral conflict. The first (Figure 5.6) amounts to a 'what to do' summary. The second (Figure 5.7) improves upon the first, in similar fashion to the two slides on the essence of maneuver conflict. So far it has become clear that courage, confidence and esprit the corps represent the positive counterweights to fear, anxiety and alienations. This does not reveal yet how to create, maintain and exploit moral strength among one's own troops. Positive counterweights to menace, uncertainty and

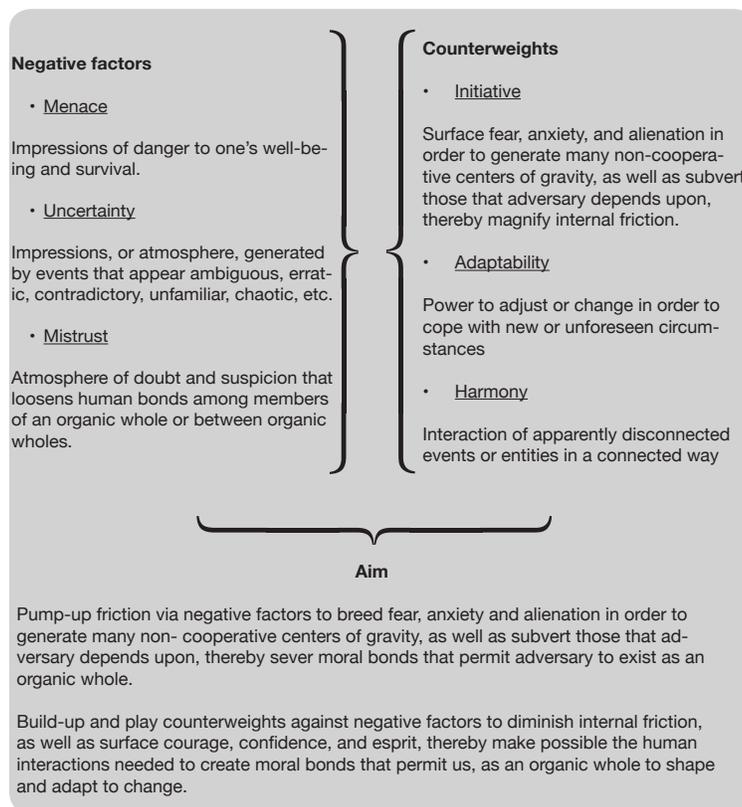


Figure 5.7 The Essence of Moral Conflict (2)

mistrust still need to be developed. These are not very obvious. Boyd makes the suggestion, admittedly based in no small part on his own intuition, that the answer lies in the elements of harmony, adaptability and initiative, offering the following explanation:

- The presence of mistrust implies that there is a rupture or loosening of the human bonds or connections that permit individuals to work as an organic whole in harmony with one another. This suggests that harmony itself represents an appropriate counterweight to mistrust.
- In dealing with uncertainty, adaptability seems to be the right counterweight. Otherwise, how can one adjust to the unforeseen or unpredictable nature of uncertainty?
- Finally, with respect to menace one cannot be passive. Instead, initiative is needed otherwise menace may obliterate the benefits associated with harmony and adaptability. Intuitively, this suggests that initiative is the right counterweight here.

This then leads to the second wrap-up of the essence of moral conflict (Figure 5.7), which combines the negative and the positive factors, the offensive as well as the defensive side.

### *Synthesis: pattern for successful operations*

#### A SHORT LOOK BACK

By now Boyd is ready to come slowly to the abstract synthesis of the dynamics and patterns of winning and losing. In the first pages of *Patterns of Conflict* he has laid out the aim of this presentation and a number of key themes and suggestions. He has taken his audience through detailed discussions of the style of warfare as practiced by Sun Tzu, Alexander, Genghis Khan and the early Bonaparte. He has argued that from the later Napoleonic battles to World War I bloody and wasteful attrition warfare was tragically in vogue. The solution to the costly loss of flexibility, to the stalemate of the trenches, was provided by infiltration tactics. Together with the development of the Blitzkrieg concept, Lawrence's version of guerrilla warfare and communist revolutionary warfare, this period manifested a de facto rediscovery of the teachings of Sun Tzu. Boyd then gradually shifts to higher levels of abstraction in his compression of the different styles of warfare to the key elements and fundamental dynamics of each. He now moves on to get to the most general and abstract formulation of the essence of strategy. In twenty pages he brings it all together, from the tactical to the grand strategic level, coming full circle to the ideas he bluntly put forward in his introduction. But by now he has taken his audience through 2,500 years of military history and strategic thought to argue his points.

#### TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPTUALIZATION OF STRATEGY

Restating his first ideas, propositions, findings and insights, including those of the essay, Boyd states

that for any system the basic goal is to diminish the adversary's freedom of action, while improving our freedom of action so that we can cope with events while they unfold and he cannot. This should also be the aim of any military commander. The plan for achieving this should incorporate the following eight steps (in which Sun Tzu and Liddell Hart can easily be recognized):

1. Probe and test the adversary to unmask strength, weaknesses, his maneuvers and intentions.
2. Employ a variety of measures that interweave menace, uncertainty and mistrust with tangles of ambiguity, deception and novelty as the basis to sever an adversary's moral ties and disorient or twist his mental images and thus mask, distort and magnify our presence and activities.
3. Select initiatives and responses that are least expected.
4. Planning should focus on a 'Schwerpunkt' with 'Nebenpunkte' and should have branches and sequels, and thus secure flexibility.
5. Threaten multiple and alternative objectives while,
6. Move along paths of least resistance to reinforce and exploit success.
7. Exploit, rather than disrupt or destroy those differences, frictions, obsessions, etc., of adversary organism that interfere with his ability to cope with unfolding circumstances.
8. Subvert, disorient, disrupt, overload or seize vulnerable and critical connections, centers and activities that provide cohesion and permit a coherent OODA

cycle in order to dismember the organism and isolate remnants for absorption or mop-up.

When it comes to action the thing is to:

'OODA' more inconspicuously, more quickly and with more irregularity as basis to keep or gain initiative as well as shape or shift main effort; to repeatedly and unexpectedly penetrate vulnerabilities and weaknesses exposed by that effort or other effort(s) that tie up, divert, or drain-away adversary attention (and strength) elsewhere.

The whole operation should be supported by a superior mobile communications structure. Only essential logistics should be used. The command concept should be highly decentralized in a tactical sense to allow tactical commanders initiative. It should be centralized at the strategic level to establish aims, match ambitions with means, to sketch plans, allocate resources and shape the focus of overall effort.

Up to this point Boyd's discussion has concerned the elements of setting goals, planning, action, support and command. Although abstract in the way he describes these elements, they still refer to the tactical level. He is still far removed from a general theory of winning and losing in which tactics (actions) are linked to strategy and the societal level. So, from this pattern of successful operations, Boyd proceeds to develop a set of hierarchically structured related definitions – or rather novel conceptualizations – of tactics, grand tactics (operational level in current parlance), strategy

and grand strategy. Once more Boyd sets out to get to the essence of success in yet another higher level of abstraction to arrive first at the ‘theme for disintegration and collapse’ and then at the ‘theme for vitality and growth’.

He first addresses the grand tactical level. The pattern he sketched out before suggests that the aim for any commander is to penetrate the adversary system and mask one’s own system against any such attempts by the opponent. One wants to create a variety of impressions of what is occurring and what is about to occur. One aims to generate mismatches between what seems to be and what is and to push the adversary beyond his ability to adapt. The intention formulated in the plan requires the application of transients that make up the action part. Here he emphasizes the element of uncertainty of combat and command, the relevance of mismatches and the value of creating a variety of impressions. These are enduring elements, indeed, vulnerabilities and weaknesses that commanders and subordinates alike must accept. To reinforce his point, Boyd returns to Napoleon, who asserted that:

‘The art of land warfare is an art of genius, of inspiration . . . A general never knows anything with certainty, never sees his enemy clearly, never knows positively where he is. When armies are face to face, the least accident in the ground, the smallest wood, may conceal part of the enemy army. The most experienced eye cannot be sure whether it sees the whole of the enemy’s army or only three-fourths. It is by the mind’s eye, by the integration of all reasoning,

by a kind of inspiration, that the general sees, knows, and judges.’

‘The first quality for a commander in chief is a cool head which receives a just impression of things; he should not allow himself to be confused by either good or bad news; the impressions which he receives successively or simultaneously in the course of a day should classify themselves in his mind in such a way as to occupy the place which they merit; because reason and judgment are the result of the comparison of various impressions taken into just consideration.’

If the element of judgment in the face of uncertainty is of such prime importance for a commander such as Napoleon, this should indeed feature prominently in the conceptualization of grand tactics. Subsequently Boyd formulates a ‘do’ definition of grand tactics which focuses in particular on the mind of the enemy commander, on the process of observation and orientation, while also containing familiar elements:

- Operate inside adversary’s OODA-loops, or get inside his mind-time-space, to create a tangle of threatening and/or non-threatening events/ efforts as well as repeatedly generate mismatches between those events/ efforts adversary observes, or anticipates, and those he must react to, to survive;

Thereby

- Enmesh adversary in an amorphous,

menacing, and unpredictable world of uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic, chaos, . . . and/or fold adversary back inside himself;

Thereby

- Maneuver adversary beyond his moral-mental-physical capacity to adapt or endure so that he can neither divine our intentions nor focus his efforts to cope with the unfolding strategic design or related decisive strokes as they penetrate, splinter, isolate or envelop, and overwhelm him.

He incorporated similar ideas in his advice for the strategic level, which to some extent he considers as comparable to the grand tactical level. However, the strategic level has a higher level of aggregation and complexity, it features more enemy elements and, importantly, a wider spectrum of options for compensation and adaptation, as well as a wider theater (in both time and space) with more options for manipulating, confusing and invalidating the strategic calculations and maneuvers of the adversary. Although Boyd in a sense merely seems to restate his previous arguments, at the strategic level he no longer sees the enemy as tactical units, but as an organic whole, as an adaptive system composed of a variety of subsystems. Another difference is that the cognitive element becomes more and more important at the strategic level. Figure 5.8 shows Boyd's list of methods for influencing the potential strategic behavior of the enemy.

This leads Boyd to the conclusion that in general terms the strategic aim is to:

Penetrate moral-mental-physical

being to dissolve his moral fiber, disorient his mental images, disrupt his operations, and overload his system, as well as subvert, shatter, seize or otherwise subdue those moral-mental-physical bastions, connections, or activities that he depends upon, in order to destroy internal harmony, produce paralysis, and collapse adversary's will to resist.

This results in a synthesis of abstract formulations of prescriptions for actions and objectives of operations at the tactical, the grand tactical and strategic levels. It is in a sense a list of things 'to do'. However, it is not a check-list for commanders to follow, but a reconceptualization of what one should be trying to achieve vis à vis the opponent's level of cohesion, his capability to observe and orient correctly, and his ability to respond in a timely and relevant way. In other words, Boyd offers ideas for affecting the opponent's capability to adapt, arguing that any physical movement, as well as the hiding of movements, should relate directly to a cognitive effect one wants to achieve within the OODA process of the opponent:

#### TACTICS

- 'OODA' more inconspicuously, more quickly and with more irregularity as basis to keep or gain initiative as well as shape or shift main effort; to repeatedly and unexpectedly penetrate vulnerabilities and weaknesses exposed by that effort or other effort(s) that tie up, divert, or drain-away adversary attention (and strength) elsewhere.

GRAND TACTICS

- Operate inside adversary's OODA-loops, or get inside his mind-time-space, to create a tangle of threatening and/or non-threatening events/efforts as well as repeatedly generate mismatches between those events/efforts adversary observes, or anticipates, and those he must react to, to survive;

Thereby

- Enmesh adversary in an amorphous, menacing, and unpredictable world of uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic, chaos, . . . and/ or

fold adversary back inside himself;

Thereby

- Maneuver adversary beyond his moral-mental-physical capacity to adapt or endure so that he can neither divine our intentions nor focus his efforts to cope with the unfolding strategic design or related decisive strokes as they penetrate, splinter, isolate or envelop, and overwhelm him.

STRATEGY

- Penetrate moral-mental-physical being to dissolve his moral fiber, disorient his mental images, disrupt his operations, and overload his system, as well as subvert, shatter, seize or otherwise subdue those moral-mental-physical bastions, connections, or activities that he depends upon, in order to destroy internal harmony, produce paralysis, and collapse adversary's will to resist.

STRATEGIC AIM

- Diminish adversary's capacity while improving our capacity to adapt as an organic whole, so that our adversary cannot cope while we can cope with events/efforts as they unfold.

*Theme for disintegration and collapse*

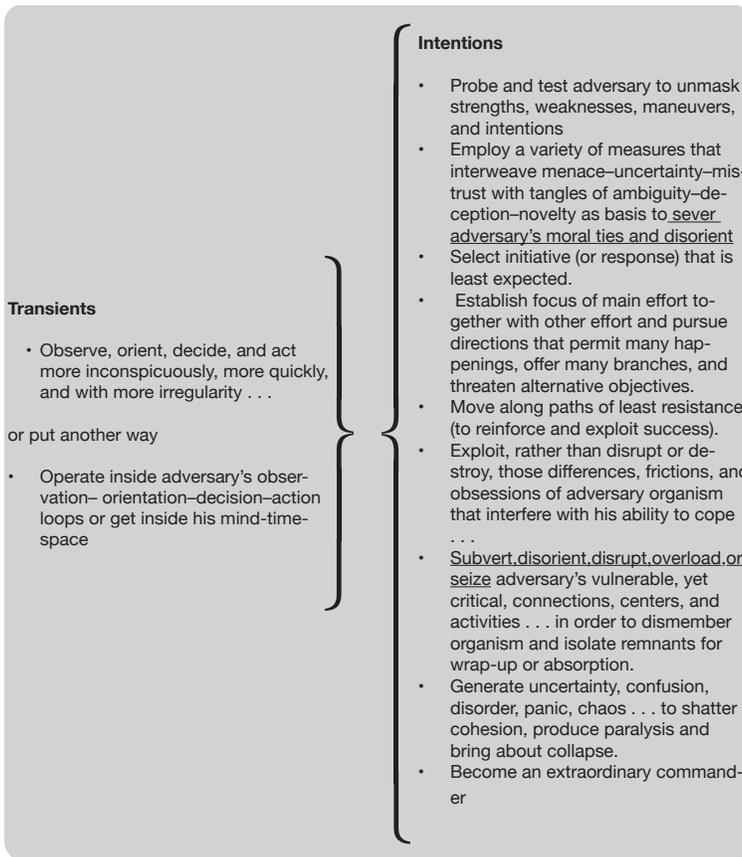


Figure 5.8 Influencing the enemy's behavior

THE NAME OF THE GAME

Boyd acknowledges that so far this exercise has not produced insights that are significantly different from the destructive attrition-maneuver-moral ideas played out in the synthesis of ‘Categories of Conflict’. More is required to lay bare the essence of winning and losing. He subsequently recasts both ‘Categories of Conflict’ and the list of ideas above in the following schematic, once more showing the deeper meaning of the rapid OODA loop idea, dispelling the notion that mere information superiority or superior speed in command and control is the essence of that idea. In the schematic Boyd has captured and combined elements of maneuver and moral conflict, as well as an element of the description of grand tactics. By now he has worked his way towards a view on strategy, which focuses on those elements that allow complex social structures to exist and function in a purposeful way and to adapt to changes in the environment. Gradually his verbiage has become more abstract, general and conceptual in nature, and decreasingly recognizable as grounded in military history (Figure 5.9).

His holistic approach, and his view of the adversary as a complex adaptive system, becomes even more manifest in the subsequent slides, which lead him to formulate nothing less than the *Theme for Vitality and Growth*. Boyd continues to strip down and recombine his ideas, focusing in particular on the element of cohesion. Not the manifestation of force but the cohesion that produces it should be the focus of planning, for the ‘underlying insight’ of the *Theme for Disintegration and Collapse*, is that:

unless one can penetrate

adversary’s moral-mental-physical being, and sever those interacting bonds that permit him to exist as an organic whole, by being able to subvert, shatter, seize, or otherwise subdue those moral-mental-physical bastions, connections, or activities that he depends upon, one will find it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to collapse adversary’s will to resist.

Boyd then homes in on the meaning of the word ‘penetrate’. Seen from a different angle, the observation above can be rephrased to produce the name of the game as:

Morally-mentally-physically isolate adversary from allies or any outside support as well as isolate

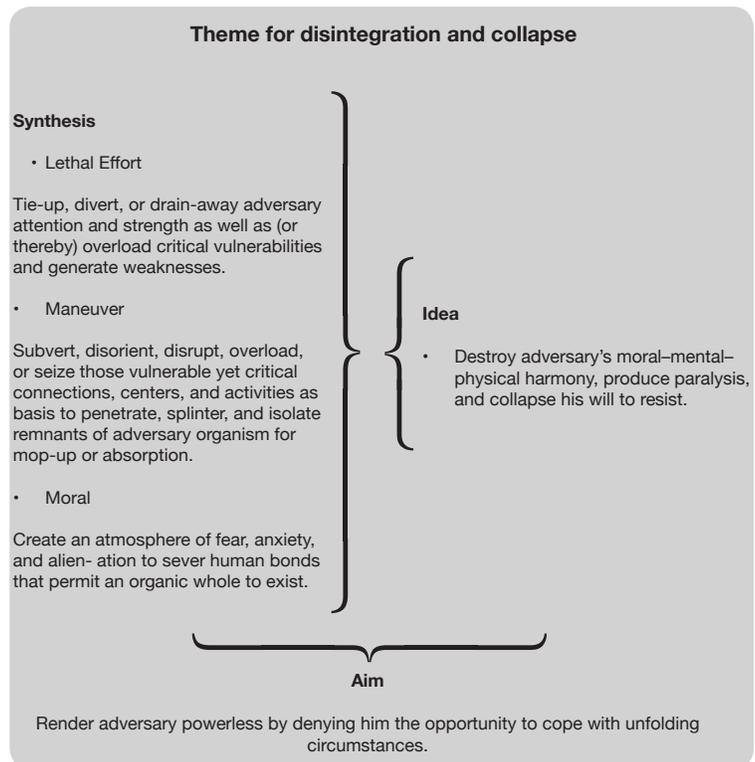


Figure 5.9 Theme for disintegration and collapse

elements of adversary or adversaries from one another and overwhelm them by being able to penetrate and splinter their moral-mental-physical being at any and all levels.

From this perspective the nexus of military strategy and grand strategy comes into view, which involves other sources of power, national public support, ideology, etc. Or, put in the question Boyd asks his audience: 'How do we connect the tactical and strategic notions or the theme for disintegration and collapse with the national goal?' Again he provides the answer: 'via a sensible *grand strategy* that will':

- Support national goal.
- Pump-up our resolve, drain away adversary resolve, and attract the uncommitted.
- End conflict on favorable terms.
- Ensure that conflict and peace terms do not provide seeds for (unfavorable) future conflict.

In his view, grand strategy first and foremost must be an appealing idea, or set of objectives and interests, which inspires and unites the populace as well as allies and the uncommitted. Grand strategy is directly related to, and should be a function of, the prime national goal, which Boyd earlier regarded as a Darwinian drive to improve the fitness of the nation to survive in the dynamic environment. The *essence of grand strategy* is to:

- Shape pursuit of national goal so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength (while undermining and isolating our adversaries) but also influence the

uncommitted or potential adversaries so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success.

Grand strategy should therefore be designed on the basis of:

- An appreciation for the underlying self-interests, critical differences of opinion, internal contradictions, frictions, obsessions, etc., that we as well as the uncommitted and any potential or real adversaries must contend with.

#### STRATEGY AS A MODE OF BEHAVIOR

Boyd then presents the combined set of prescriptions concerning the modes of behavior that favor success and survival on the various levels in a hierarchical order.

##### *National goal*

Improve fitness, as an organic whole, to shape and cope with an everchanging environment.

##### *Grand Strategy*

Shape pursuit of national goal so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength (while undermining and isolating our adversaries) but also influence the uncommitted or potential adversaries so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success.

##### *Strategic aim*

Diminish adversary's capacity while improving our capacity to adapt as an organic whole, so that our adversary cannot cope while we can cope with events/efforts as they unfold.

### Strategy

Penetrate moral-mental-physical being to dissolve his moral fiber, disorient his mental images, disrupt his operations, and overload his system, as well as subvert, shatter, seize or otherwise subdue those moral-mental-physical bastions, connections, or activities that he depends upon, in order to destroy internal harmony, produce paralysis, and collapse adversary's will to resist.

### GRAND TACTICS

- Operate inside adversary's OODA-loops, or get inside his mind-time-space, to create a tangle of threatening and/or non-threatening events/efforts as well as repeatedly generate mismatches between those events/efforts adversary observes, or anticipates, and those he must react to, to survive;

### Thereby

- Enmesh adversary in an amorphous, menacing, and unpredictable world of uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic, chaos, . . . and/ or fold adversary back inside himself;

### Thereby

- Maneuver adversary beyond his moral-mental-physical capacity to adapt or endure so that he can neither divine our intentions nor focus his efforts to cope with the unfolding strategic design or related decisive strokes as they penetrate, splinter, isolate or envelop, and overwhelm him.

### TACTICS

- 'OODA' more inconspicuously, more quickly and with more irregularity as basis to keep or gain initiative as well as shape or shift main effort; to repeatedly and unexpectedly penetrate vulnerabilities and weaknesses exposed by that effort or other effort(s) that tie up, divert, or drain-away adversary attention (and strength) elsewhere.

Boyd explains how the national goal and grand strategy, which tend to be *constructive* in nature, are directly related and in harmony with strategic aim, strategy, grand tactics and tactics, despite the fact that these four are *destructive* in nature. It is an important section, for it provides insight into his view of the main aim of warfare, and his close association with Sun Tzu, Fuller and Liddell Hart.

Following naturally from his discussion of the flaws of attrition warfare and his praise for the alternatives of moral and maneuver conflict, Boyd explains that:

. . . application of these latter four strategic and tactical notions permit real leadership to avoid high attrition, avoid widespread destruction, and gain a quick victory. This, combined with shattered cohesion, paralysis, and rapid collapse demonstrated by the existing adversary regime, makes it appear corrupt, incompetent, and unfit to govern. Under these circumstances, leaders and statesmen offering generous terms can form the basis for a viable peace. In this sense, the first two and the latter four notions can be in

harmony with one another.

### *Theme for vitality and growth*

Boyd is still not satisfied because the destructive element is not sufficiently balanced by an awareness of the importance of a constructive element for national survival, asserting that

up to this point – by repeatedly adding, stripping-away, and recombining many different, yet similar, ideas and thoughts – we have examined the nature of conflict, survival, and conquest in many different ways. A review and further manipulation of the ideas and thoughts that make-up these different ways suggest that, for success over the long whole

and under the most difficult conditions, one needs some unifying vision that can be used to attract the uncommitted as well as pump-up friendly resolve and drive and drain-away or subvert adversary resolve and drive.

In other words, what is needed is a vision rooted in human nature so noble, so attractive that it not only attracts the uncommitted and magnifies the spirit and strength of its adherents, but also undermines the dedication and determination of any competitors or adversaries. Moreover, such a unifying notion should be so compelling that it acts as a catalyst or beacon around which to evolve those qualities that permit a collective entity or organic whole to improve its stature in the scheme of things. Put another way, we are suggesting a need for a supra-orientation or center-of-gravity that permits leaders, and other authorities, to inspire their followers and members to enthusiastically take action toward confronting and conquering all obstacles that stand in the way.

Enclosed in this section Boyd again, but now from yet another angle and now at the societal level, uncovers elements that foster initiative and harmony, two among four vital elements for survival he has already introduced on page 12 of the presentation. The themes he regards as vital for success are conceptually quite similar. For instance, Boyd sees a

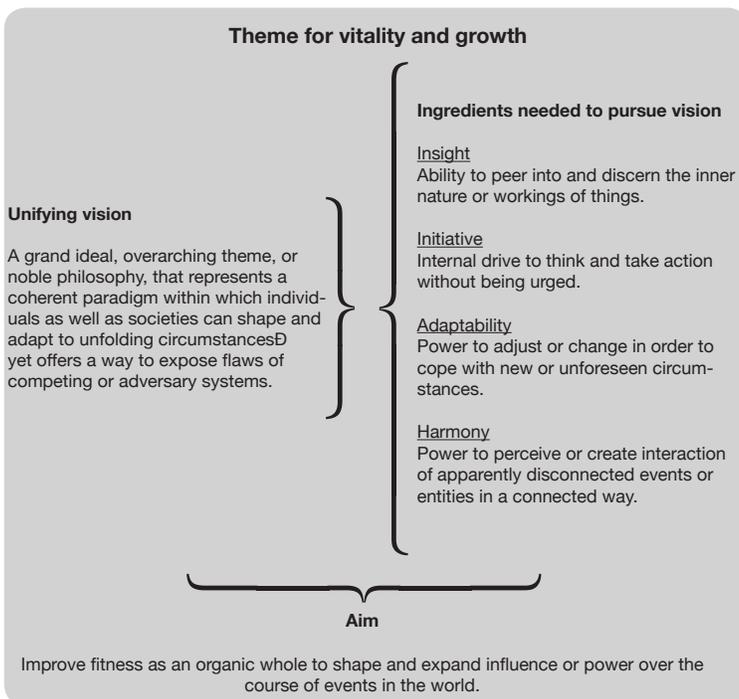


Figure 5.10 Theme for vitality and growth

unifying vision as yet another way to achieve implicit control. Indeed, Boyd comes full circle in his formulation of the 'theme for vitality and growth' (Figure 5.10).

