

## Revolution and Diavolution: What is the Difference?

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### **Abstract**

Whereas revolution has been often viewed as contrary to organization, it in fact requires the overcoming of a present organization in the promise of achieving another superior organization. The revolutionaries of every age have always harboured a dream of organization. In an attempt to achieve better understanding of the relationship between organization and revolution, the article conducts a theoretical, rather than historical, reflection on the interplay among three concepts: organization, revolution, and diavolution. By exploring the modernist conception of revolution and its religious substratum, the idea is advanced that the relationship can be framed as follows: organization is the *katéchon* of revolution, whereas revolution is the *éschaton* of organization. The last part of the article introduces and discusses the concept of diavolution as an attempt to overcome the dichotomy between the subjectivist and the structuralist view both at the theoretical and the practical level. Diavolution is a style of inhabiting organizations that differs from the revolutionary one; a style of resistance that, although much more elusive and difficult to capture, may prove to be at the same time more human.

### **Keywords**

Revolution, organization, *katéchon*, *éschaton*, diavolution

### **Introduction**

Empirically, as noticed by Yinger and Katz (2001), the term revolution is often used vaguely, given that there are no universal criteria to determine the time span, the degree of violence and the institutional outcomes within which a revolution occurs, and beyond which some other social phenomenon is taking place. This may be one of the reasons why, conceptually, revolution is sometimes superficially regarded as simply something that stands against organization, as being the anti-organization. But revolution requires the overcoming of a present organization in order to achieve another organization deemed to be in some respects *superior* to the former. The revolutionaries of every age have always harboured a dream of organization. In an attempt to achieve better understanding of the relationship between organization and revolution, this article conducts a theoretical discussion on the interplay among three concepts: organization,

revolution, and diavolution. The last term is a neologism which is introduced to describe a type of activity that entertains a different relationship with organization from that entertained by revolution. Specifically, diavolution will be described as a form of transformative resistance to the organizational present. Admittedly, discussion is theoretically oriented, and historical references may appear cursory and insufficient, if not superficial. Thus, the article provides only a very selective reading on historical instances of revolution.

### **Modern revolution**

The pre-modern meaning of the word ‘revolution’ rests on the correspondence between the polity and the cosmos. In the classic view, “the few known forms of government revolve among the mortals in eternal recurrence and with the same irresistible force which makes the stars follow their pre-ordained paths in the skies” (Arendt 1973/1963: 35). The idea of cycles of constitutional changes, the *metabolè*, can be traced back to the classical Greek and Latin theories of constitution to be found in Plato, Polybius, and Cicero, later reverberated in Machiavelli and then Bodin (Kumar 1971: §4.a). This understanding of the word revolution runs throughout the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and is closely intertwined with astronomical science – see e.g. Copernicus’ *De Revolutionibus Orbium Celestium* (Copernicus 1543) – as well as with the medieval representations of the instability of *fatum* and the ups and downs of Fortune’s wheel – as the famous lines in Carmina Burana’s *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* remind us: “*O Fortuna / velut luna / statu variabilis / semper crescis / aut decrescis*”. The fortune of states and men is unstable and in constant change, but also due to return, just like the phases of the moon.

The modern concept and narrative of revolution (Wagner 2001) are typically eighteenth-century ideas, offspring of the age of the Enlightenment and the belief that man could shape the social as well as the natural world. Indeed, it is a narrative that occupies a central position in the