### *Application*

#### REVISITING SUN TZU, REINFORCING KEY THEMES

In this section Boyd takes his audience on a tour through the early German military campaigns in Poland, the Low Countries and France and Russia. In that respect, this section resembles the previously discussed section titled 'Historical Snap-Shots'. The importance of this section, however, lies not so much in the historical analysis and illustrations. Instead, what makes this section relevant is the way he shows how military success is the result of a dialectic process of adaptation and counter-adaptation, of shaping and being shaped. He uses the Blitz-counter-Blitz dynamic to illustrate this. This seems merely an expansion of his earlier sections. However, now he ties the dynamics even more than before to the cognitive element of war. He returns to Sun Tzu to explain and re-emphasize this key argument to which he has already frequently alluded.

On the one hand, the discussion is thus a repetition of his earlier remarks on counter-Blitz but now with the following central theme: what matters at all levels of command is the cognitive impact of feints, maneuvers, attacks, retreats, threats, fire-engagements, etc. Collectively they constitute information, and this information, could reveal a pattern, and recognizing a pattern can lead the opponent to make predictions about the next steps. Consequently, the name of the game becomes one

of consciously shaping the opponent's perception of the pattern of operations unfolding before him, while hiding the real picture.

Again Boyd stresses the connection between physical events and cognitive impact, and now he takes this to the logical conclusion that cognitive impact needs to be a core rationale for designing tactics, grand tactics and strategy.

Foreknowledge and judgment play central roles here. The influence of Sun Tzu is explicit not only because he includes Sun Tzu in the titles of slides 146–56, but also because he borrows heavily from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, with ideas such as *cheng/chi*, *the vacuous and substantial*, the idea of *formlessness and being unfathomable* echoing through.

The aim of Blitz and counter-Blitz, according to Boyd, is to 'blind side' the adversary regardless of the circumstances. The 'human penchant for generating mental patterns' immediately suggests that it is important to shape the adversary's impression. Translated to the defense against a Blitz, shaping the opponent's impression is accomplished by arranging the elements of defense, as the basis to guide adversaries to form or project patterns on the environment they are facing. In other words, one should emphasize certain features so that the adversary's intelligence, reconnaissance, patrols, and other observation activity generate mental pictures of what we seem to be doing. In this sense, we cause the adversary to project a rhythm as well as a sense of or gestalt upon the environment. Naturally, Boyd tells his audience, this raises the question: How do we want our posture to appear to an adversary, i.e., what kind of mental picture do we want to generate in his mind?

Designing one's defense on this basis is obviously quite a departure from the regular determinants of tactics and grand tactics, which were generally related to terrain and enemy position and strength.

After literally repeating the ‘things to do’ for the counter-Blitz of slide 105, Boyd reveals that at the strategic level the game of counter-Blitz is to:

- Shift from such an ambiguous or misleading posture into a gauntlet defense with alternative channels, sectors, or zones by thinning-out some sectors or zones in order to strengthen others.

The basic notion is to think in terms of channels, avenues and gauntlets (instead of just belts, bands and fronts) so that ambush gauntlets will naturally evolve or be set up to deal with forward as well as lateral (roll-out) thrusts of the adversary. In this way, ambush gauntlets can then be set up at any level from platoon to theater.

At the tactical level one should use obstacles, delaying actions, hit-and-run attacks (note the inclusion of guerrilla tactics) and/or baited retreats in thinned-out sectors/zones together with ‘shaping’ and ‘disruption’ activities to disorient the adversary as well as to pile-up or stretch-out his maneuver. These actions should be accompanied with fire and movement (coming from one’s own strengthened adjacent sectors/zones) into the flanks and/or rear of the adversary. This will slow the opponent’s momentum and ‘blow adversary away’, or alternatively, channel the momentum. The thrust can then either be decapitated, or, in case of stretch-out, the cohesion of the thrust can be broken.

The cognitive effects of these actions are what matter, and these cognitive effects will lead to an enemy response which is to some extent predictable, thus shaping the enemy’s actions. As Boyd explains:

- Think of obstacles, delay, hit-and-run, and baited retreats together with shaping and disruption activities as Cheng or Nebenpunkte to create gaps, exposed flanks, and vulnerable rears by the pile-up/congestion or stretch-out of adversary maneuver.
- Think of Ch’i or Schwerpunkt maneuver (fire and movement) hitting unexpectedly thru gaps into adversary flank/rear, or blind-side, as a decisive stroke to pull enemy apart and roll-up his isolated remnants.

A similar message lies in other related air and ground reconnaissance and offensive actions. They serve to harass and delay the enemy, to disorient him while at the same time providing information to one’s own senior commanders to help them decide which sectors to thin out and which to strengthen. Multiple counterstrokes, the interplay of Nebenpunkte and Schwerpunkte, disrupt the enemy offensive, force him to allow gaps and to stretch out his forces. Rapid shifts of forces can then reinforce a successful minor counter-attack into a ‘super-Schwerpunkt’. Such maneuvers are effective not only because of the delay in the advance they cause but also by forcing the opponent to become ‘preoccupied in overcoming the challenge posed by the Super Nebenpunkte’. Such counter-Blitz actions keep the pressure on the enemy, who now is continually forced to adapt to many abrupt and irregular changes.

The general underlying idea of counter-Blitz, according to Boyd, is thus to:

Pull adversary apart and bring about his collapse by causing him to generate or project mental

images that agree neither with the faster tempo/rhythm nor with the hidden form of the transient maneuver patterns he must compete against.

After a seventeen-page discussion of the German Blitz campaigns, and the successful Russian counter-Blitz, which serves to illustrate this underlying idea, Boyd arrives at the section of *Patterns of Conflict*, in which he ties the various key insights together in five pages and produces a conclusion of his view on the art of success.

### *Wrap Up, or coming full circle*

#### THE MEANING OF 'GETTING INSIDE THE OODA LOOP'

The wrap-up is a highly conceptual synthesis and reformulation of all of his previous arguments, ideas and themes. It includes direct reference to his earliest intuitive remarks as well as his last argument concerning the importance of shaping the opponent's perception. Here he abandons the division into tactical, grand tactical and strategic levels but combines them. He does not refer to attrition, maneuver or moral conflict anywhere, but merges the essence of the latter two. He attempts to strip away and recombine even further than before, to arrive at the most concise formula for explaining success and failure in conflict. In a sense the wrap-up is his way of proving he has validated the assertions he made in the first section of *Patterns of Conflict*. On slide 12 he had asserted that 'variety, rapidity, harmony and initiative seem to be the key qualities that permit one to shape and adapt to an

ever-changing environment'. In the 'Wrap Up' he focuses on these four elements in particular to arrive at the most concise conceptualization of 'The Art of Success'. According to Boyd, the message thus far is that:

- He who is willing and able to take the initiative to exploit variety, rapidity, and harmony – as basis to create as well as adapt to the more indistinct – more irregular – quicker changes of rhythm and pattern, yet shape focus and direction of effort – survives and dominates.  
or contrariwise
- He who is unwilling or unable to take the initiative to exploit variety, rapidity, and harmony . . . goes under or survives to be dominated.

The Game is to:

- Create tangles of threatening and/or non-threatening events/efforts as well as repeatedly generate mismatches between those events/efforts adversary observes or imagines (Cheng/Nebenpunkte) and those he must react to (Ch'i/Schwerpunkt)

as basis to

- Penetrate adversary organism to sever his moral bonds, disorient his mental images, disrupt his operations, and overload his system, as well as subvert, shatter, seize or otherwise subdue those moral-mental-physical bastions, connections, or activities that he depends upon

thereby

- Pull adversary apart, produce paralysis, and collapse his will to resist.

The way to accomplish this, the how to, in most abstract terms is to:

- Get inside adversary observation-orientation-decision-action loops (at all levels) by being more subtle, more indistinct, more irregular, and quicker – yet appear to be otherwise.

Boyd then adds a short but new discussion on the implications of these observations, in particular how they relate to variety, rapidity, harmony and initiative. In this discussion he inserts Sun Tzu's idea of fluidity, an important theme from his essay Destruction and Creation, the element of organizational complexity as well as the discussion above on pattern recognition. Boyd asserts that:

- In a tactical sense, these multidimensional interactions suggest a spontaneous, synthetic/creative, and flowing action/counteraction operation, rather than a step-by-step, analytical/logical, and discrete move/countermove game.
  - in accepting this idea we must admit that increased unit complexity (with magnified mental and physical task loadings) does not enhance the spontaneous synthetic/creative operation. Rather, it constrains the opportunity for these timely actions/counteractions, or put in another way
  - Complexity (technical, organizational, operational, etc.) causes commanders and subordinates alike to be captured by their own internal dynamics or

interactions – hence they cannot adapt to rapidly changing external (or even internal) circumstances.

- In a strategic sense, these interactions suggest we need a variety of possibilities as well as the rapidity to implement and shift among them. Why?
  - Ability to simultaneously and sequentially generate many different possibilities as well as rapidly implement and shift among them permits one to repeatedly generate mismatches between events/efforts adversary observes or imagines and those he must respond to (to survive).
  - Without a variety of possibilities adversary is given the opportunity to read as well as adapt to events and efforts as they unfold.

Recombining these, in particular the comment on organizational complexity, and other comments and insights (including the Clausewitzian concept of friction) related to the four elements of variety/rapidity/harmony/initiative, Boyd shows what and how they contribute to victory by connecting them to the ability to adapt. He asserts that 'Variety and rapidity allow one to magnify the adversary's friction, hence to stretch-out his time to respond. Harmony and initiative stand and work on the opposite side by diminishing one's own friction, hence compressing one's own time to exploit variety/rapidity in a directed way'. Altogether variety/rapidity/harmony/initiative enable one to:

Operate inside adversary's observation-orientation-decision-action loops to enmesh adversary

in a world of uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic, chaos,... and/or fold adversary back inside himself so that he cannot cope with events/efforts as they unfold.

Simultaneously, so Boyd continues, 'by repeatedly rolling-thru OODA loops while appealing to and making use of the ideas embodied in 'Grand Strategy' and 'Theme for Vitality and Growth', we can evolve and exploit variety/ rapidity/harmony/ initiative as a basis to:

Shape or influence events so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength (while isolating our adversaries and undermining their resolve and drive) but also influence the uncommitted or potential adversaries so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success.

## THE ART OF SUCCESS

Finally, Boyd arrives at his 'nutshell' formulation of what constitutes 'The Art of Success'. The two sentences that convey this view do not make a convincing assertion when read in isolation. Indeed, they may sound simplistic. However, when read in the context of the discourse he has had so far with his audience, the various exercises in abstraction, in stripping away and recombining, this final effort at getting to the essence of things contains a world of meaning, theories, theorists, schools of thought and concepts. Every word has been discussed before and has become a signifier of a train

of thought. And in these few words Boyd both concludes and captures a discussion that spans 2,500 years of military history and strategic theory. In a few conceptually rich but very abstract words, he manages to combine in a logically connected way the 'things to do' at the tactical, grand tactical, the strategic and grand strategic levels, themes from moral and maneuver conflict and the themes for vitality and growth and for disintegration and collapse. Boyd's advice for success is to:

- Appear to be an unsolvable cryptogram while operating in a directed way to penetrate adversary vulnerabilities and weaknesses in order to isolate him from his allies, pull him apart, and collapse his will to resist;

yet

- Shape or influence events so that we not only magnify our spirit and strength but also influence potential adversaries as well as the uncommitted so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success.

The first sentence is an advice to remain, in the words of Sun Tzu, unfathomable to the enemy, yet operate coherently in several levels of war and across different dimensions. While this part includes physical actions, the second sentence exclusively refers to the moral, ideological and political aspects of strategy.

In the Epilogue Boyd compares his arguments with the familiar principles of war. These principles suggest certainty and seem like a checklist for success. This makes them popular. To cater for those who favor a concise list of 'to do's', Boyd offers a list that captures in a sufficient way his thoughts, yet cannot be construed as 'principles'.

They span the physical, temporal and the cognitive dimensions. They deal with adaptability and include the view of the enemy as an adaptive organism. Instead of principles, Boyd refers to them as:

#### Appropriate Bits and Pieces

- Compress own time and stretch-out adversary time.
- Generate unequal distributions as basis to focus moral-mental-physical efforts for local superiority and decisive leverage.
- Diminish own friction (or entropy) and magnify adversary friction (or entropy).
- Operate inside adversary's observation-orientation-decision-action loops or get inside his mind-time-space.
- Penetrate adversary organisms and bring about his collapse.
- Amplify our spirit and strength, drain-away adversaries' and attract the uncommitted.

The 'Central Theme', Boyd concludes his massive search for the Patterns of Conflict, lies in these final words:

Evolve and exploit insight/initiative/adaptability/harmony together with a unifying vision, via a grand ideal or an overarching theme or a noble philosophy, as basis to:

- Shape or influence events so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength but also influence the

uncommitted or potential adversaries so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success,

Yet be able to

- Operate inside adversary's observation-orientation-decision-action loops or get inside his mind-time-space as basis to:
- Penetrate adversary's moral-mental-physical being in order to isolate him from his allies, pull him apart, and collapse his will to resist.

#### *Concluding words*

In *Patterns of Conflict* Boyd has thus offered his audience a new look at military history. With the conceptual lenses science offered him, with uncertainty as the key problem organisms and organizations have to surmount, he sheds new light on the dynamics of war. He has introduced familiar and some new case studies and theories. In particular, in the second half of the presentation Boyd makes a shift in level of abstraction. Applying the process of destruction and creation to his investigation, he uncovers underlying dynamics of each category of warfare and expresses these in an increasingly abstract and conceptual way. It implicitly manifests an increasing application of systems-theoretical perspectives. Expressed within the context of adaptation, he shows conceptual similarities between very distinct modes of warfare. Gradually he unfolds a novel conceptualization of tactics, grand tactics, strategy and grand strategy that revolves around the process of adaptation in

which open, complex adaptive systems are constantly engaged in. The following presentations expand upon the arguments presented here.

## Study Guide: **Patterns, Speed, Decisions**

### *Key Concepts & Terms*

- John Boyd is most famous for developing the concept of the **OODA loop**, or decision cycle. This is the process by which an entity reacts to an event—a person, or an organization, or a group. Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. For Boyd, the most decisive element in any conflict is moving through the OODA loop faster than your adversary—being able to react to changing circumstances appropriately and anticipate what might happen next, while keeping your enemy disoriented and off-balance. Getting inside your adversaries OODA loop collapses their mental and moral ability to act and respond.
- Boyd has a somewhat Hobbesian view of **human nature**, but it can also be read through a Spinozan lens. He says that humans want to, in this order: Survive, survive on own terms, improve capacity for independent action (see Spinoza, increase our power to act). And, with regards to enemies: Diminish adversary’s capacity for independent action, or deny him the opportunity to survive on his own terms, or to survive at all. It’s easy to map this onto the Spinozan framework of increasing our power to act in the world, and decreasing our adversaries ability to act.
- “To shape and adapt to change one must take the initiative.” Boyd emphasizes **variety, rapidity, harmony, and initiative**.
- Boyd argues that warfare takes place on three levels: **moral, mental, and physical**.
  - **Moral**: “the destruction of the enemy’s will to win, disruption of alliances (or potential allies) and induction of internal fragmentation. Ideally resulting in the “dissolution of the moral bonds that permit an organic whole [organization] to exist.” (i.e., breaking down mutual trust and any common outlook).
  - **Mental**: “the distortion of the enemy’s perception of reality through disinformation, ambiguous posturing, and/or severing of the communication/information infrastructure.”
  - **Physical**: the abilities of physical resources such as weapons, people, and logistical assets.
- Warfare takes place in two modes: first, a **negative** mode of trying to **undermine the networks** and support structures of each category (moral, mental, and physical), and second, a **positive** mode of trying to **build up one’s own networks** and support structures and make them resilient and powerful.
- In the context of **moral conflict**, he provides a few examples: Negative (Menace, Uncertainty, Mistrust), Counterweights: (Initiative, Adaptability, Harmony).
- **Guerrilla** and **insurrectionary** warfare tend to inhabit the moral mode most of

## Drawing Connections

all—simultaneously delegitimizing a government or occupying force while gaining the sympathy of the people.

- The general framework remains the same for all three modes (moral, mental and physical): The goal is to “**Diminish adversary’s freedom-of-action while improving our freedom-of-action**, so that our adversary cannot cope—while we can cope—with events/efforts as they unfold.”
- **Grand tactics:** Operate inside your adversary’s OODA loops, or get inside his mind-time-space...thereby enmesh adversary in an amorphous, menacing, and unpredictable world of uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, confusion, disorder, fear, panic, chaos
  - Compress own time and stretch-out adversary time.
  - Generate unequal distributions as basis to focus moral-mental-physical effort for local superiority and decisive leverage.
  - Diminish own friction (or entropy) and magnify adversary friction (or entropy).
  - Operate inside adversary’s observation—orientation—decision—action loops or get inside his mind—time—space.
  - Penetrate adversary organism and bring about his collapse.
  - Amplify our spirit and strength, drain-away adversaries’ and attract the uncommitted.

The OODA loop relates to *The Master’s Tools*: “We must outpace the police’s capacity to police. When their resources are spent, they have to just react to what is in front of them. We should continually stretch them thin and amplify the crisis of policing”.

For Boyd, the most important element of the OODA loop was Orientation—or the images, views, or impressions of the world shaped by genetic heritage, cultural tradition, previous experiences, and unfolding circumstances. Boyd recognizing that Orientation is not simply a matter of rational thought and decision, but the sum of all last experiences—we might relate this to a Spinozan conception of a body whose affections have more to do with itself than the body affecting it. Boyd says: Orientation is the Schwerpunkt (or focal point). It shapes the way we interact with the environment—hence orientation shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act. In this sense Orientation shapes the character of present observation, orientation, decision, action loops—while these present loops shape the character of future orientation.

And then he asks: how do we affect our orientation? Spinoza might ask: how do we develop adequate ideas, or common notions, about ourselves and about situations so that we might respond implicitly in more effective ways? Boyd’s solution is to: “Expose individuals, with different skills and abilities, against a variety of situations—whereby each individual can observe and orient himself simultaneously to the others and to the variety of changing situations.” He is focused more in implicit bonds and connections than on explicit organizational structures. He argues that explicit organizational structures, flow charts of actions, or

static maneuvers tend to increase friction, produce paralysis, and then system collapse. Boyd suggests that we should “Suppress tendency to build-up explicit internal arrangements that hinder interaction with external world.” Instead, we should create situations where people are given opportunities to interact with the outside world and with each other, in order to ultimately create similar orientations and shared understandings.

In our terms, this might mean spending more time together exposing ourselves to different situations and developing skills, trust, and instinctual responses, rather than charting out specific, rigid tactics. Boyd was opposed to centralization and hierarchical decision making on tactical matters, and encouraged defining a common goal and then allowing individuals and small groups to pursue that goal in flexible and creative ways.

### *Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion*

- Police project force through organization; by breaking their organization they lose ability to project force.
- We need to have micro level goals even if they are fairly vague.
- We should act as a body with common notions.
- See Al Qaeda: every person has agency, constantly interacting with chaotic situations, but with some shared ideology or goal.
- See Marxist insurgency: propagandize

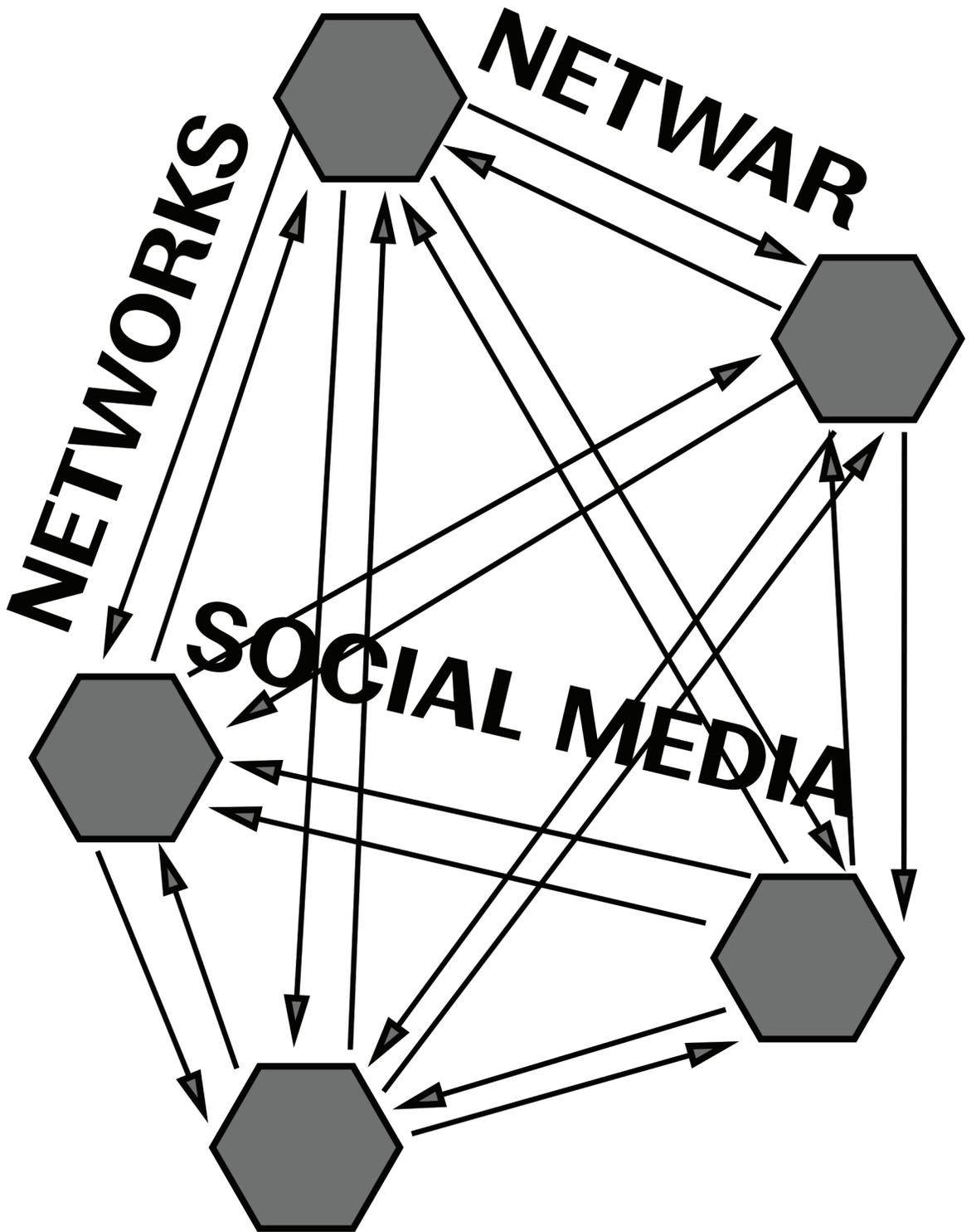
different communities, solve contradictions to fight for the overthrow of capitalism. Infrastructure allows us to fight for longer. Offering a platform & resources to people generates support.

- See guerilla base-building and the strategy of envelopment. This reminds us of Go and Mao: how to surround and digest cities, adversaries, etc, winning the battle before having a frontal confrontation.
- See Che & Mao: providing land to peasants meant offering something physical to make life better in some way.
- Modern guerilla campaigns connect with peoples’ grievances and mistrust of government. This is a dual motion of disrupting and delegitimizing state power while making examples of a better life. It could be successful to create connections based on that.
- See the Kurdish example: the ability to be fluid and play both sides (Assad’s non-engagement, US resources etc.) The YPG & YPJ are doing all the things in the book: Commune building, rich culture of involvement, they are successful because they operate at high speeds (they don’t even wear helmets because helmets slow them down), they use a network model (commanders & soldiers can make autonomous decisions), they have an overarching strategy but otherwise act in decentralized manner.
- We are concerned with the separation of a guerilla “militant vanguard” from “people”.

Are guerrillas not regular people who are moved to revolt? (Mao: “revolutionaries must swim in the sea of the people.”) We see the vanguardist structure as coaxing people into doing things. Whatever militant subject that exists should become indistinguishable from people and distinct from government: “become the terrain.”

- Police shatter a crowd and then envelop them. Flash bangs precede a kettle, arrest, or charge. We can use the same tactics: create chaos, confusion, and intentional disorientation. We have the example of the 1999 Seattle WTO protests: Police organization was totally overwhelmed and led to breakdown of their force projection. Every now and then we do disorient the police but we rarely orient our strategies/tactics towards sowing chaos and disorganization in police forces.
- We see how the media always tries to use information to create harmony with government and to stabilize situations. This is a body that also needs to be broken up and enveloped and digested. How can we spread disorganization and confusion in information?
- How do you track the success of reducing your enemies capacity? Probing an enemy to see how they respond, for example, flyering a neighborhood and observing the reaction.
- How can we get better quality and more information? How to be creative and not always use the same tactics?

- What are the social spheres our enemies rely on? Can they be targeted?
- How can we imagine long term goals or a long war?



**THE ADVENT OF NETWAR**

ARQUILLA & RONFELDT

**WEAPONIZED SOCIAL NETWORKS**

JOHN ROBB

## Reading Arquilla & Ronfeldt on **The Advent of Netwar**, and John Robb on **Weaponized Social Networks**

THE ADVENT OF NETWAR WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED in 1996, and then re-released with updated content in 2001. In many ways it is extremely dated; in other ways, though, it demonstrates the way that government and private think tanks think about “us” broadly. Much of what Arquilla and Ronfeldt anticipated in 2001 has come to pass, while other predictions have been off base. Nonetheless, it is useful to read what our enemies have to say about us—especially since they focus so heavily on Zapatistas, the alter-globalization movement, and de-centralized resistance strategies.

John Robb’s piece on “Weaponized Social Networks” is much more contemporary, and contains interesting reflections on how Left and Right forces attempt to deploy social networks differently—and how the platforms themselves manipulate and use antagonism from both sides for their own ends. He uses many of John Boyd’s concepts in his analysis of social media conflict and strategy, in ways that feel useful and illustrative.

Both of these texts are quite short. In addition to reading and discussing them, we conducted an exercise attempting to identify and analyze and adversary in a particular conflict using the tools we have gained so far. This felt like a useful and productive way to turn abstract ideas into concrete tools, and to more fully understand the texts and the intuitions underneath them.

# THE ADVENT OF NETWAR (REVISITED)<sup>1</sup>

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt

<sup>1</sup>Our netwar concept predates, and should not be confused with, the U.S. military's network warfare simulation (NETWARS) system.

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION IS ALTERING THE nature of conflict across the spectrum. We call attention to two developments in particular. First, this revolution is favoring and strengthening network forms of organization, often giving them an advantage over hierarchical forms. The rise of networks means that power is migrating to non-state actors, because they are able to organize into sprawling multiorganizational networks (especially “all-channel” networks, in which every node is connected to every other node) more readily than can traditional, hierarchical, state actors. This means that conflicts may increasingly be waged by “networks,” perhaps more than by “hierarchies.” It also means that whoever masters the network form stands to gain the advantage.

Second, as the information revolution deepens, the conduct and outcome of conflicts increasingly depend on information and communications. More than ever before, conflicts revolve around “knowledge” and the use of “soft power.”<sup>2</sup> Adversaries are learning to emphasize “information operations” and “perception management”—that is, media-oriented measures that aim to attract or disorient rather than coerce, and that affect how secure a society, a military, or other actor feels about its knowledge of itself and of its adversaries. Psychological disruption may become as important a goal as physical destruction.

These propositions cut across the entire conflict spectrum. Major transformations are thus

coming in the nature of adversaries, in the type of threats they may pose, and in how conflicts can be waged. Information-age threats are likely to be more diffuse, dispersed, multidimensional nonlinear, and ambiguous than industrial-age threats. Metaphorically, then, future conflicts may resemble the Oriental game of *Go* more than the Western game of chess. The conflict spectrum will be remolded from end to end by these dynamics.

## *A Concept and Its Brief History*

Back in 1992, while first wondering about such propositions and writing about *cyberwar* as a looming mode of military conflict, we thought it would be a good idea to have a parallel concept about information-age conflict at the less military, low-intensity, more social end of the spectrum. The term we coined was *netwar*, largely because it resonated with the surety that the information revolution favored the rise of network forms of organization, doctrine, and strategy. Through netwar, numerous dispersed small groups using the latest communications technologies could act conjointly across great distances. We had in mind actors as diverse as transnational terrorists, criminals, and even radical activists. Some were already moving from hierarchical to new information-age network designs.

We fielded the netwar concept in our first journal article, “Cyberwar Is Coming” (1993), then provided a full exposition in our RAND report, *The Advent of Netwar* (1996). Additional insights were advanced in the concluding chapter of our book, *In Athena's Camp* (1997). Elaborations appeared in multi-authored RAND volumes on *The Zapatista “Social Netwar” in Mexico* (Ronfeldt et al., 1998) and *Countering the New Terrorism* (Lesser et

<sup>2</sup>The concept of soft power was introduced by Nye (1990), and further elaborated in Nye and Owens (1996).

al., 1999). Our study *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward an American Information Strategy* (1999) observed that many socially minded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were already using netwar strategies to enhance their soft power. Our recent study *Swarming and the Future of Conflict* (2000) is mainly about developing a new military doctrine for wielding “hard” power, but it generally advances our view that swarming is likely to become the dominant approach to conflict across the spectrum, including among netwar actors. While the Zapatista study provided early evidence for this, short opinion pieces on the military war in Kosovo (1999) and the activist “Battle for Seattle”(1999) identified new cases.<sup>3</sup>

As these writings have spread, the netwar concept has struck a chord with a growing number of theorists, futurists, journalists, and practitioners. In forward-looking books, scholars as diverse as Manuel Castells (1997), Chris Hables Gray (1997), and David Brin (1998) have used the concept for discussing trends at the mostly nonmilitary end of the conflict spectrum. For several years, a web site maintained by Jason Wehling carried a wide range of articles about netwar, social activism, and information-age conflict, leading off with a paper he had written about the netwar concept (1995). Meanwhile, interesting flurries of discussion about netwar arose on email lists related to the Zapatista movement in Mexico following the armed uprising in January 1994. Harry Cleaver’s writings (e.g., 1995, 1998, 1999) are particularly illuminating. They show that Mexico became a laboratory for the emergence of a new, non-Leninist model of radicalism. The Zapatista leader, Subcomandante Marcos, even averred in 1999 that netwar described the Zapatista movement, and that *counternetwar* instructed the strategy of its military and paramilitary opponents. For its

part, the high command of the Mexican military also espoused admiration for the concept during 2000.<sup>4</sup> Also in 2000, a leader of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Jody Williams, remarked in a radio interview that she had heard that RAND researchers were developing the netwar concept to help governments control movements like the ICBL. Elsewhere, the concept cropped up in marginal rants and ruminations by militants associated with various left-wing, right-wing, and eclectic religious movements who posted on Usenet discussion groups.

Meanwhile, officials and analysts in U.S. and European government, military, and police circles began showing an interest in the concept. They were finding it difficult to deal with terrorists, criminals, and fanatics associated with militias and extremist single-issue movements, largely because these antagonists were organizing into sprawling, loose, “leaderless” networks, overcoming their former isolated postures as stand-alone groups headed by “great men.” U.S. and European officials realized that these troublesome trends put a premium on interagency communication and coordination, for everything from intelligence sharing to tactical operations. But this implied a degree of cross-jurisdictional and international networking, especially for intelligence sharing, that is difficult for state hierarchies to accomplish. The concepts of netwar and counternetwar attracted some interest because they had a potential for motivating officials to build their own networks, as well as hybrids of hierarchies and networks, to deal with the networked organizations, doctrines, and strategies of their information-age adversaries. A special issue of the journal *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* on “Netwar Across the Spectrum of Conflict” (1999) may have helped heighten awareness of this.<sup>5</sup>

Our formulation of the netwar concept has

<sup>3</sup>John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “Need for Networked, High-Tech Cyberwar,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1999, pp. A1, A6; John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “A Win for Netwar in Seattle,” December 1999, posted on the web site for the Highlands Forum.

<sup>4</sup> Both the Zapatista and the Mexican army leadership had read the RAND report analyzing the Zapatista movement as a case of social netwar (Ronfeldt et al., 1998).

<sup>5</sup>This special issue was partly assembled and edited by David Ronfeldt. Some text in this section comes from his introduction to that issue.

<sup>6</sup>For an interesting paper by a leading proponent of hacktivism, see Wray (1998).

<sup>7</sup> See speech by Jody Williams accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, [www.wagingpeace.org/articles/nobel\\_lecture\\_97\\_williams.html](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/nobel_lecture_97_williams.html); and the speech she gave at a gathering of recipients at the University of Virginia in 1998, [www.virginia.edu/nobel/transcript/jwilliams.html](http://www.virginia.edu/nobel/transcript/jwilliams.html), as well as Williams and Goose (1998).

<sup>8</sup> This section reiterates but also updates our earlier formulations about the nature of netwar (notably those in Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1996; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; and Arquilla, Ronfeldt, and Zanini, 1999). Readers who are already familiar with this work may prefer to skip this section.

<sup>9</sup> This is just a short exemplary statement. Many other examples could be noted. Instead of Hamas, for example, we might mention the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Human Rights (CDLHR), an anti-Saudi organization based in London.

always emphasized the organizational dimension. But we have also pointed out that an organizational network works best when it has the right doctrinal, technological, and social dynamics. In our joint work, we have repeatedly insisted on this. However, writers enamored of the flashy, high-tech aspects of the information revolution have often depicted netwar (and cyberwar) as a term for computerized aggression waged via stand-off attacks in cyberspace—that is, as a trendy synonym for infowar, information operations, “strategic information warfare,” Internet war, “hacktivism,” cyberterrorism, cybotage, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in some quarters, the Serb hacks of NATO’s web site in 1999 were viewed as netwar (or cyberwar). Yet, little was known about the perpetrators and the nature of their organization; if they amounted to just a few, clever, government-sponsored individuals operating from a site or two, then the netwar dimensions of this case were minimal, and it was just a clever instance of minor cybotage. This case also speaks to another distortion: These Serbs (presumably they were Serbs) aimed to bring a piece of “the Net” down. Yet, in a full-fledged ethnonationalist, terrorist, criminal, or social netwar, the protagonists may be far more interested in keeping the Net up. They may benefit from using the Internet and other advanced communications services (e.g., fax machines and cellular telephones) for purposes that range from coordinating with each other and seeking recruits, to projecting their identity, broadcasting their messages to target audiences, and gathering intelligence about their opponents.

With respect to Serbia, then, a better case of netwar as we define it was the effort by Serbia’s reformist Radio B-92, along with a supportive network of U.S. and European government agencies and NGOs, to broadcast its reportage back into

Serbia over the Internet, after B-92’s transmitters were shut down by the Milosevic regime in 1998 and again in 1999. For a seminal case of a worldwide netwar, one need look no further than the ICBL. This unusually successful movement consists of a loosely internettted array of NGOs and governments, which rely heavily on the Internet for communications. Through the personage of one of its many leaders, Jody Williams, this netwar won a well-deserved Nobel peace prize.<sup>7</sup>

### *Defining Netwar*<sup>8</sup>

To be precise, the term netwar refers to an emerging mode of conflict (and crime) at societal levels, short of traditional military warfare, in which the protagonists use network forms of organization and related doctrines, strategies, and technologies attuned to the information age. These protagonists are likely to consist of dispersed organizations, small groups, and individuals who communicate, coordinate, and conduct their campaigns in an internettted manner, often without a precise central command. Thus, netwar differs from modes of conflict and crime in which the protagonists prefer to develop formal, stand-alone, hierarchical organizations, doctrines, and strategies as in past efforts, for example, to build centralized movements along Leninist lines. Thus, for example, netwar is about the Zapatistas more than the Fidelistas, Hamas more than the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the American Christian Patriot movement more than the Ku Klux Klan, and the Asian Triads more than the Cosa Nostra.<sup>9</sup>

The term *netwar* is meant to call attention to the prospect that network-based conflict and crime will become major phenomena in the decades ahead. Various actors across the spectrum of

conflict and crime are already evolving in this direction. This includes familiar adversaries who are modifying their structures and strategies to take advantage of networked designs—e.g., transnational terrorist groups, black-market proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), drug and other crime syndicates, fundamentalist and ethnonationalist movements, intellectual-property pirates, and immigration and refugee smugglers. Some urban gangs, back-country militias, and militant single-issue groups in the United States have also been developing netwar-like attributes. The netwar spectrum also includes a new generation of revolutionaries, radicals, and activists who are beginning to create information-age ideologies, in which identities and loyalties may shift from the nation state to the transnational level of “global civil society.” New kinds of actors, such as anarchistic and nihilistic leagues of computer-hacking “cyboteurs,” may also engage in netwar.

Many—if not most—netwar actors will be non-state, even stateless. Some may be agents of a state, but others may try to turn states into *their* agents. Also, a netwar actor may be both subnational and transnational in scope. Odd hybrids and symbioses are likely. Furthermore, some bad actors (e.g., terrorist and criminal groups) may threaten U.S. and other nations’ interests, but other actors (e.g., NGO activists in Burma or Mexico) may not—indeed, some actors who at times turn to netwar strategies and tactics, such as the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), may have salutary liberalizing effects. Some actors may aim at destruction, but more may aim mainly at disruption and disorientation. Again, many variations are possible.

The full spectrum of netwar proponents may thus seem broad and odd at first glance. But there is an underlying pattern that cuts across all

variations: *the use of network forms of organization, doctrine, strategy, and technology attuned to the information age.*

### More About Organizational Design

In an archetypal netwar, the protagonists are likely to amount to a set of diverse, dispersed “nodes” who share a set of ideas and interests and who are arrayed to act in a fully internetted “all-channel” manner. In the scholarly literature (e.g., Evan, 1972), networks come in basically three types or topologies (see Figure 1.1):

- The *chain* or line network, as in a smuggling chain where people, goods, or information move along a line of separated contacts, and where end-to-end communication must travel through the intermediate nodes.
- The *hub*, star, or wheel network, as in a franchise or a cartel where a set of actors are tied to a central (but not hierarchical) node or actor, and must go through that node to communicate and coordinate with each other.
- The *all-channel* or full-matrix network, as in a collaborative network of militant peace groups where everybody is connected to everybody else.

Each node in the diagrams may refer to an

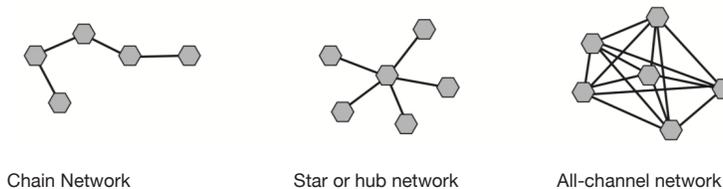


Figure 1.1—Three Basic Types of Networks

individual, a group, an organization, part of a group or organization, or even a state. The nodes may be large or small, tightly or loosely coupled, and inclusive or exclusive in membership. They may be segmentary or specialized—that is, they may look alike and engage in similar activities, or they may undertake a division of labor based on specialization. The boundaries of the network, or of any node included in it, may be well-defined, or blurred and porous in relation to the outside environment. Many variations are possible.

Each type may be suited to different conditions and purposes, and all three may be found among netwar-related adversaries—e.g., the chain in smuggling operations; the hub at the core of terrorist and criminal syndicates; and the all-channel type among militant groups that are highly inter-netted and decentralized. There may also be hybrids of the three types, with different tasks being organized around different types of networks. For example, a netwar actor may have an all-channel council or directorate at its core but use hubs and chains for tactical operations. There may also be hybrids of network and hierarchical forms of organization. For example, traditional hierarchies may exist inside particular nodes in a network. Some actors may have a hierarchical organization overall but use network designs for tactical operations; other actors may have an all-channel network design overall but use hierarchical teams for tactical operations. Again, many configurations are possible, and it may be difficult for an analyst to discern exactly what type characterizes a particular network.

Of the three network types, the all-channel has been the most difficult to organize and sustain, partly because it may require dense communications. But it is the type that gives the network form its new, high potential for collaborative undertakings

and that is gaining new strength from the information revolution. Pictorially, an all-channel netwar actor resembles a geodesic “Bucky ball” (named for Buckminster Fuller); it does not look like a pyramid. The organizational design is flat. Ideally, there is no single, central leadership, command, or headquarters—no precise heart or head that can be targeted. The network as a whole (but not necessarily each node) has little to no hierarchy; there may be multiple leaders. Decisionmaking and operations are decentralized, allowing for local initiative and autonomy. Thus the design may sometimes appear acephalous (headless), and at other times polycephalous (Hydra-headed).<sup>10</sup>

The capacity of this design for effective performance over time may depend on the existence of shared principles, interests, and goals—perhaps an overarching doctrine or ideology—which spans all nodes and to which the members subscribe in a deep way. Such a set of principles, shaped through mutual consultation and consensusbuilding, can enable members to be “all of one mind” even though they are dispersed and devoted to different tasks. It can provide a central ideational and operational coherence that allows for tactical decentralization. It can set boundaries and provide guidelines for decisions and actions so that the members do not have to resort to a hierarchy because “they know what they have to do.”<sup>11</sup>

The network design may depend on having an infrastructure for the dense communication of functional information. This does not mean that all nodes must be in constant communication; that may not make sense for a secretive, conspiratorial actor. But when communication is needed, the network’s members must be able to disseminate information promptly and as broadly as desired within the network and to outside audiences.

In many respects, then, the archetypal

<sup>10</sup>The structure may also be cellular. However, the presence of “cells” does not necessarily mean a network exists. A hierarchy can also be cellular, as is the case with some subversive organizations.

<sup>11</sup>The quotation is from a doctrinal statement by Beam (1992) about “leaderless resistance,” which has strongly influenced right-wing white-power groups.

netwar design corresponds to what earlier analysts (Gerlach, 1987, p. 115, based on Gerlach and Hine, 1970) called a “segmented, polycentric, ideologically integrated network” (SPIN):

By segmentary I mean that it is cellular, composed of many different groups. . . . By polycentric I mean that it has many different leaders or centers of direction. . . . By networked I mean that the segments and the leaders are integrated into reticulated systems or networks through various structural, personal, and ideological ties. Networks are usually unbounded and expanding. . . . This acronym [SPIN] helps us picture this organization as a fluid, dynamic, expanding one, spinning out into mainstream society.<sup>12</sup>

### *Caveats About the Role of Technology*

Netwar is a result of the rise of network forms of organization, which in turn is partly a result of the computerized information revolution.<sup>13</sup> To realize its potential, a fully interconnected network requires a capacity for constant, dense information and communications flows, more so than do other forms of organization (e.g., hierarchies). This capacity is afforded by the latest information and communication technologies—cellular telephones, fax machines, electronic mail (email), web sites, and computer conferencing. Such technologies are highly advantageous for netwar actors whose constituents are geographically dispersed.

But two caveats are in order. First, the new

technologies, however enabling for organizational networking, are not absolutely necessary for a netwar actor. Older technologies, like human couriers, and mixes of old and new systems may do the job in some situations. The late Somali warlord, Mohamed Farah Aidid, for example, proved very adept at eluding those seeking to capture him while at the same time retaining full command and control over his forces by means of runners and drum codes (see Bowden, 1999). Similarly, the first Chechen War (1994–1996), which the Islamic insurgents won, made wide use of runners and old communications technologies like ham radios for battle management and other command and control functions (see Arquilla and Karasik, 1999). So, netwar may be waged in high-, low-, or no-tech fashion.

Second, netwar is not simply a function of “the Net” (i.e., the Internet); it does not take place only in “cyberspace” or the “infosphere.” Some *battles* may occur there, but a *war’s* overall conduct and outcome will normally depend mostly on what happens in the “real world”—it will continue to be, even in information-age conflicts, generally more important than what happens in cyberspace or the infosphere.<sup>14</sup>

Netwar is not solely about Internet war (just as cyberwar is not just about “strategic information warfare”). Americans have a tendency to view modern conflict as being more about technology than organization and doctrine. In our view, this is a misleading tendency. For example, social netwar is more about a doctrinal leader like Subcomandante Marcos than about a lone, wild computer hacker like Kevin Mitnick.

<sup>12</sup> The SPIN concept is a precursor of the netwar concept. Proposed by Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine in the 1960s to depict U.S. social movements, it anticipates many points about network forms of organization, doctrine, and strategy that are now coming into focus in the analysis not only of social movements but also of some terrorist, criminal, ethnonationalist, and fundamentalist organizations.

<sup>13</sup> For explanation of this point, see Ronfeldt (1996), Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1996), and other sources cited in those documents.

<sup>14</sup>This point was raised specifically by Paul Kneisel, “Netwar: The Battle over Rec.Music. White-Power,” *ANTIFA INFO-BULLETIN*, Research Supplement, June 12, 1996, which is available on the Internet. He analyzes the largest vote ever taken about the creation of a new Usenet newsgroup—a vote to prevent the creation of a group that was ostensibly about white-power music. He concludes that “The *war* against contemporary fascism will be won in the ‘real world’ off the net; but *battles* against fascist netwar are fought and won on the Internet.” His title is testimony to the spreading usage of the term *netwar*.

## *A Capacity for Swarming, and the Blurring of Offense and Defense*

This distinctive, often ad-hoc design has unusual strengths, for both offense and defense. On the offense, networks tend to be adaptable, flexible, and versatile vis-à-vis opportunities and challenges. This may be particularly the case where a set of actors can engage in *swarming*. Little analytic attention has been given to swarming,<sup>15</sup> which is quite different from traditional mass- and maneuver-oriented approaches to conflict. Yet swarming may become the key mode of conflict in the information age (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2000, and Edwards, 2000), and the cutting edge for this possibility is found among netwar protagonists.

Swarming is a seemingly amorphous, but deliberately structured, coordinated, strategic way to strike from all directions at a particular point or points, by means of a sustainable pulsing of force and/or fire, close-in as well as from stand-off positions. This notion of “force and/ or fire” may be literal in the case of military or police operations, but metaphorical in the case of NGO activists, who may, for example, be blocking city intersections or emitting volleys of emails and faxes. Swarming will work best—perhaps it will only work—if it is designed mainly around the deployment of myriad, small, dispersed, networked maneuver units. Swarming occurs when the dispersed units of a network of small (and perhaps some large) forces converge on a target from multiple directions. The overall aim is *sustainable pulsing*—swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then disperse and redispense, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse. The capacity for a “stealthy approach” suggests that, in netwar, attacks are more likely to occur in “swarms” than in more traditional “waves.” The Chechen

resistance to the Russian army and the Direct Action Network’s operations in the anti-World Trade Organization “Battle of Seattle” both provide excellent examples of swarming behavior.

Swarming may be most effective, and difficult to defend against, where a set of netwar actors do not “mass” their forces, but rather engage in dispersion and “packetization” (for want of a better term). This means, for example, that drug smugglers can break large loads into many small packets for simultaneous surreptitious transport across a border, or that NGO activists, as in the case of the Zapatista movement, have enough diversity in their ranks to respond to any discrete issue that arises—human rights, democracy, the environment, rural development, whatever.

In terms of their defensive potential, networks tend to be redundant and diverse, making them robust and resilient in the face of attack. When they have a capacity for interoperability and shun centralized command and control, network designs can be difficult to crack and defeat as a whole. In particular, they may defy counterleadership targeting—a favored strategy in the drug war as well as in overall efforts to tamp organized crime in the United States. Thus, whoever wants to attack a network is limited—generally, only portions of a network can be found and confronted. Moreover, the deniability built into a network affords the possibility that it may simply absorb a number of attacks on distributed nodes, leading an attacker to believe the network has been harmed and rendered inoperable when, in fact, it remains viable and is seeking new opportunities for tactical surprise.

The difficulty of dealing with netwar actors deepens when the lines between offense and defense are blurred, or blended. When *blurring* is the case, it may be difficult to distinguish between

<sup>15</sup>The first mention of “swarm networks” we encountered was in Kelly (1994). A recent discussion, really about “swarm intelligence” rather than swarm networks, is in Bonabeau, Dorigo, and Theraulaz (1999).

attacking and defending actions, particularly where an actor goes on the offense in the name of self-defense. For example, the Zapatista struggle in Mexico demonstrates anew the blurring of offense and defense. The *blending* of offense and defense will often mix the strategic and tactical levels of operations. For example, guerrillas on the defensive strategically may go on the offense tactically, as in the war of the mujahideen in Afghanistan during the 1980s, and in both recent Chechen wars with the Russians.

### *Operating in the Seams*

The blurring of offense and defense reflects another feature of netwar (albeit one that is exhibited in many other policy and issue areas): It tends to defy and cut across standard boundaries, jurisdictions, and distinctions between state and society, public and private, war and peace, war and crime, civilian and military, police and military, and legal and illegal. This makes it difficult if not impossible for a government to assign responsibility to any single agency—e.g., military, police, or intelligence—to be in charge of responding.

As Richard Szafranski (1994, 1995) illuminated in his discussions of how information warfare ultimately becomes “neo-cortical warfare,” the challenge for governments and societies becomes “epistemological.” A netwar actor may aim to confound people’s fundamental beliefs about the nature of their culture, society, and government, partly to foment fear but perhaps mainly to disorient people and unhinge their perceptions. This is why a netwar with a strong social content—whether waged by ethnonationalists, terrorists, or social activists—may tend to be about disruption more than destruction. The more epistemological

the challenge, the more confounding it may be from an organizational standpoint. Whose responsibility is it to respond? Whose roles and missions are at stake? Is it a military, police, intelligence, or political matter? When the roles and missions of defenders are not easy to define, both deterrence and defense may become problematic.

Thus, the spread of netwar adds to the challenges facing the nation state in the information age. Its sovereignty and authority are usually exercised through bureaucracies in which issues and problems can be sliced up and specific offices can be charged with taking care of specific problems. In netwar, things are rarely so clear. A protagonist is likely to operate in the cracks and gray areas of a society, striking where lines of authority crisscross and the operational paradigms of politicians, officials, soldiers, police officers, and related actors get fuzzy and clash. Moreover, where transnational participation is strong, a netwar’s protagonists may expose a local government to challenges to its sovereignty and legitimacy by arousing foreign governments and business corporations to put pressure on the local government to alter its domestic policies and practices.

### *Networks Versus Hierarchies: Challenges for Counternetwar*

These observations and the case studies presented in this volume lead to four policy-oriented propositions about the information revolution and its implications for netwar and counternetwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1993, 1996):<sup>16</sup>

*Hierarchies have a difficult time fighting networks.* There are examples of this across the conflict

<sup>16</sup> Also see Berger (1998) for additional observations about such propositions.

spectrum. Some of the best are found in the failings of many governments to defeat transnational criminal cartels engaged in drug smuggling, as in Colombia. The persistence of religious revivalist movements, as in Algeria, in the face of unremitting state opposition, shows both the defensive and offensive robustness of the network form. The Zapatista movement in Mexico, with its legions of supporters and sympathizers among local and transnational NGOs, shows that social netwar can put a democratizing autocracy on the defensive and pressure it to continue adopting reforms.

*It takes networks to fight networks.* Governments that want to defend against netwar may have to adopt organizational designs and strategies like those of their adversaries. This does not mean mirroring the adversary, but rather learning to draw on the same design principles that he has already learned about the rise of network forms in the information age. These principles depend to some extent on technological innovation, but mainly on a willingness to innovate organizationally and doctrinally, perhaps especially by building new mechanisms for interagency and multijurisdictional cooperation.

*Whoever masters the network form first and best will gain major advantages.* In these early decades of the information age, adversaries who are advanced at networking (be they criminals, terrorists, or peaceful social activists, including ones acting in concert with states) are enjoying an increase in their power relative to state agencies. While networking once allowed them simply to keep from being suppressed, it now allows them to compete on more nearly equal terms with states and other hierarchically oriented actors. The histories of Hamas and of the Cali cartel illustrate this; so do the Zapatista

movement in Mexico and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Counter-netwar may thus require very effective interagency approaches, which by their nature involve networked structures. It is not necessary, desirable, or even possible to replace all hierarchies with networks in governments. Rather, the challenge will be to blend these two forms skillfully, while retaining enough core authority to encourage and enforce adherence to networked processes. By creating effective hybrids, governments may become better prepared to confront the new threats and challenges emerging in the information age, whether generated by ethnonationalists, terrorists, militias, criminals, or other actors. (For elaboration, see Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1997, Ch. 19.)

However, governments tend to be so constrained by hierarchical habits and institutional interests that it may take some sharp reverses before a willingness to experiment more seriously with networking emerges. The costs and risks associated with failing to engage in institutional redesign are likely to be high—and may grow ever higher over time. In the most difficult areas—crime and terrorism—steps to improve intra- and international networking are moving in the right direction. But far more remains to be done, as criminal and terrorist networks continuously remake themselves into ever more difficult targets.

### *Recent Cases of Netwar*

Since we first wrote about netwar over seven years ago, there have been at least ten prominent (i.e., front-page) instances of its employment, in conflicts ranging from social activist campaigns to violent ethnic insurgencies (see Table 1.1). The netwar record has been generally successful. In

these ten cases, which feature networked nonstate actors confronting states or groups of states, five netwars have achieved substantial success. Three have achieved limited success, while one (Burma) has yet to prove either a success or failure, and another (Chechnya) must be judged, currently, as a failure.<sup>17</sup> Most of these cases, and the reasons for their success or the lack thereof, are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

The limits on some successes and the one failure imply a need to take a balanced view of netwar, analyzing the conditions under which it is most likely to succeed, fail, or fall somewhere in between. Clearly, there is enough success here to make netwar worth examining more closely. But it is important not to “tout” netwar, as Robert Taber (1970) once did guerrilla war. He was sharply rebutted by Lewis Gann (1970), who pointed out that guerrillas, far from being unstoppable, have often been defeated. Netwar will also have its ups and downs. Our purpose is to uncover and get a deeper understanding of its dynamics.

In Table 1.1, the cases are divided into those conflicts that were or have been drawn out, and those focused on specific crises—a useful distinction often made in studies of conflict. Interesting insights emerge. For example, the two most

successful protracted campaigns were waged violently by ethnonationalists and criminals who sought freedom from state controls. The short-duration successes also included some use of violence (in two cases), and a global civil society reaction (that threatened a forceful response) to state violence in the other. And, though more muted, most of the other cases have violent aspects.

The table distributes netwars by type along a spectrum ranging from those that are globalist in orientation (e.g., the anti-landmine campaign), to those that are autonomist at the opposite end (e.g., the 1994 Chechen effort to secede from Russia). In the middle lie mixed cases where the objective is to gain power locally, but these netwars depend on the protagonists being able to open their societies to democratic, globalist influences.

The two unsuccessful netwar campaigns (in Russia and Burma) have featured networks confronting hierarchical authoritarian governments that have been willing to use substantial force to assert—in the case of Russia, to reassert—their hold on power. These networks’ losses to hierarchies, combined with the fact that the principal successes to date have been gained by violent “uncivil society” actors, suggest being cautious about the claims for netwar. That said, the nonviolent

<sup>17</sup> Both Russo-Chechen conflicts are included as netwars, because of the extent to which the Chechens have relied upon networked forms of organization, both in field actions and in the struggle to win the “battle of the story.” Arquilla and Karasik (1999) describe the Chechen victory in the 1994–1996 conflict as a clear triumph for networking but also posed concerns that the Russians would learn from this defeat—as they have learned from defeats throughout their history—and would improve, both in the field and in the arena of world perception. They have gotten better in the second conflict, driving the Chechens to their southern mountain redoubts and convincing state and nonstate actors around the world that Russian forces are fighting on behalf of a world community opposed to terrorism.

**Table 1.1 Prominent Cases of Netwar, 1994-2000**

Campaign	Dates	Outcome	Type
<i>Protracted Netwars</i>			
EZLN	1994-	Limited Success	Autonomist
ICBL	1998-	Limited Success	Globalist
Burma	1996-	Failing?	Mixed
Drug Cartels	1994-	Substantial Success	Autonomist
Chechnya I	1994-1996	Substantial Success	Autonomist
Chechnya II	1999-2000	Failure	Autonomist
<i>Short-Duration Netwars</i>			
Greenpeace	1994	Limited Success	Globalist
Battle of Seattle	1999	Substantial Success	Globalist
East Timor	1999	Substantial Success	Autonomist
Serb Opposition	1999	Substantial Success	Mixed

International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Greenpeace effort to curb nuclear testing both achieved reasonable measures of success without engaging in any violence whatsoever. This is a hopeful sign. And, while the civil society campaign to free Burma from authoritarian rule is a partial failure to date, this is a continuing campaign whose ultimate outcome is yet unknown.

Finally, these netwar conflicts feature an uneven split between those about globalist issues—aimed at fostering the rise of a rights- and ethics-based civil society—and the more frequent, somewhat darker “autonomist” variety of netwar, featuring nonstate actors trying to get out from under state controls. Most of the limited successes that have been achieved thus far are globalist in orientation, while most of the substantial successes (save for the Battle of Seattle and Serbia) have been autonomist. It will be interesting, as the instances of netwar increase over time, to see whether this pattern holds. The outcomes of the globalist cases suggest the prevalence of negotiated solutions, while the autonomist conflicts may, in general, have a much more inherently desperate character that drives them to greater violence and less willingness to reach accommodation. All this we will watch in the years to come. For now, these early cases have helped us to develop this taxonomy of netwar, further refining the concept.

Will netwar continue to empower nonstate actors, perhaps reducing the relative power advantage enjoyed by nation states? Civil society networks have already made much use of social netwar as a tool for advancing a globalist, ethics-based agenda focused on broadening and deepening human rights regimes—often in the context of an ongoing effort to foster movement from authoritarian rule to democracy (e.g., Burma). But there is another side of nonstate-actor-oriented

netwar, characterized not by globalist impulses, but rather by the desire to avoid state control of a network’s criminal, terrorist, or ethnicseparatist agenda (e.g., Hamas and Chechens). While the globalist netwars seem devoted to nonviolent tools of struggle, the autonomists may employ both means of engagement—often with a greater emphasis on violence.

### *Varieties of Netwar—Dual Phenomena*

Netwar is a deduced concept—it derives from our thinking about the effects and implications of the information revolution. Once coined, the concept helps show that evidence is mounting about the rise of network forms of organization, and about the importance of “information strategies” and “information operations” across the spectrum of conflict, including among ethnonationalists, terrorists, guerrillas, criminals, and activists.<sup>18</sup> Note that we do not equate ethnonationalists, terrorists, guerrillas, criminals, and activists with each other—each has different dynamics. Nor do we mean to tarnish social activism, which has positive aspects for civil society.<sup>19</sup> We are simply calling for attention to a cross-cutting meta-pattern about network forms of organization, doctrine, and strategy that we might not have spotted, by induction or deduction, if we had been experts focused solely on any one of those areas.

Netwar can be waged by “good” as well as “bad” actors, and through peaceful as well as violent measures. From its beginnings, netwar has appealed to a broad cross-section of nonstate actors who are striving to confront or cope with their state authorities. Ethnonationalists, criminals, and terrorists—all have found new power in networking. But so too have emerging global civil society

<sup>18</sup>These are not the only types of netwar actors; there are others. For example, corporations may also engage in netwars—or find themselves on the receiving end of netwar campaigns.

<sup>19</sup>See discussion in Ronfeldt (1996).

actors who have emphasized nonviolent efforts to win the “battle of the story”—a more purely informational dimension of netwar—rather than the violent swarming characteristic of its darker side. Both categories of actors seem to realize, even if only implicitly, that, in the future, conflict will become even more “irregularized,” with the set-piece confrontations and battles of earlier eras largely disappearing. While the U.S. military remains focused—in terms of budgetary emphasis, doctrine, and force structure—on the traditional forms of conflict, the rise of netwar should prompt a shift to a nimble “turn of mind,” one far less attuned to fighting in the Fulda Gap or the Persian Gulf and more focused on engaging a range of odd new adversaries across a densely interconnected “global grid.”

The duality of netwar in the real world—dark-side criminals and terrorists on the one hand, but enlightening civil society forces on the other—is mirrored in the virtual world of cyberspace, which is increasingly utilized for crime and terror (still embryonic), along with social activism. At present, social activism is far more robust and established in the cyber realm than is crime or terror. Will this continue to be the case? We think so. Activists will become more adept at integrating the mobilizing force of the Internet with the power and appeal of messages aimed at spreading and protecting human rights. Even so, criminal and terrorist organizations will learn how to manipulate the infosphere with increasing skill.

Thus, netwar has two faces, like the Roman god Janus. Janus was the god of doors and gates, and thus of departures and returns, and new beginnings and initiatives. This, in a sense, meant he was the god of communications, too. His double face, one old and looking back, the other younger and peering forward, conveyed that he was an

inherently dual god. At the beginning of creation, he partook in the separation of order from chaos. In Roman times, he was identified with the distinction between war and peace, for the gate to his temple at the Forum was kept ceremoniously closed in times of peace and open in times of war—which meant the gates were rarely closed. At the start of the 21st century, the world is again at a new beginning. It is uncertain whether it will be an era of peace or conflict; but how matters turn out will depend to some degree on which face of netwar predominates.

This volume explores the two faces of netwar, in three parts. The first part is composed of three chapters that chronicle the increasingly networked nature of major types of “uncivil-society” actors for whom violence is a principal mode of expression. The analyses by Michele Zanini and Sean Edwards of Arab terrorist groups, by Phil Williams of transnational criminal networks, and by John Sullivan of street-level gangs and hooligans, all speak to the increasingly sophisticated usage of the new information technologies to enhance both these groups’ organizational and operational capabilities.

The second part of the book examines the rise of social netwar, again with three chapters. These chapters examine social netwars waged by networked civil society actors against various types of states. Tiffany Danitz and Warren Strobel show the limitations (but also some successful facets) of social netwar when waged against a resolute dictatorship that maintains a system virtually closed to civil society. Our own chapter on Mexico finds that an “NGO swarm” was quite effective in transforming a rural insurgency into a mostly peaceable netwar in a then rather authoritarian system. Paul de Armond provides insights into the full mobilizing potential of social netwar when conducted in a free society like the United States.

The final part considers the future of netwar, particularly regarding how technology, organization, and doctrine interact. Dorothy Denning assesses whether activists, hacktivists, or cyberterrorists may gain the most influence from exploiting the new information technologies. Luther Gerlach's chapter, though focused on environmental activism, identifies the dynamics of organizations that are segmentary, polycentric, and integrated as a network—from leaderlessness to operational fluidity. We think these dynamics apply, in varying degrees, to all the types of actors examined in the first two parts of the book. Our concluding chapter addresses likely trends in both the theory and practice of netwar—from how to draw on academic theories about networks, to how to think strategically about netwar itself. Thus, Part III should make the reader aware of both the perils and the promises of netwar, while also providing analytical guideposts for future studies of this phenomenon.

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# Weaponized Social Networks

John Robb

WEAPONIZED SOCIAL NETWORKS HAVE MOUNTED A successful challenge to an increasingly illegitimate US political system. These networks are now at war with it and each other in a chaotic struggle that may usher in a *long night* of networked oppression.

## *The Rise of Politicized Networks*

Last year, as social networking technology became ubiquitous, three weaponized networks overran the US political system. Here are the highlights:

- One emergent network became an *insurgency* that shattered the Republican party in the 2016 presidential primary and then seized the White House.
- Later, another emergent network shoved the Democratic party to the sidelines to become the national *#resistance* movement opposing the new government.
- Meanwhile, the *corporations* running these social networks took control of the country's information distribution system and its influence over politics.

## *Political Vulnerability*

The runaway success of these networks was in part due to the inherent strengths of networked organizations. However, it was a witches brew of debilitating factors eating away at the US body politic that turned this challenge into an ugly rout:

- **Institutional Delegitimization** The US system has suffered a sustained loss of legitimacy over decades. Poll after poll shows that very few people trust traditional sources of authority anymore. The causes of this loss range from an unjustified, unnecessary and pyrrhic<sup>1</sup> war in Iraq to the complete abdication of responsibility for the economic devastation caused by the collapse of a fraud riddled financial system.
- **An Existential Crisis** This loss in legitimacy has been lethal to the traditional sources of value and meaning many Americans have built their lives upon. The result is a growing existential crisis. In Russia, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a similar existential crisis led to a drop in life expectancy as despondent Russians drank themselves to death. In the US, life expectancy is falling too (for two years in a row!) as Americans kill themselves with opiates (opicide).
- **Reflexive Conditioning** This existential crisis has led to political polarization as authoritarians on the left and right supplied simplistic replacements for traditional values. We can see evidence of this authoritarian conditioning in how quickly trigger words, events and situations generate widespread outrage, condemnation, disgust. In the traditional mass media environment, this type of authoritarian conditioning merely created a bothersome polarization and political gridlock. That changed with the sudden emergence of social networking. As we saw in November's GG Report on "Reflexive Control," social networking turns this conditioning into a weapon of mass disruption and control.

<sup>1</sup>In addition to tens of thousands of US casualties and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi casualties, recent estimates put the financial cost of the war in Iraq at over \$6 trillion (including interest).

## *Weaponized Social Networks*

This new weapon has fueled the rise of the socially networked organizations that burst onto the scene during the last election cycle and how it being used by these networks provides clues on the direction we're headed. To fully explore this, let's look at how these networks wage war through the lens of John Boyd's (America's best strategist) three dimensions of warfare:

- the *physical*,
- the *mental* (psychological), and
- the *moral*.

In any dimension of warfare, victory is achieved by *reducing* the connectivity of the opposition's network while *improving* your own network's connectivity. It's fairly simple in concept but fiendishly difficult in practice.

### PHYSICAL

In the physical dimension of warfare, the objective is to physically disconnect the opposition while increasing your own physical connectivity. The traditional way to fight in the physical dimension is through attrition—physically damaging an opponent (killing soldiers, destroying equipment, chewing up supplies, etc.). Online, attrition translates into account deletion, temporary bans, and self-editing.

- The *insurgency* disconnects participants in the opposing network through relentless harassment and intimidation. A preferred method is doxing—the public release of detailed information on a target, from private online accounts to where they live. Once doxed, targets are swarmed with threats by anonymous members of the insurgency

both on and offline. Studies show that doxing is extremely effective at reducing the target's participation in the network and/or driving them completely offline. In order to defend its own physical connectivity from attrition, the insurgent network has developed alternative social networks like Gab.ai (etc.).

- The *#resistance* uses complaint campaigns to compel the social networking companies to ban targeted individuals from the network and to protect members of its own network from disconnection. The resistance also uses complaint campaigns, targeted at the employers and the families of insurgents that it can identify (e.g. the Charlottesville torch march provided the resistance with pictures it was able to use to ID targets for attritive attacks).
- The *corporations* that own the social networks are unmatched in their power to control physical connectivity. They can delete accounts, without recourse, based on vague violations of its terms of use. So far, deletion has been only minimally applied since these companies see themselves as ubiquitous utilities (think: power and water). As a result, these companies have limited themselves to soft bans (the ability to secretly reduce an account's visibility to others on the network), account suspension, and the removal of privileges (i.e. blue check marks or posting).

### MENTAL

Conflict in this dimension is accomplished by reducing the psychological cohesion (make it harder

for them to think clearly) of an opponent while improving your own mental cohesion. Both on-line and offline, this is best accomplished by making rapid maneuvers (e.g. armored thrusts deep behind enemy lines in maneuver warfare or a rapid series of tweets/posts) that leverage ambiguity, deception, and novelty in order to disorient, disrupt, and overload an opponent.

- The *insurgency* disorients, disrupts, and overloads opponents by developing (Reddit, 4Chan, etc.) and deploying the novel triggers (memes, etc.) needed to generate reflexive responses (outrage). To keep its opponents off balance, the insurgency rapidly maneuvers from new outrage to new outrage, using bots and fake accounts (deception) to amplify this activity. Over time, this onslaught overloads opponents, making it impossible for them to think clearly. The insurgency is strongest within this dimension.
- The *#resistance* uses authority and consensus to achieve success in this dimension of war. For example, the resistance has deep connections in academia, the government, and the (traditional) media. These connections allow it to quickly amass claims of authority that it can use to defend against insurgent attacks and mount disorienting attacks of its own. Also, unlike the insurgency, the resistance is publicly visible online. This visibility allows it to quickly generate “a defacto consensus” on any issue. This consensus can be used to disorient the opposition since many opponents don’t want to be seen as too extreme.

- The *corporations* can wage war in this dimension by manipulating the “social graph.” This manipulation allows them to increase or decrease the distribution of messages and information on the platform. So far, these companies are only using this capability to increase the addictivity of the platform rather than a means of muting opponents. This currently makes them arms suppliers to both the insurgency and the *#resistance*, rather than opponents. This status can change rapidly.

#### MORAL

In the moral dimension of warfare, menace, uncertainty, and distrust are heightened in order to create alienation, fear, and anxiety within the ranks of the opposition. As we have seen in guerrilla wars of the past, success in this effort will cause the opposition to break apart into smaller, non-cooperating centers of gravity that can be easily defeated.

- The *insurgency* wages war in the moral dimension through moral nullification—a rejection of public morality. When facing a moral attack (a claim of immorality), the insurgency has three options: 1) to deny the claim is valid (distrust of the source), 2) to deny the claim is real (uncertainty), and 3) to cast the claim as an attack (menace). The insurgency mounts its own moral attacks through charges of hypocrisy (whataboutism).
- The *#resistance* is strongest in the moral dimension. It casts itself as the sole protector of the public morality and the arbiter of public values. To date, this positioning has provided it with the gravitational attraction

it needed to grow its network and maintain good cohesion. It's been particularly successful in exerting overwhelming moral pressure on targeted individuals. As we saw in its #metoo campaign, once the #resistance makes a moral claim against an individual, the targets are immediately removed (alienated) from society and fear/anxiety keeps others from coming to their defense.

- The **corporations** protect themselves from moral attacks through appeals to freedom of speech. In parallel, in an effort to enhance their moral value, these networks are actively developing nanny services to “protect” their users. For example, Facebook now has a service that can determine if someone is suicidal and alert family or friends.

- The **#resistance...** A sacred bureaucracy (Chinese model). A new public morality based on modern concepts (a simplified morality). A public morality rating system. Opposition targets are shamed and removed from public life (job, social connection, etc.).
- The **corporations...** More of the same (neoliberalism) but with a public dementia that conveniently forgets—by using its control of the social network to remove the opposition from public discourse—any effort to change the system. Political change is top down, made real by increasingly sophisticated social AIs.

### THE LONG NIGHT

Where are these weaponized networks taking us? Here are three possibilities to get you thinking:

- The **insurgency...** “Strong” leader (Russian model). Ethnic nationalism (tribal identity). Nonlinear politics and everyday chaos. Kleptocracy. Meaningful opposition is swarmed with threats/doxing/violence and driven offline.

The Weaponized Social Network Crib Sheet	Insurgency	#Resistance	Corporate
<b>Physical</b>	Threats Doxing Gab.ai (etc.)	Complaints Contact employers	Account Deletion Soft Bans
<b>Mental</b>	Memes Trolling	Consensus Authority	Addiction Graph Manipulation
<b>Moral</b>	Nullification Denial Whataboutism	Public Shaming Moral High Ground	Freedom of Speech AI Services

## Study Guide: **Networks, Netwars, Social Media**

### *Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion*

- Why is netwar different from traditional guerilla warfare? Hierarchy vs. networks; all-channel networks vs. star/node networks
- In France and the UK, leaderless decentralized networks are normalized now, even among right-wing groups. “Leaderless resistance” emerged in 1980s as a white supremacist strategy.
- The US Military tries to employ networks to fight networks (counterterrorism) but can’t do it very well because of chain of command.
- Shifts now are in social networks, information war, etc. This usually looks like information sharing between sectors of the government, but also leads to whistleblowers because of the scale of contractors sifting through NSA/FBI/etc. data
- Things tend towards the all-channel network because it’s the most reliable/resilient. However, repressive measures affect everyone in a network because of connection: we share weaknesses because we care about each other.
- Only social media networks/signal chats/etc. are true all-channel networks. Networks are hydra-headed more than all-channel networks.
- We often form temporary networks for specific reasons that can be disintegrated. Tactical biodiversity means that the story can be more spread out.
- Social terrain can have **thickness** too: like how a swamp can break up an army. “Behind every tree is a stratagem/behind every friendship is a stratagem”. Terrible things can happen to you if you’re really marginalized and separated from social thickness (terrorist, muslim, pedophile); it is easy to imagine “antifa” becoming a new socially isolated identity.
  - How do we link networks to marginalized groups, and share strength of social & networked power?
- How is a network established? With communication, in physical places and specific moments?
- What is the tension between density and opacity?
- Social media age movements are ultra-transparent (people livestreaming meetings, etc.). How do we relate to this? What suggestions might we draw from the texts regarding transparency and opacity?
- How do we reach out to people who are new and showing up to things that don’t know anyone?
- Relationships are made at blockades/ruptures/etc., but they often don’t last beyond the moment. This was the problem of Occupy networks that dissolved once the

occupation was evicted. Also people's disagreements become exacerbated after the end of something, blaming each other for the failure. How can we respond to this constructively & preemptively?

- Networks can materialize at flash points. We want a network based in “what is possible” or “what can we do together.” How do we make nodes for people to meet each other?
  - How do we create entry points?
  - How do we nurture functions like care, etc.?
- The question might not be “how to form a network” but “we want to do a thing and how can we assemble the pieces to do it; what do we need to build this thing.” We imagine an objective first and a network forming around it; but is this what really happens? Often there is an objective and then an existing network picks it up; it is rarely actually an organic network that emerges around a particular objective. Is the term “network” is useful? Is it the language of our enemies? Really we're talking about complicated human relationships, which are messy, shifting, and hard to track.
- Is constant communication necessary for all-channel networks?
- There is a large finitude of complexity in how we do things, we're ahead of the RAND corporation and should be thinking about what's next.
  - But also dynamics and tendencies get ahead of us and escape us—see Gilets

Jaunes in France, etc. How can we remain agile & open to new ideas and organizational forms?

- If we're good at networks—and good at seeing how they fail—we should be good at assessing weaknesses in enemies' networks as they begin to adopt the network form for the first time
- “But there are so few of us and we are all terrible.” People don't treat each other well and that is an obstacle. But maybe this is about communication and not innate ass-holery. Can we rescue something of value from NVC/group dynamics work/communication skills, without being trapped in the NGO & liberal framework that often accompanies them?
- Millenials contain the signs of the times. We need to be able to accentuate and occupy the contemporary, naturally lean towards bodies that share inclinations.
- Consider networks that are based in relations instead of information; how can we do things that don't make sense algorithmically?
- Enemies are important to networks; consider how youtube popularity works, by people watching videos that debunk their enemies. We shouldn't center our lives on having enemies, but it can be strategic to share enemies. We would prefer to view our enemies as barriers or limits to move through rather than unifying forces—otherwise we risk dialectical entrenchment

that reifies both positions and traps us in a specific identity.

- We're never going to abolish the police by fighting them in the streets, we should view them as an obstacle or limit instead of a rival.

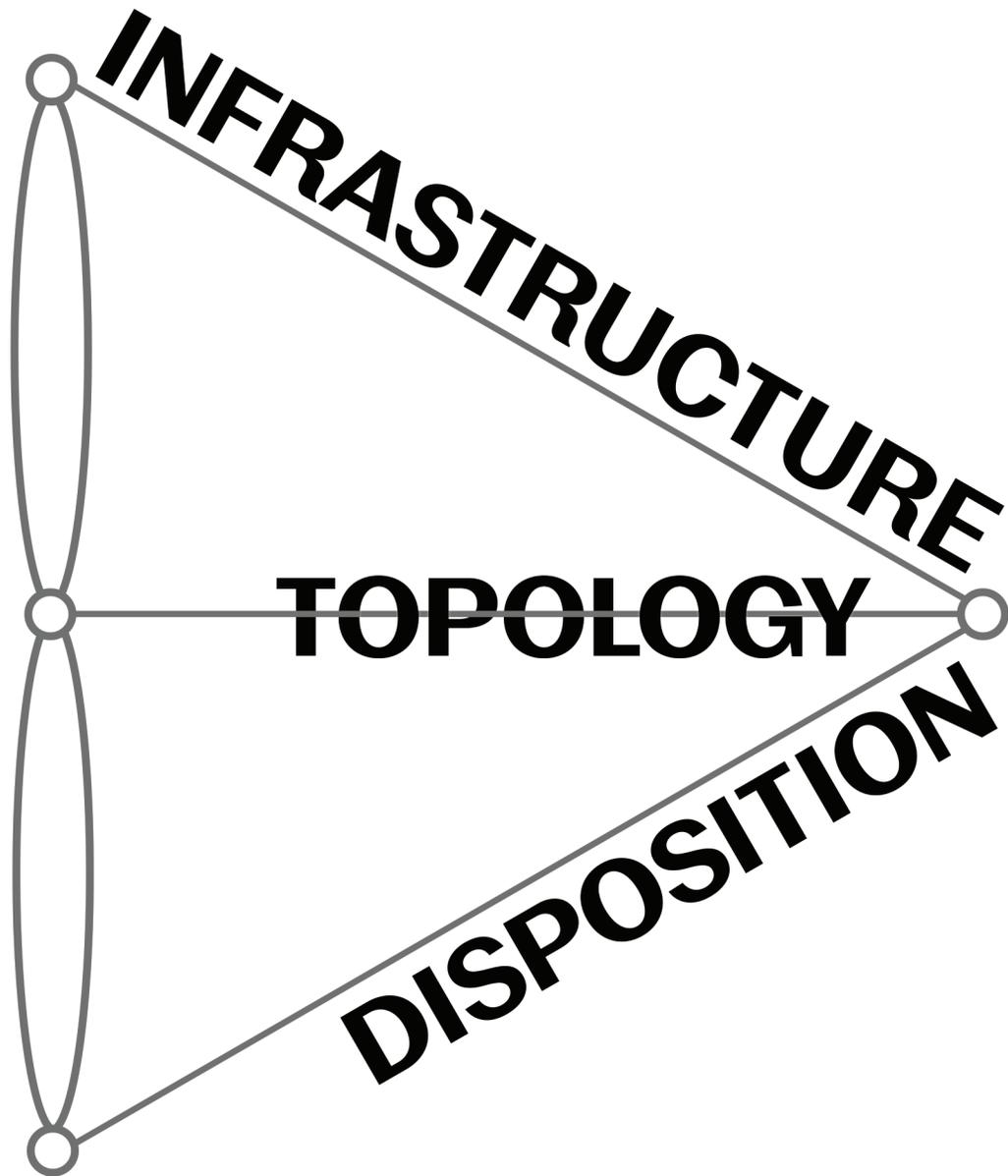
### *Activity for Engagement*

Identify an adversary, and try to map their mental/moral/physical networks, and think about how we might attack and disrupt them. Following Sun Tzu, first, attack their plans, next, disrupt their alliances, next, attack their army.

#### CHOOSE AN ENEMY

- What are they capable of? What is their orientation? What are they trying to do? What are their past patterns of conflict? When have they gained power/connectivity/legitimacy, when have they lost it?
- What are the moral, mental, and physical elements that they depend on? What are the vulnerabilities of each?
- What is the time difference/ response difference between us and them? Who has the initiative, and how do we seize it?
- Where do we have local superiority and decisive advantage?
- How do we decrease our friction/increase our response speed and grace?

- How do we get inside their OODA loops/ mind-space, and make sure that situations don't follow predictable patterns?
- How do we destroy their ability to orient themselves in the world?
- How do we increase our connectivity and the resilience of our moral, mental, and physical networks?



**EXTRASTATECRAFT**  
KELLER EASTERLING

## Reading Keller Easterling on **Extrastatecraft**

KELLER EASTERLING IS AN ARCHITECT AND YALE professor. Her book “Extrastatecraft” examines the invisible rules that attempt to govern our everyday lives. These rules are thought of here as an operating system in the built environment. Her term “infrastructure space” goes beyond the literal conduits of material flows (like pipelines, cables, transportation networks) to also describe immaterial and informational exchanges (like street lights, airport lounges, shopping malls, ATMs, suburbs). These forms are thought of as products of repeatable spatial formulas that unfold through time (“active forms”). One can easily point to the fact that none of these systems are neutral or apolitical, and that appearing apolitical or by not appearing at all (as hidden software), they maintain an everyday life that we experience as literally hell.

The “operating system” lens helps us focus on what a system is doing rather than what it is saying that it is doing. The text supports the discovery of techniques for alternative design and for opposition—specifically opposition that imagines how to be less heroic, more effective, and sneakier (gossip, compliance, comedy, misdirection, distraction).

## Extrastatecraft: Disposition

Keller Easterling

HIGHWAYS, FIRST PROMOTED WITH STORIES ABOUT freedom and uninterrupted movement, possessed an organizational logic that actually caused congestion. ARPAnet, first characterized as a stealth network for the military, lent itself to the kinds of exchanges that finally generated the internet. Promises of decentralization accompanied the first electrical utilities, just as promises of open access have accompanied contemporary broadband networks. Yet both networks, at certain junctures in their evolution, have sponsored constricting monopolies, whether scattered or centralized. The mass-produced suburbs sold unique country homes but delivered the virtually identical products of an assembly-line organization. Facebook, a platform created for social networking on a college campus, revealed another initially unrecognized potential when, in the Arab Spring, it was used as an instrument of dissent. Likewise the zone, created and promoted as a tool of free trade and economic liberalism, has often produced closed, exurban enclaves.

In all these cases, some of the most consequential political outcomes of infrastructure space remain undeclared in the dominant stories that portray them. Information resides in the technologies—from telecommunications to construction—as well as in the declared intent or story—from decentralization to stealth. Yet information also resides in a complex of countless other factors and activities. All these activities, taken together, lend the organization some other agency or capacity—a disposition—that often escapes detection or

explanation.

Reading disposition in infrastructure space is like Twain's reading of the water's surface. The shiny new technology or the persuasive promotional story may command attention just like the pretty landscapes of the river, but in excess of that material, spatial organizations are always providing information about their inherent, if undeclared, activities. While beyond complete comprehension, disposition describes something of what the organization is doing—activities that may diverge from the stated intent. This misalignment with the story or rhetoric is one means of detecting disposition, but additional organizational attributes are also helpful in assessing it.

Perhaps the idea of disposition is not really so mysterious. A ball at the top of an inclined plane possesses a disposition.<sup>1</sup> The geometry of the ball and its relative position are the simple markers of potential agency. Even without rolling down the incline, the ball is actively doing something by occupying its position. Disposition, in common parlance, usually describes an unfolding relationship between potentials. It describes a tendency, activity, faculty, or property in either beings or objects—a propensity within a context.

Infrastructure space possesses disposition just as does the ball at the top of an incline. Few would look at a highway interchange, an electrical grid, or a suburb and perceive agency or activity in its static arrangement. Spaces and urban organizations are usually treated, not as actors, but as collections of objects or volumes. Activity might be assigned only to the moving cars, the electrical current, or the suburb's inhabitants. Yet the ball does not have to roll down the incline to have the capacity to do so, and physical objects in spatial arrangements, however static, also possess an agency that resides in relative position. Disposition is immanent, not

<sup>1</sup> François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 29.

in the moving parts, but in the relationships between the components.

When navigating the complex dispositions of a river, dimples or ripples on the water serve as markers; and when navigating or hacking the complex dispositions of infrastructure, some simple markers are equally useful. The infrastructural operating system is filled with well-rehearsed sequences of code—spatial products and repeatable formulas like zones, suburbs, highways, resorts, malls, or golf courses. Hacking into it requires forms that are also like software. Different from the object forms of masterpiece buildings or master plans, these active forms operate in another gear or register, to act like bits of code in the system. Active forms are markers of disposition, and disposition is the character of an organization that results from the circulation of these active forms within it. Since these forms are always changing, as is the complexion of disposition, they cannot be catalogued as elemental building blocks or terms in a glossary. Rather, identifying just a few among the many active forms that might be manipulated, redesigned, or rewritten only begins to crack the code, making more palpable the dispositions they inflect and providing some instruments for adjusting political character in infrastructure space. Still, as signs of ongoing processes—like the ripples used for river navigation—the practicality of these forms relies on their indeterminacy.

An important diagnostic in the fluid politics of extrastatecraft, disposition uncovers accidental, covert, or stubborn forms of power—political chemistries and temperaments of aggression, submission, or violence—hiding in the folds of infrastructure space.

#### MULTIPLIER

A field of mass-produced suburban houses is a common phenomenon in infrastructure space, and it is an organization with clear markers of disposition. In the case of the US suburb of Levittown, the developer did not set out to make 1,000 individual houses, but adopted a kind of agricultural method of house building—1,000 slabs, 1,000 frames, 1,000 roofs, and so on. The site was effectively an assembly line separating the tasks of house building into smaller activities each of which could be applied across the entire population of houses in sequence. Beyond the activity of the humans within it, the arrangement itself rendered some things significant and others insignificant. The organization was actively *doing something* when it directed urban routines. It made some things possible and some things impossible (e.g., the building of an individual house different from all the others). There were different kinds of form involved: the object form of the house and the active forms that organized the components of the field. Levittown was simple software, and one obvious marker or active form in its organization was the multiplier. The house was not a singularly crafted object but a multiplier of activities. The developer, William Levitt, turned the site into an assembly line and the homes into a population of commodities, from their frames and roofs to their TVs and washing machines.

Redesigning a single house, or the object form of the house within the suburb, may not be as powerful as addressing the active form—in this case a multiplier. A designer who intervenes in the repetitive fields of suburban space with a single house will have little impact. But designing something to be multiplied within a population

of houses has the potential to recondition the larger suburban field or hack the suburban software. For instance, when the car arrived in suburbia, it was a multiplier that required a garage to be attached to every house, and today recalibrating or reconceiving the car and its garage would multiply and spread spatial changes throughout a field of houses. More powerful than a single object form in these landscapes, multipliers piggyback on repetitive components.

The city grows or changes because of the multipliers that circulate within it—cars, elevators, mobile phones, laws, real estate formulas, structural innovations, and security technologies among them. Just as the car is a multiplier that determines the shape and design of highways and exurban development, the elevator is a simple example of a multiplier that has transformed urban morphology. In the late nineteenth century, the elevator, together with the stackable floors of structural steel skeletons, made vertical buildings possible. Those that first appeared in Chicago and New York have evolved into the modern skyscraper—a prevalent spatial product in cities around the world. The elevator's propagation, rather than its movement up and down, makes it an active form with a disposition to multiply in urban environments. Since the elevator carries the genetics of the skyscraper, altering its routines potentially has collateral effects. For instance, contemporary elevator technologies that experiment with horizontal as well as vertical movements are the germ of a very different urban morphology. The designer who deploys a new conveyance vehicle may not design the vehicle itself but the way in which it propagates in and rewrites the urban landscape.

The presence of a multiplier is not the only reason why a mass-produced suburb does not deliver on its promise of a leafy country home, just as the

elevator, as multiplier, is not the only reason for the urbanity of a city like New York or the isomorphism of the zone skyline. The multiplier is only one active form, one factor in assessing or adjusting a disposition, but it is present in almost all of the software of infrastructure space.

#### SWITCH/REMOTE

In addition to the multiplier, another common active form in infrastructure space is the switch. An interchange in a highway network acts like a switch. A dam in a hydrological network, a terminal in a transit network, an earth station in a satellite network, or an internet service provider in a broadband network are all switches. Like the ball on the inclined plane, they establish potentials. Like a valve, they may suppress or redirect. The switch may generate effects some distance down the road or the line. It is a remote control of sorts—activating a distant site to affect a local condition or vice versa. Exceeding the reach of a single object form, the switch modulates a flow of activities. However deliberate the activities of the switch, it cannot control all of its own consequences any more than one could account for every use of the water flowing through a dam.

Infrastructure space is filled with switches and remote controls, most of which are also multipliers repeated throughout the system, and tuning these active forms tunes the disposition of an organization. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth, the electrical networks that spread across developed countries promising decentralized access to power were often actually composed of a patchwork of local utilities—powerful nodes or switches in the network that had controlling monopolies.<sup>2</sup> In the development of telegraph, telephone, and

<sup>2</sup> Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society 1880–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 14, 404–60; David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 182, 266, 349, 385–9.

fiber-optic submarine cables, any landing point for the cable acted like a switch in the network that could similarly develop a monopoly and affect onward service and pricing. In both cases, generating redundant switches in the form of multiple cable landings and multiple service providers potentially gave the network a more competitive and more robust disposition.

A typical highway interchange offers only a change of direction at constant speed. It is a switch in the network, but not a very smart switch. In traffic engineering, it was believed that statistical evidence of larger and larger populations of cars warranted more and more lanes of traffic. Yet increasing capacity only increased congestion, in part because of inadequate switches. Tuning the switches in the network would be one way of addressing the fallacies of the traffic engineering interchange. Volumes of traffic, like those in rush hour, could best be handled by the larger capacities of mass transit. A smarter, more resilient transportation interchange or station might then offer an intermodal switch between highway, rail, air, and mass transit.

The character of the switches in electrical or highway networks is not the only reason why they can foster monopolies or congestion. But in each case the switch is one active form—one lever or dial in determining unanticipated dispositions in the networks.

#### WIRING/TPOLOGY

The Königsberg Bridge Problem started with a bet in a pub. The challenge was to find a route through the eighteenth-century Prussian city of Königsberg that went from the city's central island and back again without crossing any of its seven bridges more than once. In 1735, the mathematician

and physicist Leonhard Euler demonstrated that there was no possible route satisfying that criteria. In doing so, he developed a mode of analysis fundamental to contemporary thinking about network topologies—expressions of relative position and sequence in a network. Topologies model the “wiring” of an organization. It is perhaps telling that topological thinking originated with a game about circulating through urban space. Just as an electronic network is wired to support specific activities, so can space be “wired” to encourage some activities and routines over others.

Topologies are intuitive markers of disposition in an organization, and they can be considered to be assemblies of multipliers and switches. Just as we know the potential of the ball at the top of the incline, we are familiar with the potentials and capacities of networks that have, for example, linear, multi-centered, radial, serial, or parallel topologies. A linear network connects successive points along a line, as in the case of a bus, a train, or an elevator that connects sequential floors. The disposition of a linear rail system or a linear fiber-optic cable buried in the ground is different from the disposition of an atomized sea of mobile telephones. In a radial, or hub and spoke, network, like massmedia television or radio, a single central point controls the flow of information. Mainframe computing was a serial network that passed information sequentially, while a parallel network might be modeled as a more open mesh with information flowing simultaneously from many points.

Topologies are also markers of political disposition insofar as they highlight the ways in which the authorities circulate or concentrate information. In the United States, the patchwork of local electrical utilities that generated a scattering of monopolies and inefficiencies was eventually absorbed into larger centralized monopolies like

<sup>3</sup> Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 20, 7–16, 19–20, 278–85.

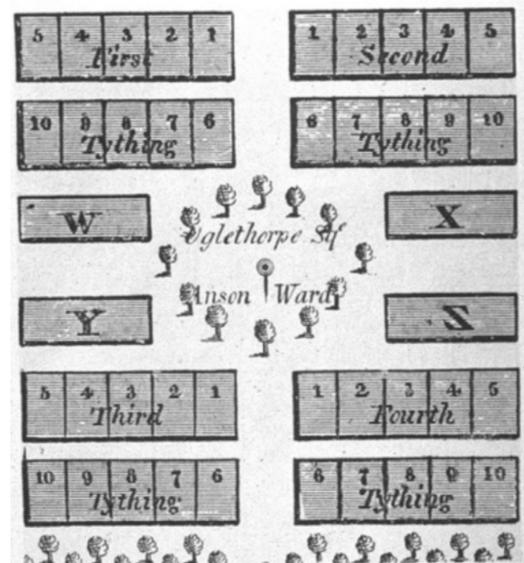
General Electric and Westinghouse. The internet, often theorized as an open mesh in which every point in the network can reach every other point, may really be more like a multi-centered organization. Sites like Google or Facebook may either help to filter information, making the web more salient and less chaotic, or shape an internet that operates more like a utility network with monopoly control.<sup>3</sup> While portrayed as relaxed and open, the zone enclave often assumes the disposition of a closed loop that will only recirculate compatible information. Yet mapping some of the zone incentives onto the city potentially changes its wiring and disposition, inviting more channels of information, circumstance, and contradiction that are the hallmarks of open, public urban space.

Again, although a contributing factor, topology alone does not determine the disposition of an organization. The same topology can sponsor very different kinds of social and political activity. Disposition in infrastructure space almost always involves compound conditions, relying not just on multipliers, switches, or their topological arrangement. It can be modeled as a network or as an *interplay* of many different kinds of active forms to create increasingly complex spatial software.

#### INTERPLAY/GOVERNOR

In 1733, James Oglethorpe designed a scheme for the New World city of Savannah, Georgia. To control real estate speculation and damage from fire, he produced not a graphic master plan—a plat or a complete set of rectilinear blocks—but rather a growth protocol or governor that established relationships between different species of urban space. The town was to grow by wards, each of which was to contain a ratio of lots to green open space. A percentage of the lots around the green, called

tythings, were reserved for residential and commercial properties, while another percentage was reserved for public or civic functions. For each ward that was developed, a quotient of agricultural space outside of town was automatically reserved. The ward was at once a multiplier and, like a calculus function, an expression of variability and interdependency where components balanced and offset each other. The Savannah protocol provided explicit geometrical instructions for each ward, but the pattern of accumulated wards could evolve without having to determine a fixed boundary or master plan of the town.



Typical ward, Savannah, Georgia

Savannah provides a vivid example of a suite of active forms, like multipliers and remotes, linked as interdependent variables in simple but sophisticated software that regulated an urban disposition. The growth protocol was like a governor in an engine or a thermostat that modulated the relative proportions of public, private, open, and

agricultural space over time. It could direct not only additional development but also its cessation or contraction. Different from an object form, the Savannah software established the terms of an interplay between spatial variables.

The golf course community—another quintessential global spatial product— involves an interplay of active forms that, like the Savannah software, links interdependent spatial variables to perform as a governor. If the goal of Savannah was to control speculation, the goal of the golf course suburb or any spatial product is to maximize profit. Two crucial interdependent variables are the debt incurred from creating the golf course and the surface area of the course itself. The surface area determines the number of lots for course-side golf villas that can be sold to offset the debt incurred in constructing the course. The surface area governs the shape of the course and vice versa. Securing a celebrity endorsement from the likes of Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer adds 15 percent to the value of each villa—just one of many variables in the game the developers play. While the appearance of the course is important, the object form is less important than its software—the powerful bits of code underlying millions of acres of development all around the world.

Many active forms circulating in the software that makes up infrastructure space can be used to hack that software. While not offering comprehensive control over an organization, active forms can nevertheless be inserted to counterbalance or redirect a disposition. They can multiply across a field, recondition a population, or generate a network. Like *cosx* or the mathematical *delta*, they can be part of an explicit expression for one way that the field changes. Active forms establish a set of parameters for what the organization will be doing over time. They have time-released powers

and cascading effects. When the object of design is not an object form or a master plan but a set of instructions for an interplay between variables, design acquires some of the power and currency of software. This spatial software is not a thing but a means to craft a multitude of interdependent relationships and sequences—an updating platform for inflecting a stream of objects. Like the engine of interplay that philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a “diagram,” an active form does not represent a single arrangement. It is an “abstract machine” generative of a “real that is yet to come.”<sup>4</sup>

As the levers of disposition in infrastructure space, active forms, in different linkages and interplays, are tools of extrastatecraft.

### *Knowing That and Knowing How*

*Ascriptions of dispositions are actions.*

—Ludger Jansen<sup>5</sup>

Most urban and architectural designers—perhaps reflecting sentiments of the broader culture—are trained to work on object forms or master plans rather than active forms in interplay. When summoned to create an active form, designers naturally rely on what they are best trained to create—a formal object *representing* action or dynamic process. A more simple-minded confusion (made more powerful by being simple-minded) arises when action or activity is confused with movement or kineticism. A building is shaped to suggest a dynamic blur of motion, or the circulation of inhabitants is mapped with a blizzard of arrows. The more complex or agitated these tracings, the more “active” the form is seen to be. Or, reflecting a modernist faith in the succession of technologies,

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “On Several Regimes of Signs,” in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 141, 142.

<sup>5</sup> Ludger Jansen, “On Ascribing Dispositions,” in Max Kistler and Bruno Gnaassounou, eds. *Dispositions and Casual Powers* (London: Ashgate, 2007), 161.

<sup>6</sup> Many contemporary architects use computer software and parametric thinking in the design of object forms. The discipline rarely applies parametric thinking to active forms—to the relationships between objects in the time and space of an expanded urban field. While digital software is not necessary to the contemplation of the spatial software, Bruno Latour muses about digital software that not only manipulates geometry but also draws into interplay a web of other urban circumstances and consequences. See the interview with Bruno Latour by María J. Prieto and Elise S. Youn, “Debriefing the Collective Experiment,” July 5, 2004, at academia.edu. Carlo Ratti and Joseph Grima’s “Open Source Architecture” is a manifesto that imagines a more diverse role for digital media in architecture and urbanism. Digital media provides a common platform, like a wiki, to collect shared components, direct fabrication, and interface with the city—a city so embedded with digital devices that it has become an “internet of things.” Carlo Ratti, Joseph Grima and additional contributors, “OSArc,” *Domus Magazine*, no. 948 (June 15, 2011); Keller Easterling, “An Internet of Things,” *E-flux*, (Spring 2012), at e-flux.com.

the form might be considered to be active only if it is coated with the newest responsive digital media.<sup>6</sup>

The distinction between form as object and form as action is something like philosopher Gilbert Ryle’s distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” With characteristic clarity and simplicity, Ryle once explained the difference between the two by using the example of a clown. The clown does not possess the correct answer to the question, “What is funny?” The clown’s antics are not a single reasoned executive order. His knowledge and experience unfold in relation to the situation, from encounter to encounter, circumstance to circumstance. He has well-rehearsed knowledge of how to do a pratfall, exaggerate his facial expressions, modulate his voice, or introduce any other gag from his bag of tricks. What is funny involves a set of choices contingent on the audience’s reactions, and the clown’s performance relies on “knowing how” rather than “knowing that.” For Ryle, the clown’s skill represents “disposition, or a complex of dispositions.”<sup>7</sup> “Knowing how” is, for Ryle, *dispositional*.<sup>8</sup>

Ryle’s contemplation of disposition supports his broader critique of the mind-body split—a consequence of what he regarded to be the false logics of Cartesian dualism. He relished the fact that he often had to look no further than expressions in everyday speech to find the most withering challenges to these logics. Intelligence is often measured in terms of the amount of knowledge that can be acquired, identified, or named. Yet, as Ryle points out, a skill is not a logical proof that can be correctly or incorrectly reasoned. He argues for an intelligence or way of knowing that has to do with *knowing how* in mind and body. “A soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them. Knowing how

to apply maxims cannot be reduced to, or derived from, the acceptance of those or any other maxims.”<sup>9</sup> Addressing the designer, Ryle might have said that the object form of a master plan betrays a desire for *knowing that*, while a growth protocol like Savannah that unfolds over time exhibits a desire for *knowing how*. In infrastructure space, to ask “what is the master plan?” is like asking “what is funny?”

With simple examples Ryle demonstrates that disposition is something we already understand given that we use dispositional expressions to explain many common phenomena in everyday life. Ryle cites Jane Austen’s changing perspective on the dispositions or temperaments of her characters as each novel unfolds. Only multiple observations of a person dealing with events over time can provide clues to their likely behaviors.<sup>10</sup> He also notes that non-human objects possess disposition. Only multiple deformations of rubber signal the material’s disposition to elasticity, and only after time can one observe that it has lost its elasticity.<sup>11</sup> Just as the ball that does not need to roll down the incline, glass does not have to be shattered in order to be brittle. There is no need for movement or event. Disposition remains as a latent potential or tendency that is present even in the absence of an event. To “possess a dispositional property,” Ryle writes, “is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular condition is realized.”<sup>12</sup> It is a “hypothetical proposition” about the glass different from an event or “episode.”<sup>13</sup>

To assess disposition is to assess how an organization deals with the variables over time—how it absorbs or deflects the active forms moving within it. Disposition does not describe a constant but rather a changing set of actions from which

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 27–33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–32, 17–33.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 89, 116.

one might assess agency, potentiality, or capacity. Considering disposition to be determinate would be impractical. For Ryle, it is a subject of some mirth that dispositional attributes are sometimes regarded as fuzzy imponderables because they cannot be reified in an event or name. Ryle refutes those theories that associate disposition with “occult” agencies or regard things like the unshattered glass as temporal processes that are in “a sort of limbo world.”<sup>14</sup>

Architecture and urbanism might have been a subject of Ryle’s sport. Treating active forms and dispositions as mysterious, unknowable conditions that cannot be legitimized as objects or representations risks losing access to the enormous political power residing in infrastructure space.<sup>15</sup> The designer is left, for instance, trying to address a machine for making golf villas with a single house, or a volatile landscape with a master plan.

Active form is not a modernist proposition; it does not replace or succeed object form but rather augments it with additional powers and artistic pleasures. The potential for both kinds of form is always present in any design. Using either is an artistic choice. Active form may partner with and propel object form determining how it will align with power to travel through infrastructure space. A design idea for suburbia becomes more powerful when it is positioned as a multiplier that affects a population of houses. An urban scheme designed as a governor has a greater likelihood of remaining in place to influence growth.

Active forms, while perhaps under-rehearsed in the design disciplines, are quite ordinary in many others. A geneticist cannot represent all the gene sequences of DNA with an image of a double helix but can engage the ongoing development of an organism with an active form that alters one of those gene sequences. An environmentalist does not

attempt to manage a forest by wiring every bird in every tree or planting every sprig of undergrowth, but will send in instrumental players that inflect ecologies over time. Entrepreneurs design not only the product but also its passage through a market, perhaps using a mobile phone network or a repetitive suburb to multiply products and desires. A computer scientist would never attempt to fully represent the internet but would rather author active forms that ride the network with very explicit instructions. In all these examples, there is no desire for a singular, comprehensive or utopian solution. Power lies rather in the prospect of shaping a series of activities and relationships over time.

The extrastatecraft of infrastructure space is artistically and intellectually attracted to the idea of designing action and interplay as well as designing objects. Even though design orthodoxies may favor a training in knowing that, some of the real power players in the world, for whom infrastructure is a secret weapon, would never relinquish their faculties for designing both object and active form—for *knowing that* and *knowing how*.

### Temperament

When the social scientist and cybernetician Gregory Bateson referred to a man, a tree, and an ax as an information system, he made self-evident the idea that the activities of infrastructure space can be a medium of information. For those like Bateson who foretold the digital revolution but were not yet completely surrounded by digital devices, it was perhaps easier to understand that anything—human or non-human, digital or non-digital—could be a carrier of information. Like Ryle, Bateson did not regard this activity to be “supernatural” or occult, but rather saw information

<sup>15</sup> Artists and architects have, at various junctures, pursued design as software or an interplay of active components. For artists like Jack Burnham or Les Levine, software was at once a literal tool and a model or metaphor. The architect Cedric Price designed architecture as a performance of components rather than a single object, in projects like Fun House or (*cont.*) Generator, among many others. Architect and mathematician Christopher Alexander used set theory to organize the relationships between components of urban and architectural design, arguing for the semi-lattice rather than the hierarchical tree as the underlying structure. Nicholas Negroponte’s Architecture Machine Group attempted to use urban space as a physical test bed for an expanded field of computing. While the occasional desire for determinacy arguably weakened some of these experiments, they have, however anecdotally, nourished the project of active forms. See Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968); Cedric Price, *The Square Book* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2003), reprint of Cedric Price, *Works II* (London: Architectural Association, 1984); Christopher Alexander, “The City is not a Tree,” *Architectural Forum* 122, nos. 1 and 2 (April–May 1965), 58–62; and Nicholas Negroponte, *The Architecture Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 70–93.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 119–20.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 464, 472.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 381, 462, 315, 272, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Hampton Press, 2000), 101.

<sup>19</sup> Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 95

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

as an ordinary currency for exchanges between humans and non-humans.<sup>16</sup> “Information is a difference that makes a difference,” he famously wrote.<sup>17</sup> Objects do not need to be enhanced by digital technologies or coated with sensors. To the degree that they “make a difference” in the world, they create influences, intentions, and relationships that constitute information. The information manifests, not in text or code, but in activity.

Bateson’s work also tutors an understanding of the active forms that manage information in infrastructure space. He wrote about “governors,” like those found in a thermostat or a steam engine, as mechanisms for modulating information—the temperature or pressure in a system—just as Savannah was a governor for modulating real estate speculation. Of switches, he wrote that a switch is a thing that “is not.” In other words, the switch controls a dispositional flow of changes—a flow of information. “It is related to the notion ‘change’ rather than to the notion ‘object.’”<sup>18</sup>

While Bateson’s more comprehensive cybernetic speculations about homeostasis in organizations are perhaps to be avoided, his work further deepens an understanding of disposition with its speculations on temperament or political bearing—the tension, violence, stability, or resilience immanent in organizations. Bateson’s catholic intelligence ranged across mathematics, communication technology, neurophysiology, game theory, and logic and did not subdivide the world into the subjects of different sciences. Assessing any subject with this cybernetic epistemology—be it electronic circuits, nations, tribes from New Guinea, or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings—Bateson could also transpose sociological assessments of tension and violence to behaviors inherent in groups or to simple topologies and network relationships.

Bateson began by looking at a number of binary

patterns in human behavior, whether between individuals or between groups, as in “Republican-Democrat, political Right-Left, sex differentiation, God and the devil, and so on.” He noted that people even attempt to square off in binary oppositions over things that are “not dual in nature—youth versus age, labor versus capital, mind versus matter.” So ingrained are these binary habits for group behavior that they induce myopia in their proponents. Bateson was interested in ternary systems as an alternative to binaries. He suggested that the proponents of binary relationships “lack the organizational devices for handling triangular systems; the inception of a ‘third party’ is always regarded, for example, as a threat to our political organization.” He was especially interested in how and why such binaries generate divisive situations.<sup>19</sup> Three models of binary relationships receive the most attention in Bateson’s writings: symmetrical, complimentary, and reciprocal.

In symmetrical relationships both sides of the binary compete for same dominant position. They mirror each other, and their mimicry may escalate toward “extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system.”<sup>20</sup> Imagine identical twins competing for parental affection. Some of these binaries he characterized as complementary motifs: “dominance-submission, succoring-dependence, and exhibitionism-spectatorship.”<sup>21</sup>

In complementary behavior, one party provides an ingredient necessary for the other. Think of the beta dog consistently submitting to the alpha dog to maintain the stability of the pack hierarchy. While submission might be reinforcing and stabilizing in some instances, it can also lead to hostility if “submissiveness promotes further assertiveness which in turn will promote further submissiveness.”<sup>22</sup>

### *Stories are Active Forms*

In reciprocal relationships, individuals or groups oscillate between symmetrical and complementary relationships. There is an understanding that dominance might be shared, or that one group might be submissive in some encounters and dominant in others. Reciprocal relationships distribute power over time and allow for the trading of roles in a way that stabilizes the relationship. Imagine a group of poker players who take turns letting each other win so that no one member is wiped out and the entire group can continue playing.<sup>23</sup>

It may seem far-fetched to assign temperament to infrastructure spaces, but concentrations of power, tension, competition, and submission are immanent in their arrangements. Applied to urban space, it is easy to see the latent violence in binaries of competition and submission such as East and West Jerusalem, San Diego and Tijuana, North and South Sudan, or the mirroring shores of Spain and North Africa.

Bateson also treats violence, tension, competition, and submission in terms of information flow. In competitive or destructive states, the flow of information collapses, whereas in balanced reciprocal organizations, information is more easily exchanged. Bateson considers the stabilizing effects of breaking binaries and increasing the possibility of exchange. His thinking highlights network arrangements that concentrate authority or constrict information, spatial relations that escalate violent situations, as well as organizations that are plural and robustly networked. Restrictions of information, like the closed loop of the zone or the monopolies in electrical or telecommunication networks, are—like the surface ripples on the river—markers of more complex and potentially dangerous dispositions.

Stories that a culture tells about infrastructure space can script the use of that space; yet in the case of highways, ARPAnet, electrical utilities, Facebook, or the zone, the organizations slipped away from the stories that were attached to them. The misalignment between the activity of an organization and its stated intent is often the first signal of an undeclared disposition. Yet beyond the declaration of intent, some social stories play an additional, powerful role in the ongoing process of shaping disposition.

The sociologist, anthropologist, and theorist Bruno Latour has long recognized that networks like infrastructure space are active and that they are composed of social and technical actors. Humans shape infrastructure space deciding, for instance, that electricity will be used for power, lighting, and telecommunications as a public utility accessed via sockets and plugs. But for Latour non-human technologies are also actors. Humans create computers, for example, but computers in turn act upon humans. They are shaped to human needs as devices that respond to hands and laps, but they also inspire further human uses and even the very mental structures that conceive of them. That altered way of thinking influences in turn the next iteration of the computer. In other words, technologies are non-human actors or “actants” influencing the desires and practices of the humans who reciprocally shape them. Indeed, beyond the human/non-human binary for Latour nothing is *merely* an object.

Everything is “doing something” and cannot be separated from its actions.<sup>24</sup> Latour uses this observation to destabilize the habits of his own discipline. He has been critical of those studies of social-technical networks that use evidence merely to confirm existing presumptions about social

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–9.

<sup>24</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 52.

<sup>25</sup> STS scholars and theorists would include Bruno Latour, Wiebe E. Bijker, Trevor Pinch, Thomas P. Hughes, Thomas J. Misa, and David E. Nye among others.

<sup>26</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 8n11, 5. Latour criticizes Durkheimian practices and steps away from, for instance, Erving Goffman's or Pierre Bourdieu's work. Goffman and Bourdieu both use the term "disposition" in a way most pertinent to social studies. Bourdieu, who was also transposing his work to an active realm of practice, used the word to describe a repeatedly structured set of cultural activities or habitus. Latour perhaps extends this by suggesting that sociology might overcome its own habitus to further consider evolving practices. In this he departs from a branch of sociotechnical studies, arguing that it sometimes enshrines social forms as structured patterns and habits or reifies the structures of social "science." These are the very constructs he wishes to renovate by considering both humans and things, actors and non-human actants, in networks. He raises questions, for instance, about Wiebe Bijker's account in *Social Shaping of Technology* (1995), because "the social is kept stable all along and accounts for the shape of technological change."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 223.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

patterns or habits.<sup>25</sup> In response, he offers an analytic framework that he calls actor-network theory (ANT) to renovate and "[redefine] sociology not as the 'science of the social', but as the *tracing of associations*."<sup>26</sup> Rather than codifying or taxonomizing the social or cultural story, he describes a dialogue between humans and non-human technologies that is constantly unfolding and impossible to fix.

An active form can be organizational like a multiplier, a remote, a switch, or a governor, but since the social and technical interact with each other, an active form can also be a social story—not a vessel in which to fix meaning but a carrier to channel a flow of meanings. Form, Latour writes, is "simply something which allows something else to be transported from one site to another ... To provide a piece of information is the action of putting something into a form."<sup>27</sup>

A story as an active form, however immaterial and non-spatial, can inflect disposition in infrastructure space and can be deployed with spatial intent. For example, the developer William Levitt associated his suburban housing with familial and patriotic narratives that were particularly infectious in the post-war period, and such stories accelerated the spatial effects of the house as multiplier. The house, its repetitive organization, and the story attached to it all constitute information that contributes to disposition. Similarly, cultural stories about the zone as a rational, apolitical instrument of economic liberalism are active forms that, however disconnected from the actual activities of the organization, drive the zone's popularity and shape its disposition. A new persuasion about the zone mapped back onto existing cities can be designed as a multiplier with both social and technological components—actors and actants that together alter urban space.

Latour, like Ryle, also uses theatrical

performance as a model for the ways in which a string of social actions or stories can influence social-technical networks. Noting that it is "not by accident" that words like script and actor are used in social studies, Latour writes, "Play-acting puts us immediately into a thick imbroglio where the question of who is carrying out the action has become unfathomable." Actions are "dislocated ... borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated."<sup>28</sup> Social networks are "a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled. It is this venerable source of uncertainty that we wish to render vivid again in the odd expression of actor-network."<sup>29</sup>

In some of his formulations of ANT, Latour even makes passing reference to the sociologist Erving Goffman. While distancing himself from more conventional sociology, Latour uses Goffman to make palpable the activities that surround social interactions in excess of declared intentions. Goffman used the word "disposition" to refer to all the gestures, postures, facial expressions, and myriad subtexts deployed in an individual's almost theatrical presentation of self.<sup>30</sup> He marveled that while all these signals often overwhelm, or are "discrepant" from, what a person is actually saying, they are rarely "systematically examined."<sup>31</sup>

Discussions of performance, indeterminacy, and discrepancy in Ryle, Latour, and Goffman are suggestive of special aesthetic practices used to confront the politics of infrastructure space. With an artistic repertoire like that of a performer, the designer of active forms, comfortable with less control, works on an unfolding stream of objects rather than a single shape. For the designer of stories as active forms—social forms that are nevertheless intended to have spatial consequences—discrepancy presents additional opportunities. Just as the

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 46; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1959), 141–66.

<sup>31</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 254–5.

powers that be in infrastructure space are usually offering persuasive stories that are decoupled from what their organizations are actually doing, performers are accustomed to the idea that action is a carrier of information that may be discrepant from the stated text. Actors have a script (e.g., “come home son”), but their real work lies in crafting an action, usually with an infinitive expression (to grovel, to reject, to caress).<sup>32</sup> The action, not to be confused with movement or choreography, is the real carrier of information, meaning, and change, and it may be entirely disconnected from the text. Comfort with crafting discrepant, indeterminate action allows design to engage both the naturally occurring dislocations of meaning as well as the duplicitous politics of extrastatecraft.

### *Diagnostics*

*Neither deterministic nor wholly malleable, technology sets some parameters of individual and social action...Different technologies make different kinds of human action and interaction easier or harder to perform.*

—Yochai Benkler<sup>33</sup>

Disposition is an extra diagnostic tool for assessing undisclosed capacity or political bearing in infrastructure space. A multitude of active forms can be used to both detect and adjust a disposition. Like powerful bits of code that can hack the infrastructural operating system, these forms may be technological, organizational, or social. Indeterminate in order to be practical, such forms deliver not a plan but an interplay capable of adjusting different situations and managing a disposition over time.

A contemplation of disposition also summons Michel Foucault’s theories about a social and

political “apparatus” or “system of relations” that he called a *dispositif*. For Foucault a *dispositif* was “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid.”<sup>34</sup>

The designer of disposition in infrastructure space is a performer. Active form supplements the aesthetics of object form while addressing the politics of discrepancy in extrastatecraft. Not limited to prescription, the designer can engage in improvisation—in the pleasures of *knowing how* as well as *knowing that*.

Finally, a reading of Latour also offers cautions that are further discussed in the chapter titled “Stories.” The stories that humans attach to technologies like infrastructure space can become enshrined or ossified as ingrained expectations. Stories may evolve beyond fluid scripts for shaping a technology into ideologies that dictate the disposition of an organization. However immaterial, these ideological stories have the power to buckle concrete and bend steel, and they can often be difficult to escape.

<sup>33</sup> Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 16–17. Network theorist Yochai Benkler refers to what STS philosopher Langdon Winner called the “political properties” of technology, or what sociologist Barry Wellman called its “affordances,” which describes some of the special capacities of social media and the internet; see also Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” a round table interview from 1977, in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 194.

<sup>32</sup> Sharing a sensibility for theater, Ryle, for instance, makes a distinction between active or “performance” verbs and verbs like “know,” “possess” and “aspire.” One would not say, for example, “he is now engaged in possessing a bicycle.” See Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 130, 116.

## Extrastatecraft: Extrastatecraft

Keller Easterling

THE 1999 BATTLE OF SEATTLE LAUNCHED AN ONGOING protest against the WTO and globalization, yet the zone continues as the engine room of globalization, immune from any protest or significant regulation.<sup>1</sup> The “No Blood for Oil” marches of 2003 brought millions of people all over the world into the streets to protest the war in Iraq. Yet, largely unaffected, the Bush Administration proceeded with the war, swaying sentiment with claims of weapons of mass destruction that did not exist. The demonstrations of the Arab Spring spread across North Africa and the Middle East demanding democratic reforms in government. Yet governments could shut down the protests simply by switching off the internet that had been used to organize them. In 2011, the Occupy movement stood up to represent the 99 percent against the 1 percent in the United States who enjoy excessive power and wealth. Even as their resistance mobilizes global unrest around similar issues, the 1 percent maintains its control over elections and legislation.

In countering authoritarian forces, familiar forms of activism are often galvanized around at least a provisional declaration. Assembling and standing firm together, the activists reject abusive policies and protect those who are the target of abuse. Dissent, as resistance and refusal, must often assume an oppositional stance. Activists may fight and die for their principles, employing tactics that often require enormous courage to enact. The most lauded activist takes a stand, fights for what is right, chooses sides, and decides who is and is

not sympathetic to the cause. Strongly held, forthright beliefs support the vigilant maintenance of solidarity, decency, and justice. David must kill Goliath.

Yet many powerful players that these activists oppose maintain fluid or *undeclared* intentions by saying something different from what they are doing. It is easy to toy with or trick activist resistance if declaration is all that qualifies as information. When targeted, the powerful wander away from the bull's-eye, arranging for shelter or immunity elsewhere. They may successfully propagate a rumor (e.g., that there is evidence of WMD, that climate change is hoax, that Obama is not a US citizen) to capture the world's attention. Switching the characters in the story, they may even come costumed as resisters. Goliath finds a way to pose as David.

Dissent is then often left shaking its fist at an effigy. Activists who show up at the barricade, the border crossing, or the battleground with familiar political scripts sometimes find that the real fight or the stealthier forms of violence are happening somewhere else. Attempting to cure its failures with “purification,” the left consolidates, and expels those who seem to compromise its values.<sup>2</sup> And it must make of its opponent an even more dangerous ur-force—an “Unspecified Enemy” like Capital, Empire, or Neoliberalism.

In this way, assumptions regarding the proper techniques and territories for political work may ironically generate some of activism's most significant internal constraints, foreclosing on the very insurgency that it wishes to instigate. Righteous ultimatums or binaries of enemies and innocents that offer only collusion or refusal might present a structural obstacle greater than any quasi-mythical opponent. In these tragic endgames, the idea that there is a proper realm of political negotiation may

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair, and Allan Sekula, *5 Days that Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Todd Gitlin, “The Self-Inflicted Wounds of the Academic Left,” *The Chronicle Review* 52, no. 35 (2006), B6, at <http://chronicle.com>.

even act as the perfect camouflage for undeclared political power.

Still, any deviation from the accepted techniques, even in an attempt to aid and broaden activism, may be interpreted as a betrayal of principles. Entering the market as an entrepreneur, even if only to manipulate that market, is mistaken for collusion. Giving positive attention to agents of systemic change rather than negative opposition to a series of enemies is mistaken for an uncritical stance. Relinquishing overt resistance is mistaken for capitulation or ethical relativism. Answering duplicity with duplicity is mistaken for equivocation or lack of conviction rather than a technique to avoid disclosing a deliberate strategy.<sup>3</sup> In the end, righteous and combative narratives may exhaust themselves and escalate tensions. Dissent, in these instances, is inconsolable.

### *An Expanded Activist Repertoire in Infrastructure Space*

*The binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one.*

—Colin Gordon<sup>4</sup>

There are times to stand up, name an opponent, or assume a binary stance of resistance against authoritarian power, but supplementing these forms of dissent are activist stances that are both harder to target and less interested in being right. Just as many of the most powerful regimes in the world find it expedient to operate with proxies and doubles in infrastructure space, the most familiar forms of activism might similarly benefit from using undisclosed partners or *unorthodox* auxiliaries, if only to soften up the ground and offer a better chance of success.

An unorthodox auxiliary entertains techniques that are less heroic, less automatically oppositional, more effective, and sneakier—techniques like gossip, rumor, gift-giving, compliance, mimicry, comedy, remote control, meaninglessness, misdirection, distraction, hacking, or entrepreneurialism. Working together in different constellations, these techniques cannot be isolated or pedantically defined. While they are long-standing practices, for designers accustomed to making object forms or for activists accustomed to making declarations, this alternative aesthetic and political repertoire is perhaps unfamiliar.

Such techniques are politically inflected incarnations of the active forms discussed throughout this book. In infrastructure space, the crucial information about a political bearing is often found not in declaration but in disposition—in an immanent activity and organization. All the active forms that shape spatial products, free zones, broadband technoscapes, and other networks—the multipliers, remotes, interdependencies, or topological adjustments—are both the markers of a disposition and the means to tune or alter it. To hack the operating system by, for instance, breaking up monopolies, increasing access to broadband, or exposing enclaves to richer forms of urbanity is to engage the political power of disposition in infrastructure space.

Redesigning disposition in infrastructure space is not a duel. Given the broad foundational space of infrastructure, the active forms that generate dispositions are capable of effecting significant changes to the operating system. The activist need not face off against every weed in the field but rather, unannounced, alter the chemistry of the soil. Dispositional capacities invite an approach to both form-making and activism that is more performative than prescriptive. While some political

<sup>3</sup> Architecture discourses often drift toward tragic or stock narratives. For instance, with its attraction to tragic ultimates and endgames, Manfredo Tafuri's critique of the "impotent and ineffectual myths" of a political architecture is apt if architecture sees as its only tools object form and ideology. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), 178, 182.

<sup>4</sup> Colin Gordon, "Afterword" in Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 256–7.

<sup>5</sup> Bruno Latour and Vincent Antoni Lépinay, *The Science of Passionate Interests: An Introduction to Gabriel Tarde's Economic Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 136.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 143–4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 37, 29–44, 142–3.

<sup>10</sup> “Sen. Inhofe Delivers Major Speech on the Science of Climate Change,” at [inhofe.senate.gov](http://inhofe.senate.gov).

traditions call for inversions, revolutions, or the absolute annihilation of the old system, a shift in disposition may sponsor the *ongoing* reconditioning or revolutionizing of a spatio-political climate. Such adjustments may reduce tensions and violence, and because they are undeclared, they need not call up the prevailing dogmas that must, if named, square up for a symmetrical fight.

An alternative activist repertoire exploits the cultural stories as well as the organizational attributes that inflect disposition. The discrepancies between story and disposition—the ways in which power says something different from what it is doing—offer the first political opening. Discrepancy is always present in the ever-changing dialogue between humans and technologies. It may be a symptom of an organization in denial, with its activities decoupled from its story. It may expose the distance between reality and an overused or degraded ideological story like liberalism. Or it may be the result of a deliberate deception. Focusing on discrepancy is then not only useful in detecting an underlying but undeclared disposition, it is also an opportunity to launch a counter-narrative. It tutors an activism in which the forthright may be less important than the fictional or the sly.

Releasing the tense grip of binary resistance, the auxiliary activist never turns around for the duel but continues pacing away into a new field of extrastatecraft.

### *Gossip/Rumor/Hoax*

*There is no manager more powerful than consumption, nor, as a result, any factor more powerful—albeit indirect—in production than the chatter of individuals in their idle hours.*

—Gabriel Tarde<sup>5</sup>

Gossip, rumor, and hoax are common tools for destabilizing power, and all of the multipliers present in infrastructure space facilitate such trickery.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott argues against enshrining the techniques of politics proper, looking instead at the actual tools most frequently used by the politically oppressed. Referencing figures from Balzac to Brer Rabbit, he writes, “Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of power holders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites.”<sup>6</sup>

Scott identifies rumor and gossip as tools of aggression among the powerless. The servant gossips about the master; the underlings can, with anonymity, stir up public opinion about the boss. Gossip, he wrote, never starts anywhere. The “linguistic equivalent and forerunner of witchcraft,” it magically multiplies without attribution, and it cannot be contained.<sup>7</sup> It is a technique of “infrapolitics,” the invisible, subterranean territory of subordinate groups.<sup>8</sup> In this way, gossip and rumor are similar to the disguises, tricks, and *perruques*—the “art of the weak”—about which the scholar and theorist Michel de Certeau writes.<sup>9</sup>

Still, rumor and gossip are also available to the powerful as well as the weak. Hoax and spin are the raw material of politics. They fuel everyday mischief while also being a practical technique of markets and governments. For the last decade, James Inhofe, a Republican congressman from Oklahoma, has led a dogged campaign to convince the world that climate change is a hoax. In a 2003 senate committee speech, Inhofe claimed that the elaborate climate change hoax was designed to “satisfy the evergrowing demand of environmental groups for money and power and other extremists who simply don’t like capitalism,

free markets, and freedom.”<sup>10</sup> Media personalities like Rush Limbaugh provided the story with its necessary multiplier. Limbaugh is what is variously known in pop-culture marketing terms as a “connector” or a “sneezer”—someone with the capacity to contact a large number of people.<sup>11</sup> After nearly ten years of broadcasting and embellishing the argument, he claims that the left is finally also convinced that global warming was all an elaborate ruse.<sup>12</sup>

During the US presidential election of 2008, since it was very easy to demonstrate that Barack Obama was Christian, claiming that he was a Muslim was a very effective rumor. It found a compelling multiplier that thrived even on its own falsehood. Being false, it was kept alive even longer and repeated twice over—first to spread the falsehood and then to refute it. Rumor and gossip are less reliant on content than on the way that content behaves, so that what must be designed is not only the content, but also the *bounce* of the rumor—its active forms.

In the extrastatecraft of infrastructure space, tuning a multiplier is like crafting rumor or gossip. Designers can alter the repertoire of a technology to be more suited to certain populations just as the construction of suburban homes was designed as an assembly-line process. Similarly, a new spatial protocol will be more powerful if it finds a carrier that multiplies it. Infrastructure space is thick with technologies that are potential multipliers: populations of suburban houses, skyscrapers, vehicles, spatial products, zones, mobile phones, or global standards.

As with rumors, active forms are also social or narrative forms, and the designer can enhance the spatial consequences of a multiplier with the non-spatial stories that accompany it. Just as the US suburban house was popularized in part

through narratives about family and patriotism, a persuasion or ideology attached to a technology may deliver it to a ready audience or a powerful political machine. The cell phone, for example, is characterized as a source of freedom, a political right, and a tool of economic liberalization. A new free zone, even before completion, is rumored to be a world city *fait accompli* in an attempt to capture a slice of the global market. The most official communiqué or the most hard-boiled business plan, while purporting to rely on facts, often marshals evidence in a pliable reality that relies on fiction.

Just as the ideological stories that accompany infrastructure space, however immaterial, can have enormous physical consequences, so a counter-story, even a deceptive one, may be the most immaterial yet most effective way to move mountains in infrastructure space. Discussing “energy narratives,” David E. Nye cites the moment when, despite a domestic oil crisis, President Reagan persisted in sending out sunny messages about “abundance.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, rather than reveal the dangers surrounding oil extraction, oil companies adopt the imagery of green technologies. Using a story to different ends, the graphic design firm Pentagram countered the assumption that green energy policy is the province of leftist politics by associating it with early American patriotism. Their posters for Cleveland’s new energy policies portrayed a green revolutionary soldier or minuteman who became a memorable icon in the city’s conservation campaign.<sup>14</sup> And the activist organization Greenpeace dramatizes environmental abuse with media-genic “mind bombs” in an alternative form of war.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps only a design that combines organizational active forms with narrative active forms has any chance of successfully engaging the world’s powerful spatial products. For example, when

<sup>11</sup> Two examples of pop-culture books about marketing are Seth Godin, *Unleashing the Idea Virus* (New York: Do You Zoom, 2001); and Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little Brown, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Rush Limbaugh, “Left Just Now Discovering Global Warming Hoax,” April 1, 2013, at [rushlimbaugh.com](http://rushlimbaugh.com).

<sup>13</sup> Nye, “Energy Narratives,” in *Narratives and Spaces*, 85–6.

<sup>14</sup> “Green Machines,” at <http://new.pentagram.com>.

<sup>15</sup> See “History” at [greenpeace.org](http://greenpeace.org).

<sup>16</sup> “Some Facts About Wal-Mart’s Energy Conservation Measures,” at <http://news.walmart.com>.

<sup>17</sup> For an exhibition of architectural rumors see *Some True Stories: Researches in the Field of Flexible Truth*, Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York City, November, 2008 at storefront-news.org

<sup>18</sup> “Celtel Chief Unveils \$5 Million Award for Governance,” *Property Kenya*, October 31, 2006, at propertykenya.com. Ibrahim founded Celtel International (subsequently bought by Zain and Bahari Airtel) and turned it into one of the continent’s largest mobile phone operators. He is one of the most successful African businessmen.

Wal-Mart replaced electric lighting with day lighting, sales actually increased.<sup>16</sup> Here a spatial rumor could find a multiplier in the roof areas and megawatts of power-usage in Wal-Mart stores worldwide, but the environmentally sensitive designer might also embellish this with a narrative rumor—mixture of fact and fiction or what Hollywood calls “faction.” A day-light roof is then reported as being an essential new condition for all big box stores, and whether this is true or false is less important than how the rumor will bounce within its audience. While utopian or visionary projections offer comprehensive, reasonable, even righteous, reforms, the less resolute factions in the global confidence game offer rumors that may be more contagious.<sup>17</sup>

### *Pandas*

Another powerful technique of extrastatecraft, seemingly very different from resistance, is that of the gift. In 2005, China offered Taiwan two pandas named Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan. The names, when translated, mean “unity”—referring to the unity with mainland China that Taiwan has passionately refused. The pandas were used here to deploy a fiction of friendship, replacing opposition with conciliatory flattery, while the undisclosed disposition may actually reflect a low-grade but persistent form of aggression. Excessively soft and cute, the panda is a steamroller of sweetness and kindness—an arm-twisting handshake that disarms and controls with apparent benevolence. The pandas were thus used to exert political leverage by exploiting a currency in values, social signals, and sentiments not usually quantified in the marketplace or treated in economic theory.

Infrastructure space—with its free zones,

broadband networks, oil exploration, and spatial products—offers many pandas, or gifts that cannot be refused. The zone itself was a “gift” from developed countries to developing countries, one that promised to rescue them from poverty and bestow upon them membership in a global economic club. Yet when global corporations offer to developing countries the gift of mobile telephony or social networking, they are often actually giving themselves a gift—a large amount of data about the world’s next big crop of consumers. Oil exploration in the Ecuadorian Amazon promised to bring progress to the region, just as development formulas like LAPSSET come with promises of economic solvency, global fluency, and signature architecture. These sorts of gifts have often leveraged from their host countries billions of consumers, exploitative cheap labor, and immunity from regulation even in the face of labor and environmental abuses.

Gifts of another sort try to temper such abuse by using awards or prizes as incentives for productive behavior or self-regulation. The Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement uses profits from mobile telephony to grant 5 million dollars over ten years and \$200,000 per year for life to an elected African official who has served their term and demonstrated strong leadership.<sup>18</sup> The Global Citizen Award, sponsored by Clinton’s Global Initiative, the Aga Khan Awards, the XPrize, and the targeted philanthropy of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are among countless examples of awards used to incentivize socially responsible individuals and projects. Certification systems like ISO or Social Accountability International also similarly reward selected behaviors.

In extrastatecraft, however, the give-and-take designed into an interplay of spatial variables may offer active forms like governors—pandas more

powerful than awards and self-congratulatory certificates. Governors can establish a counterbalancing interdependency that may remain in place to extract more benefits for labor or the environment. They can be designed to yield more than inferior jobs in global free zones. Like the offsets that were part of Dubai's deal with foreign investors, the offerings of workers, urbanity, natural resources, and consumers can be used more effectively to leverage access to education, technology transfers, wilderness preservation, and better labor practices.

### *Exaggerated Compliance*

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott draws attention to a passage in Milan Kundera's *The Joke* in which the prisoners in the story are challenged to a relay race against the camp guards. The prisoners decide to run very slowly, while wildly cheering each other on. Their compliance brings them together in an act of defiance that does not diminish their energies as would competing or fighting. Compliance can disarm and deliver independence from authority.<sup>19</sup> It can destabilize an enemy that is bracing for opposition rather than an obedient response.

When the mayor of Copenhagen, Ritt Bjerregaard, made a campaign promise of 5,000 affordable apartments for the city, the Danish architecture firm PLOT (later BIG and JDS Architects) appeared to rush to her aid by producing designs for the buildings in advance. Their designs kept the issue in the press, making it hard for the mayor to break her promise and forcing a design competition for the housing. In this way, compliant activism can mobilize resources for change in advance of political will—submitting to and even congratulating power on intentions it never had.

The New York City Occupy movement generated symbolic capital by demonstrating that the Occupy Kitchen set up to feed the protestors was actually better at delivering food to the needy than many of the municipal agencies paid to do the job. Winning over their potential critics, they got the upper hand. Like good children whose perfect grades and model behavior strip their parents of all authority, the compliant activist can run rings around supposedly more powerful players.

Responding to the Taksim Square protests of 2013 in Istanbul, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivered a speech in which he referred to the protesters as *çapulcu* or “looters.” The protesters responded by embracing the insult, using it on social media, and printing it on T-shirts and bags. The label served as both a protective camouflage and call to arms. Made into a verb, *çapulung* even came to mean standing up for your rights.<sup>20</sup>

Exaggerated compliance is central to the tactical bluffs of infrastructure deal-making. Infrastructure contractors have long operated under the banner of economic liberalism, and their access to new territories is often characterized as a struggle with regulation. The companies laying terrestrial or submarine fiberoptic cable in Kenya were all competing against each other for market share while being forced to “submit” to regulations from the host nation, the World Bank, or some other organization. They would all characterize each other as monopolists and competitors at any one moment in the game. Yet, the smartest entrepreneurs discovered that if they stayed together in a reciprocal game, alternating between resistance to regulation and compliance, they generated collective advantages. And the open, competitive system to which they appeared to submit would yield a larger market.

In extrastatecraft, picking one's submissions

<sup>19</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 139–40; Milan Kundera, *The Joke* (New York: Harper, 1992), 139–40.

<sup>20</sup> Sebnem Arsu, “Protest Group Gives Turkish Officials Demands,” *New York Times*, June 6, 2013. The author is indebted to A. J. Artemel for sharing his research on the 2013 anti-government protests in Turkey.

rather than one's battles is an almost invisible, noncontroversial means of gaining advantage in the field without drawing attention to a broader strategy.

### *Doubling*

Head-to-head confrontations are marked by competition and symmetrical mimicry that often leads to violence. Another kind of mimicry, the double, can be not only a source of competition but also an opportunity for confusion and disguise. The double is a skill or proxy that, like twin siblings, can sometimes fool the world or launder an identity. A double can also simply hijack the place or power of its counterpart to increase its territory in the world.

Employing the double as imposter or caricature has long been a tactic in exposing the absurdities of authority. In 2007, a member of the activist group The Yes Men posed on the BBC as an executive from Dow Chemical (which owns Union Carbide) and announced that the company had, after years of evasion, finally decided to make full restitution for all of the suffering they had caused in Bhopal. A Yes Men member also posed as speaker in the US Chamber of Commerce, promoting green policies that the organization lobbies against. Another member appeared at a Wharton Business School conference suggesting that “full private stewardry of labor,” or the buying and selling of human beings, was a realistic approach to economic stability in Africa. The Yes Men could then report that this advocacy of slavery, smothered in jargon, had been politely received without questions or challenges from the floor.<sup>21</sup>

The Dutch non-profit organization Women on Waves (WoW), founded in 1999, is a double that addresses women's reproductive rights by adopting

the imbricated sovereignties and shifting political identities used in commercial maritime trade. Commercial ships move between legal jurisdictions as they cross from national to international waters. When in international waters, they are subject to the laws of the country in which they are registered. Many shipping companies select legal responsibilities that work to their advantage by registering in a country with, for instance, lax labor or environmental laws. Exploiting this freedom, WoW funds a medical ship that conducts abortions for women from countries where abortion is illegal by sailing into international waters where only Dutch law has jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup>

On their day off, domestic workers in Hong Kong meet by the hundreds in the central public spaces of the city that are otherwise inhabited by their employers. Taking over these open spaces, they sit, talk, prepare meals, and reconnect to their home culture. Their occupation is entirely peaceful and yet is a way for the workers to stand their ground and establish themselves as a group of professionals, rather than invisible servants. The doubling is passive but resolute.

The Tea Party movement used the label “fascist” to describe Obama, thus hijacking a marker that had been used defensively by the left to refer to power seized through the exploitation of fear and hatred. The Tea Party double was used offensively to instigate the same kind of fear and hatred that might have been originally anticipated. The double simultaneously defanged the term in its previous usage and inoculated the present user against the accusation.

The doubled and redoubled ideological stories that attend infrastructure space can be used to commandeer political support. FDR appropriated the liberal label to sway right-wing sentiment for his New Deal policies—to capture territory

<sup>21</sup> See <http://theyesmen.org>.

<sup>22</sup> See [womenonwaves.org](http://womenonwaves.org).

and either confuse or neutralize the arguments of laissez-faire. Sentiments surrounding liberalization have fueled contemporary development patterns related to the zone or to broadband urbanism. The neoliberal label is yet another doubling used to expose the inequities of liberalization and privatization, and something like a libertarian strain of liberalism now attends the “free” exchange of information in social media and the communities they sponsor.

Market platforms like Jana are doubles of the activist crowd-sourcing platform Ushahidi. Jana comes cloaked in ideas about the well-being of the collective and a rerouting of compensation from big business to billions of cell phone customers. Yet it remains to be seen whether Jana will leverage useful income and other assets for developing countries or whether it will be used primarily to shape a consumer market—whether its primary research will be conducted for the UN or for Unilever.

Just as the privateer was a shadow for the state, zone urbanism has served as the double for Hong Kong in Shenzhen, Mumbai in Navi Mumbai, Seoul in New Songdo City, and Almaty in Astana. Each major city or capital has a camouflaging agent able to conduct business with relaxed laws and less accountability, allowing it to operate in more fluid or profitable global networks.

The double can also engineer a replacement for abusive or unproductive situations by creating a twin enterprise that satisfies or exceeds projected revenues while being a carrier of alternative politics. When the zone doubles the city, it becomes the city, potentially adopting the politics and public accountability that the city offers without reducing revenues. The interplay of spatial variables in the new broadband digital village and the new financial portfolio for subtracting development are doubles—parallel markets designed to slip into and

displace existing markets, social habits, and desires.

Extrastatecraft as an alternative activist repertoire is, in some ways, a doubling of the kind of extrastatecraft practiced by the world’s most powerful. It creates not a binary—an enemy and an innocent—but rather countless mirrorings of power in a world where no one is innocent. It monitors the sleight of hand of any double in the world even as it manipulates these twists and turns of identity with doubles of its own.

### Comedy

As an expert on internet dissent in China recently said, “humor works as a natural form of encryption.”<sup>23</sup> Comedy presents contradictions that can, without direct confrontation, topple the logic of dominant organizations. With irreverent cheekiness, it interrupts the rigidities that characterize both concentrations of power and resistances to power. Comedy may engage in a direct satirical address, as do *The Yes Men*. It may rely on wordplay or a single punch line. It may simply effect an inversion, as in the case of the BLO or Barbie Liberation Organization—a project to covertly switch the voice chips of Barbies and GI Joes in toy stores (Barbie: “Eat lead, Cobra.” GI Joe: “Let’s plan our dream wedding”).<sup>24</sup>

Infrastructural space itself is often a carrier of comedy that is perhaps most powerful when, like the humor of Ryle’s clown, it is dispositional, unfolding, and undeclared.<sup>25</sup> Erandi De Silva’s comic design work Logopelago satirizes “The World”—Dubai’s familiar archipelago of artificial islands constructed in the shape of a world map. De Silva’s cartoons of similar island formations take the shape of gigantic logos—a Nike swish, a Mickey Mouse head, a Ralph Lauren horse, or the double Cs of

<sup>25</sup> Usually producing the humor of “knowing that” rather than “knowing how,” the architecture culture that called itself “postmodern” created compositions from various architectural tropes that were to be consciously read as witticisms and ironies within fixed object forms and one-to-one correspondences of meaning—“one-liners” in comedy jargon. The counter-culture demonstrations and satires of Ant Farm or Archigram entered into other print, film, and performance media with mixtures of object and active forms. Some were designed to reference a specific antecedent upon which the humor relied. Others carried non-specific references that were both funny and disruptive. While there was specific content in the comics that Archigram designed, the very act of depicting architecture with comic books was itself an active form with many associations. Ant Farm’s Cadillac Ranch, a sculpture of Cadillacs half buried in the ground, or its Media Burn performance featuring a collision of a car with a pyramid of TVs, travel as active form with no one specific antecedent.

<sup>23</sup> Hu Yong quoted in Brook Larmer, “Where an Internet Joke Is Not Just a Joke,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 30, 2011, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Cheekiness—the *kynicism* about which philosopher Peter Sloterdijk writes—resists a self-satisfied cynicism or consensus. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 101–33; and rtmark.com.

## Remotes

Chanel. All these logo islands are populated with the villas, golf courses, and other spatial products that fill up infrastructure space. Yet “The World” itself may be its own best satire. In its hyperbole, the island formation is already a joke about global real estate conquest or the migration of global power into islands of exemption. Preempting its own critique, or stealing the punch line, each micro-nation is not unlike the city-state of Dubai itself. The comedy now continues in a different vein since, after the financial crisis of 2008, the sea has been reclaiming the dissolving islands.

Similarly, François Roche’s *DustyReliefB\_mu*, a 2002 design for a building in Bangkok, avoids the single punch line in favor of a longer comedic performance. The building was designed to attract dust electrostatically from the surrounding polluted air.<sup>26</sup> Its continual, obliging willingness to clean its surroundings, coupled with its slow minuscule advance toward becoming a gigantic and adorably flocked fuzz ball, are actively comic in visual, temporal, and cognitive registers. It critiques pollution with a sympathetic, resourceful, and enthusiastic remedy. Yet it associates this desire for cleaner air with hapless self-deprecation rather than the piety and belt-tightening that often accompany green initiatives.

Deadpan reportage of the comedies of infrastructure space might often be sufficient to achieve the desired political effect. Yet another promotional video for yet another zone that begins, as have dozens before it, with a zoom from outer space, exposes the entire PR apparatus with its canned fanfares and toy architectures. A simple comparison of the acronyms for management mottos and creeds—PDCA, POCCC, POSDCORB, CSSBB, ISSISSIPPI among them— together with their buoyant narratives and sober metrics also requires very little effort from the comedian.

A remote control effects change indirectly or from some distance away, often without being detected. Jerry, the soft cartoon mouse, presses down on the plunger labeled “TNT” with Tom at the receiving end of a long fuse. He catapults Tom into the air by dropping an anvil on the opposite end of a seesaw where the cat is sitting. Objects in one part of the house ricochet until they eventually hit Tom over the head. In similar fashion, a nation indirectly floods a city when it builds a dam downstream. A hacker drops a pebble in the internet waters with collateral effects. A mass-produced suburb, remote from the center, drains the city of its population. Any switch in any of the networks of infrastructure space can act like a remote—as a valve that may control flows of cars, electricity, microwaves, or broadband capacity somewhere down the line.

The activist often longs to directly confront and cure a problem just as the designer often longs to address urban issues with object form. Political engagement is typically scripted with concerns about the environment, natural resources, labor, or human rights, accompanied by persuasions about volunteerism and self-sacrifice, or dramatized with grave manifestos and sci-fi dystopias. Showing up at the local site and getting one’s hands dirty is considered to be a sign of political authenticity.

Yet there may be no great virtue in exclusively local action on the ground when the powerful remote controls in the networks of extrastatecraft may be businesses, governments, or international organizations halfway around the world. These remotes lend extra leverage to the bargaining of “pandas” since, alongside the multinationals, there are now extra players in the game—NGOs, IGOs, and coalitions of all sorts. Saving a wilderness, for instance, relies on direct advocacy as well as remote

<sup>26</sup> See [new-territories.com](http://new-territories.com).

pressures and incentives from research institutions, distant markets, regulations, and compacts. Advocates who cannot provoke action from their own state can look to NGOs or IGOs in another state or in the international community, creating “governance triangles” that leverage influence or exert pressure on the home state—what has been called a “boomerang effect.”<sup>27</sup>

Remotes are essential to designing an interplay of spatial variables rather than a single prescription. The designer and urbanist Rahul Mehrotra approached the slums of Mumbai not with a master plan to reorganize the entire territory but with a simple public toilet that was designed to have remote effects throughout the slum. Solar panels allowed the toilets to operate off the grid, eliminating a charge for electricity and maintaining consistent power. Women and children were then not fearful to use the toilet at night. A caretaker’s apartment above the toilet further ensured its cleanliness and safety, and an open-air porch on the top floor provided a panoramic view, to relieve the limited, congested perspective of streets.<sup>28</sup>

In the same way that a confidence man needs to find a way to look completely normal, the remote can also be camouflaged in a seemingly nonpolitical, non-spatial, self-serving project with an undisclosed political intent. The most conscientious consumers already check the labels on clothing or packs of coffee and boycott those products that have been manufactured in abusive conditions. Yet without overt political declaration, a remote might simply work on the prevalent tastes of, for instance, fashion or food. Companies that make clothes poorly with mediocre materials and cuts usually also search for the cheapest labor. A new articulation in desire, seemingly pursued for self-serving, even frivolous reasons, may deliberately deflate the market for disposable clothes or food produced

under abusive conditions. These remotes can indirectly retool the disposition of manufacturing and agricultural spaces, buying time before the race to the bottom begins again.

### *Distraction/Meaninglessness/Irrationality*

Activism cast as resistance typically goes head-to-head with an oppressing power, facing off in a symmetrical opposing position. Yet rather than engaging in the fight, with the risk of it escalating or being drawn into its vortex, the activist may distract from it with misdirection and surprise—often by creating a third thing that is supposedly neutral to the opposing forces. The comedian already knows something about the power of distraction to defuse tension. Warring countries are brought together over ping-pong, chess, or music. In Tirana, Albania, mayor Edi Rama transformed the exhausted post-war city by first simply painting the facades with very bright colors—a move sufficiently strange to refresh the terms of development, even governance, in the city.

Meaninglessness can continue the work begun by distraction, crafting the initial moment of destabilization into a condition that must be continually maintained. Generally considered by the forthright activist to be an evacuation of principles and an indication of crisis, meaningless can be the opposite—a tool with enormous political instrumentality. Just as the bait and switch relies on distraction, the longer confidence game relies on a series of distracting stories that draw attention away from the real details of the transaction, which is, of course, never declared. Hustlers lead their suckers down the garden path with countless little courtesies and unimportant details that become collectively untraceable but are inescapable.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, “The Governance Triangle: Regulatory Standards Institutions and the Shadow of the State,” in Walter Mattli and Ngaire Woods, eds., *The Politics of Global Regulation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50; Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 23–4, 12–13.

<sup>28</sup> “Conversation with Rahul Mehrotra,” at <http://harvardmagazine.com>.

29 In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri discuss a number of techniques of political craft, including the refusal of characters like Herman Melville's Bartleby or J. M. Coetzee's Michael K., paying particular attention to Michael K. as a gardener whose constant movement is mimetic of the vines he wishes to be tending. This serpentine disposition eases the dangerous stakes embodied in defiant refusal and enhances his chances of success. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 203–4.

<sup>30</sup> PBS Newshour, "Remembering Ronald Reagan," airdated June 7, 2004, at pbs.org.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of "special stupidity," see Easterling, *Enduring Innocence*, 195.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Rancière, "The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum International* 45 no. 7 (March 2007): 256–60.

<sup>33</sup> Mattli and Woods, eds., *The Politics of Global Regulation*, x–xi.

The absence of a single coherent story is the compelling factor, convincing the victims that they do not see what is in front of them.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the most powerful political operations in the world are lubricated with obfuscations and irrational desires that have anesthetizing effects, keeping at bay the dogma that incites conflict. In Jerzy Kosinski's novel *Being There*, Chauncey Gardiner is at once a comedian and a beautiful soul whose meaningless statements about the growth of the garden or the inevitability of the seasons allow him to become a confidant of the US president. However transparent, some hypnotizing fictions may form a strong web capable of holding together opposing forces or diffusing cruel forms of authority.

Meaninglessness, like simplemindedness, can be powerful because it is not burdened with information. Leaders like Ronald Reagan often resisted intelligence as a matter of duty and principle. In a now famous story, at one G-7 summit Reagan failed to study the briefing books, choosing instead to stay up and watch his favorite movie, *The Sound of Music*. His aide, David Gergen remembered that the next day Reagan was in top form—able to grasp the "big picture" free of complicating facts.<sup>30</sup> Apparent oblivion—a kind of special stupidity—nourishes resilient forms of power and attends many of the most successful political strategies.<sup>31</sup>

However powerful and monolithic it may seem to be, infrastructure space trades on ephemeral desires and irrational aspirations. Organizations of every kind—from celebrity golf suburbs to retail chains to zones—attempt to profit, govern, or otherwise maintain power with instrumental forms of meaninglessness. Quality management attracts a large following with principles that lack any binding content. Managementese is often a form of babble used in isomorphic organizations. It means

very little, but it can be used to create consensus around almost anything. Typically these organizations find collective beliefs and rationalizing formulas galvanizing, but they must also develop techniques for overlooking the evidence that contradicts their formulations. They must find ways of decoupling errant events from controlling logics. Rationalizing formulas can also engender nonsensical beliefs to which the group is sentimentally obedient.

For extrastatecraft, the long con is instructive. Just as fictitious rumors can be successful, so too can the stubbornly circuitous unfolding story. The day of reckoning can always be delayed. Diaphanous fairy tales can replace hard-nosed logics. The auxiliary activist learns that through any combination of new technologies, new spatial software, or new persuasions, a snaking chain of moves can worm into an infrastructure space and gradually generate leverage against intractable politics.

### *Hackers/Entrepreneurs*

*To ask, "How can one escape the market?" is one of those questions whose principal virtue is one's pleasure in declaring it insoluble.—Jacques Rancière<sup>32</sup>*

Hackers and entrepreneurs—whether as social, political, or commercial agents—understand the power of multipliers, rumors, remotes, and distractions.<sup>33</sup> Understanding the currencies of all kinds of value, these characters play social and market networks with the viral dissemination of pandas and persuasions as well as products in infrastructure space. Both operate very differently from the utopian activist or designer. The utopian often imagines a transcendent and singular moment

of change—a comprehensive reform or a soulful masterpiece. Like the activism of declarations, the designs of architects and urbanists are often presented as a corrective program. Even when, moving away from the object or master plan, design has borrowed extradisciplinary techniques from, for instance, the social sciences, cybernetics, or mathematics, the desire has often still been to declare—to find data or equations that deliver the right answer. The fact that the world never seems to adopt the utopian schemes of planners can then be portrayed as a sad mistake, or a lack of purity.

The hacker/entrepreneur does not value purity but rather relies on multiple cycles of innovation, updating platforms, and tracking changeable desires that supersede, refresh, or reverse the products and plans they introduce into the world. Entrepreneurs cannot survive unless they are always on the way to becoming obsolete. Finding fertile territory in inversion—an inversion that is often considered to be unreasonable—entrepreneurs will be most successful if they renovate what is considered to be practical. They vigorously engage the world looking for multipliers that will amplify their influence.

The cagey and enterprising bargains of the most productive hacker/entrepreneur may not measure their productivity in moral terms—on a determination of what is good. Just as Bateson assessed political temperament in terms of information flow, productive change might constitute those moves that release and mix more information than they hoard or deny—breaking deadlocks, undoing isomorphisms, unwinding authoritarian concentrations of power to generate less violent, more resilient political dispositions. The utopian's binary righteousness and refusal may even be the least desirable disposition if it means arresting the flow of information.

For the hacker/entrepreneur of extrastatecraft, space is the underexploited opportunity or the low-hanging fruit. Not products and technologies circulating in space but space itself is the operating system to manipulate or overwrite. Spatial variables are the crucial active forms in an extensive shared platform—at once information, technology, product, and pawn. The space that has always been available for manipulation, when seen in this way, becomes a fresh territory for political action.

### *Inadmissible Evidence*

*I would rather talk about dissensus than resistance.*

—Jacques Rancière<sup>34</sup>

Dissensus, as the opposite of consensus, is usually seen as a condition that needs remedying, but it can also be a positive engine. Dissensus disrupts the self-reflexive consensus that only considers compatible evidence. It also suggests a general unrest, a confusion in order that is more widespread than a single target of dissent. For Jacques Rancière, “The work of dissensus is to always reexamine the boundaries between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical.”<sup>35</sup> For Rancière, “inadmissible” evidence generates dissensus.<sup>36</sup> For instance, the immigrant worker, a character for whom there is often no relevant national or international law, is something like inadmissible evidence. Rancière describes the immigrant as a

wordless victim, object of an unquenchable hatred. The immigrant is first and foremost a

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Rancière, “The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière,” *Artforum International* 45, no. 7 (2007), 256–60.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004), 85.

worker who has lost his name, a worker who is no longer perceptible as such. Instead of the worker or proletarian who is the object of an acknowledged wrong and a subject who vents his grievance in struggle and disputation, the immigrant appears as at once the perpetrator of an inexplicable wrong and the cause of a problem calling for the round-table treatment.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 105.

The immigrant worker returns again and again in the evidence of infrastructure space as the subject of an uneasy or false consensus—“the round-table treatment.” Dissensus always exposes this inadmissible evidence, forwarding and highlighting it within the consensus that tries to explain it away.

Looking beyond the sanctioned plotlines of the proper political story, inadmissible evidence identifies the category leftovers, or the butterflies that are not pinned to the board. Political change often pivots around less dramatic turning points that are not taxonomized by either the left or the right. Unlikely evidence may be the real cause of shifts in sentiment, changes in economic fortune, or escalations and suspensions of violence. Just as consensus may deliver the worst and most destructive leaders or juridical forms, an opponent may be strong-armed with a gift. The biggest changes may result from a seemingly innocuous detail that sneaks in when no one is paying attention. The most productive move may be the selfishly motivated innovation of the most abusive player. An abundance of fiction may make a supposedly impossible option, whether productive or unproductive, suddenly inoffensive and plausible. Waters may part inexplicably because of an indirect

bargain made over a remote problem.

Extrastatecraft plunges into the field of contradictory or inadmissible evidence. The hacker/entrepreneur looks for openings in a bit of code or a stray desire that will unsettle the status quo and release more information. The scholar looks for the extra history sidelined by the dominant ideologies. The innovative economists, sociologists, information specialists, and urbanists are often looking beyond the master narratives and assumptions of their disciplines for more actors, more complex contexts, and more information for problem solving. The auxiliary activist hopes to engage all kinds of values and concentrations of authoritarian power, not just those celebrated in the political theologies of Capital or Neoliberalism.

Dissensus is not only about identifying the inadmissible and navigating the ripples and dimples on the water; it is also about creating some of those ripples. Space can embody dissensus when it scripts an interplay for multiple opposing or counterbalancing players and when it returns to that game of the laws and people that the market has erased or excluded for its convenience. The dissensus of extrastatecraft troubles the waters.

### *English*

English is a word used when playing pool or billiards, in phrases such as “put a little english on the ball” or “give it some english.” Grazing the cue ball in a particular way imparts a bit of spin that transfers to the numbered ball, perhaps to overcome a bad angle and help the ball slip into the pocket. Apart from the general direction and intent of the shot, which may even be announced by the player, the ball delivers another unannounced agency that is much harder to control, one that

even sometimes seems to be a matter between the balls themselves.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière does not discuss the aesthetics of politics, but the politics surrounding a work of art. He does not describe, for instance, the pageant of goose-stepping soldiers in a Zeppelin field, or the aestheticizing of resistance as fervid disappointment. Instead he describes the scatter of associations that attend art or design as they are received and used in political action. For instance, discussing the ways in which art both inflects and generates political activity, he mentions Flaubert:

When *Madame Bovary* was published, or *Sentimental Education*, these works were immediately perceived as “democracy in literature” despite Flaubert’s aristocratic situation and political conformism. His very refusal to entrust literature with any message whatsoever was considered to be evidence of democratic equality.<sup>38</sup>

Somehow the novels relayed to their audience a liberating disposition despite Flaubert’s conservative politics. The books had “english,” or an indirect political spin in culture.

Bob Dylan’s “Like a Rolling Stone” was something of an accident—the result of a single take after a two-day recording session filled with false starts in June of 1965. The snarling song seemed to be addressed to a rich girl, and it had no explicit political content. Yet for whatever reason—the opening “pistol shot” of drums, Dylan’s association with Woody Guthrie, or his strained voice crying “how does it feel?”—the song became an

anthem of the counter-culture during the wars and assassinations of the 1960s. It introduced a kind of english that helped to ignite the song for political use.<sup>39</sup>

Political disposition often relies on a bit of english or aesthetic spin. Rancière outlines an aesthetics that “does not refer to a theory of sensibility, taste, and pleasure for art amateurs.” Rather than treating aesthetics as a codified set of guides or rules that culture carefully tends and maintains, he focuses on “aesthetic practices” that both “depict” and enact, that articulate “ways of doing and making.” Aesthetics exists as a changing regime of forms that are full of meaning but not determinate meaning. Rancière describes the ways in which forms are “distributed” into various strata of the sensible.<sup>40</sup> Just as Foucault’s *dispositif* is a matter of “the said as much as the unsaid,” for Rancière, “Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.”<sup>41</sup>

“English” is an advanced technique in pool and in infrastructure space. It is deployed deliberately but it is not entirely under the user’s control. Its intelligent use lies in the recognition that a special kind of spin is possible beyond the straightforward dynamics of the ball. In the crafting of infrastructure space, it is not possible to control the consequences of technologies and their interactions with humans in space. Being able to control the english in infrastructure space would be like inventing the cell phone knowing that it would go from being a “yuppy toy” to a tool of development in the world’s poorest countries. If it is not possible to control the english, it is nevertheless possible to be at ease with the presence of errant spin, to anticipate it, spot it, and use it to advantage. While perhaps a source of disappointment to those with

<sup>39</sup> Greil Marcus, *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 80, 224, 3.

<sup>40</sup> In response to selected media and installation work of the 1990s, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud developed a notion of “relational form” that described art as a “state of encounter” rather than “the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space.” In his manifesto, *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud writes that this new “policy” of form “points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art.” Rancière’s broader framework describes a politics of aesthetics that does not rely on these new forms of media and performance art as a radical or inaugural moment. See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 194; Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 22–3, 12–14.

<sup>38</sup> Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 14.

the fixed anticipations of a proper political program, swerves, unexpected consequences, and the shadings of disposition are the raw material of a political performance in extrastatecraft.

### *Knowing How*

A refreshed activist repertoire learns from a number of characters—pirates, prisoners, hackers, comedians—who, considering themselves too smart to be right, successfully pursue more slippery political practices. Like actors in theater, their job is to create mixtures of opposing intentions—playing actions that are different from the stated text. The operation need not be overt or declared. It may be remote or invisible. The Invisible Man was only powerful because he both appeared and disappeared. When the man himself was not visible, a drink was drained from a glass or doors were opened and closed and only the space that he disturbed was visible. In this context, a sneakier David—happy that Goliath is big—would never go to the trouble of killing the giant. He would see in infrastructure space not defeat but rather opportunity. Why kill the giant when it can be put to work, and when its great size, like a multiplier, can amplify that work?

The indeterminacy of these alternative activist techniques is ultimately what is most practical about them. Erving Goffman was fascinated by discrepant characters like confidence men and go-betweens, just as he was fascinated by the discrepancy between what people say and what they do in their everyday performances. He wondered how they learned their art.<sup>42</sup> Most disciplines train their practitioners to reconcile and verify evidence using their own disciplinary standards, laws, and tests for what constitutes information. One does

not ordinarily train in discrepancy or trickery. Discrepancy is the supernatural counterpart of forthright communication, the wispy smoke that passes between the supposedly solid fields of signifiers. Training to be a hustler, a con man, or a shill is learning to be responsive to change. It is dispositional. It relies on practical knowledge and improvisation—what James C. Scott calls *métis*.<sup>43</sup> The techniques of extrastatecraft are rehearsed in preparation for a performance that one can only know *how* to do.

An auxiliary activism is enacted. The declarative and the enacted approaches to activism both map onto an ethical Möbius. One aligns with the maintenance of consensus around stated principles; the other, in a partial inversion, describes the maintenance of dissensus around a necessarily indeterminate struggle with undeclared but consequential activity. Each—while moving on opposite sites of the same surface and approaching from different directions—supports and challenges the other. The two together describe both the solid, stable state and the state of encounter. The galvanized and the atomized. The moment of certainty and the moment of uncertainty. The prescription and the epidemiology. The fix and the wager. The condition of “knowing that” and the evolving activities of “knowing how.”

<sup>42</sup>Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 73–4.

<sup>43</sup>Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 6–7, 340.

## Study Guide: **Infrastructure, Disposition, Topology**

### *Key Concepts & Terms:*

- **Infrastructure space** are details and repeatable formulas that generate most of the space in the world. This is the concept that underlies the current mode of development in the world. Infrastructure space is a medium of information: “The information resides in invisible, powerful activities that determine how objects and content are organized and circulated. Infrastructure space, with the power and currency of software, is an operating system for shaping the city.”
- **Disposition** describes something of what the organization (of information) is doing—activities that may diverge from the stated intent. Disposition describes a tendency, activity, faculty, or property in either beings or objects — a propensity within a context. Disposition is immanent. Disposition is relational. There is information both in technologies themselves as well as in the declared intent or story of the technologies.
- **Multipliers** are technology or development that have the power of repeatability. An example from the text: Elevators allowed for skyscrapers to multiply in form. Another example: In the 80’s in Italy everyone rode scooters, therefore everyone had helmets. This meant that everyone had a technology of self-protection from enemies, which multiplied accessibility to fighting.
- **Switches and remotes** establish potentials, and act like a valve; they direct or redirect. A switch modulates a flow of activities. There are less smart and more smart switches (for example, a highway off-ramp versus a train station).
- “**Topologies** are intuitive markers of disposition in an organization, and they can be considered to be assemblies of multipliers and switches... Topologies are also markers of political disposition insofar as they highlight the ways in which the authorities circulate or concentrate information.” Some varieties of topology are linear (a bus line, fiber-optic cables) and radial (TV, radio, flowing from center outward).”
- For designers, there is no desire for a singular, comprehensive or utopian solution. Power lies rather in the prospect of shaping a series of activities and relationships over time.
- **Symmetrical relationships** involve competition between sides of a binary. **Complimentary relationships** are relationships in which one side provides something necessary for the other. In **reciprocal relationships**, individuals or groups oscillate between symmetrical and complimentary modes. These types of relationships should be used to analyze infrastructure spaces.
- A social story can be an **active form**.

Nothing is merely an object. Everything is acting and being acted upon. Everything is doing something and cannot be separated from its actions.

- **Gossip/rumor/hoax** as strategy. Gossip begins in the place where most people spend time—between compliance and rebellion—in idle time. Gossip magically multiplies without attribution and cannot be contained.
- **Giving a gift** as strategy is a way to make a twisted arm handshake.
- The strategy of **Exaggerated Compliance**: “In extrastatecraft, picking one’s submissions rather than one’s battles is an almost invisible, noncontroversial means of gaining advantage in the field without drawing attention to a broader strategy.”

*Strategic Suggestions & Topics for Discussion:*

- Industrialization is both a multiplier for the factory model and a multiplier for strikes. What are the multipliers of our de-industrializing moment? Which of them are conducive to struggles?
- Does all multiplication produce homogeneity? And does homogeneity produce exclusivity?
- We may often perceive systems as static that

actually come from specific designs, with specific intentions.

- Can disposition be defined as material conditions versus stated intentions?
- Dimples and ripples in a river show rocks under water but don’t show the actual rocks: We can take what our enemies do or say at face value or we can understand their behaviors as a sign of what and why they do what they do.
- Established monopolies are established vulnerabilities.
- Coal miners are literally responsible for mining coal out of the ground, that is a switch. That is a position of power. Look for focal points in the lifeblood of the economic system.
  - Identify chokepoints and centralized nodes.
- What does the supply chain for information on counterinsurgency look like? What does the supply chain for corn look like?
- Move around Goliath rather than attacking him; use a system’s weight, inertia & strength against it.
- Be impossible to map.
- How do we open ourselves to “working the system” while still being on guard against recuperation?
- Spinozan bodies developing instincts and

habits together through doing. Exposure to experiences helps to build repertoires. How do we strengthen our ability to “know how” rather than to “know that”?

- Is disposition a new way of talking about the fetishization of class struggle and violence against nature?
- Look at things in their active forms and not in their object forms.
- How can there be opacity and security around more militant tactics while also developing and maintaining working relationships with other strategies and social groups using other strategies
- How do we agitate while remaining opaque?
- Gossip/Narrative appeals to moral authority. This is an artificial dichotomy. Embed ideology versus earnestness and “truthfulness.”
- You don’t have to control a narrative in order to have interesting, influential and genuine ideas. (“Post-post-irony”)
- There is danger in the line, “find your people and do your thing” because probably we all have lots of people who do all kinds of things. More cross-pollination of conversation offers clarity and variety in narrative. Real life meeting places can help relieve subcultural anger.
- Abandon rigidity.
- Finding common ground can also be a strategic way to shift people’s ideas.
- Ambiguous uprisings engage with people and reality from totally different positions, providing opportunities to shift narratives.
- Narrative Misery
- She’s trying to make a tool box of strategems and support analytical thinking. Make your own analytical toolbox of strategies. You have the capacity to make your own tools and strategems rather than regurgitating. She’s trying to break binaries and change shapes, change situations rather than embedding in them.
- Walk away from unnecessary conflict.
- Face Magic & mimicking power, the “yes men.”
- There is an oversaturated market for political and subcultural identity
  - Try being just a regular person with ideas and feelings and ethics without a fixed ideological identity to legitimize.

# APPENDIX

## SOURCE MATERIAL & FURTHER READING

BECAUSE THIS STUDY GROUP WAS PRIMARILY CONCERNED with the content of the material, and with drawing out strategic lessons, we didn't put much energy into academic rigor. The sources were taken from pirated books, found on the *internet*, or copied from existing zines that have circulated for awhile. We found that sufficient for the purposes of our own study group and the book. However, if you are interested in delving into this material in more depth on your own, we'll include the sources & translations we used, with their original provenance. We also have a list of supplemental material for each section, to go further in depth.

### Power, Joy, Affect

This text came from a zine titled "Deleuze on Spinoza" from the distro Friendship as a Form of Life ([friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com](http://friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com)). The original text was transcribed from a lecture series delivered by Gilles Deleuze in 1978. For the full text of the lecture (and additional lectures by Deleuze), see: <http://deleuzelectures.blogspot.com/2007/02/on-spinoza.html>

#### *Supplements*

bergman, carla & Nick Montgomery, "Beyond the Sad Comforts and Stale Air of Radicalism." Ill Will Editions ([illwilleditions.tumblr.com](http://illwilleditions.tumblr.com)) (An excerpt from a larger book, *Joyful Militancy*, which is well worth reading in its entirety. This zine includes a glossary of Spinozan terms in the back that might help to clarify the reading.

Lord, Beth. *Spinoza's Ethics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

### Power, Realpolitik, States

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>

#### *Supplements*

Youtube: "The Prince in 3 Minutes"

### Tactics, Policing, Insurgency

Tom Nomad. *The Masters Tools: Warfare and Insurgent Possibility*. Repartee, 2013. Also available on Libcom: <https://libcom.org/files/Tom%20Nomad%20-%20The%20Master%27s%20Tools%20-%20Warfare%20and%20Insurgent%20Possibility.pdf>

#### *Supplements*

It's Going Down Podcast. "The Past of Trumpism is the Past of America": with Tom Nomad. October 18, 2018

US Army Field Manual 3-19.15 *Civil Disturbance Operations*. 2005. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-19-15.pdf>

### Distance, Movement, Cunning

*The 36 Stratagems*. <http://chinesewarstrategies.blogspot.com/2008/11/36-strategies-of-ancient-china-overview.html>

*The Go'Ing Insurrection*. [https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bwh\\_-EombXf7OUJaWVNYSkFaWjQ/edit](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bwh_-EombXf7OUJaWVNYSkFaWjQ/edit)

#### Supplements

Hazan, Eric & Kamo. *First Revolutionary Measures*. Ill Will Editions (illwilleditions.tumblr.com). (Esp. the chapter “Creating the Irreversible”)

## Patterns, Decisions, Speed

Osinga, Frans. *Science, Strategy, and War: the strategic theory of John Boyd*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007

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Boyd, John R. *A Discourse on Winning and Losing*. Alabama: Air University Press, 2018. [https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B\\_0151\\_Boyd\\_Discourse\\_Winning\\_Losing.pdf](https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0151_Boyd_Discourse_Winning_Losing.pdf)

Virilio, Paul and Sylvère Lotringer. *Pure War*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008. (Esp. “1997: Infowar” and “2007: War on the Cities”).

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. “Nomadology.” (in *A Thousand Plateaus*), available in zine form here: [http://epicbaz.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/nomadology\\_read1.pdf](http://epicbaz.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/nomadology_read1.pdf)

## Networks, Netwar, Social Media

Arquilla, John and David Ronfeldt. *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001. (Available online: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1382.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1382.html))

Robb, John. “Weaponized Social Networks.” Posted on *Global Guerrillas* (<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com>), which has other interesting contemporary reflections on conflict & strategy. <https://www.patreon.com/posts/december-global-16104684>

#### Supplements

Lewis, Rebecca. *Alternative Influence: Broadcasting the Reactionary Right on YouTube*. Data & Society, 2018. [https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/DS\\_Alternative\\_Influence.pdf](https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/DS_Alternative_Influence.pdf)

Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. “1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity.” (in *A Thousand Plateaus*), available as a PDF here: <http://www.after1968.org/app/webroot/uploads/TP-Micropolitics.pdf>

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Easterling, Kelly. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. London: Verso, 2014.

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Bernes, Jasper. “Logistics, Counterlogistics, and the Communist Prospect,” in *Endnotes 3*, 2013. <https://endnotes.org.uk/issues/3/en/jasper-bernes-logistics-counterlogistics-and-the-communist-prospect>



**IF ALL ELSE FAILS, RETREAT**