landscape of modernity. This view is well captured by Albert Camus in his concept of *protestation*: “L’esprit révolutionnaire est tout entier dans une protestation de l’homme contre la condition de l’homme” (Camus 2006[1937-1939]: 849). For the existentialist, the rebel is the human being in his/her purest condition, poised on the brink of the abyss of freedom. Thus, revolution is intrinsically liberating. Interestingly, it is precisely this element that ‘natural history’ and structuralist social scientific theories of revolutions fail to grasp or, at best, underestimate (see respectively Edwards 1970[1927], Skocpol 1979; for an overview, Goldstone 1980, Paige 2003). Of course, the revolutionary subject is a collective subject (the fear of revolutionary *masses* dominates 19<sup>th</sup> century conservative scholarship in Le Bon’s style) and this fact is hardly irrelevant; but the very idea of revolutionary spirit is deeply interweaved with the agential, even existentialist production of novelty. Castoriadis’ (1987) concept of ‘self-institution’ captures precisely this aspect, which Bobbio (1997) describes as the *mutamento* (change) irreducible to the *movimento* (movement). To take another example of an intellectual directly engaged in active struggle, Régis Debray’s (1967) remarks on revolutionary movements in Latin America begin with the following argument: we do not understand the present because and insofar as we tend to interpret it according to the categories of the past. Accordingly, in order to understand revolution and its potential, we must first of all set the present free from the past. It is the discourse of the ‘table rase’ analyzed by Touraine (1990).

The model of time that underpins this modern view was best expressed by Hegel’s dialectic conception of history as a process that proceeds through *Aufhebung*. The anthropocentric ideal of the *homo faber* able to use knowledge as a productive instrument granted the moderns a chance to plan society rationally: because society is a human product, it can be artificially reconstructed. It is an instance of what Latour (1993) calls ‘work of purification’, aimed to produce and

stabilize modern dualisms, *in primis* subject versus object. The legacy of this view, which precludes social engineering, can be found *inter alia* in Comte's conception of society as a machine, an image which Durkheim fiercely opposed. Indeed, Durkheim replaced the mechanism with the organism, whose development cannot be dictated from the outside but springs from inherent qualities, thus implicitly opposing *evolution* to *revolution*. Evolution presupposes certain inner societal tendencies which cannot be freely managed. Consequently, if the first half of the modernist discourse castigates the belief in the power of objects, the second half, embodied for instance in the structuralist and functionalist discourse, ends up castigating the belief in the power of subjects (see again Latour 1993).

On the one hand, revolution is clearly associated to conflict. That is why Charles Tilly (2006) ties revolutionary processes to what he calls 'contentious politics'. On the other hand, however, it involves conflict of a peculiar nature. The modern view maintains that revolution is not part of the rhythm of events, as was assumed by the ancients; on the contrary, it affects and fundamentally alters that same rhythm. This entails the *transmutation*, rather than the mere change, of the political, social, and cultural order. It is not so much facts that are changed by revolution as the principles of coordination of facts themselves: "Revolutionaries, rather than simply playing within the limits of the game as it is, with its objective principles of price formation, transform the game and the principles of price formation" (Bourdieu 2004: 63). This feature is particularly clear when the word revolution is used to indicate, not simply revolution of *formal* constitutions, but above all entire socio-political systems, *material* constitutions.

Revolution causes a rupture, a logical gap, a *vacuum* or difference which cannot be filled by resorting to the procedural and transformational norms of the former constitution: this is the moment when the *Grundnorm* (Kelsen 1967[1960]) is forced to come out into the open as

wholly detranscendentalized. During revolution, hegemony – in Gramsci’s (1971[1929-1935]) sense, the long ‘war of position’ for the conquest of the state, a slow-motion war which defines an unquestioned framework of power wherein local conflict can be subsumed – is finally called into question because the ‘war of movement’ takes over. Three pivotal consequences of the modern revolutionary movement follow from this: first, revolution inextricably weaves together the power/knowledge nexus (Foucault 1980); second, revolution has to face the rise and exercise of governmentality (Foucault 1991[1978]), which is government exercised not simply over a population but also within it, through its ‘tendencies’; third, revolution can only be made possible by a *moment of suspension* (Agamben 1993) of foundations, which turns into a new foundational moment later to be ‘mysticized’ (Bourdieu 2000).

Max Weber, too, was interested in revolution as a form of structural change in society. As evidence that this is a field where personal attitudes matter a great deal, when Weber examined the issue of the legitimacy of the revolutionary outcome, he radically rejected it. Recently, Collins (2001: 173) has examined Weber’s articles on the Russian Revolution, finding that, in Weber’s view, “revolution is a specifically non-legitimate form of change and produces illegitimate forms of power”. This is a curious position, given that Weber was also one of the foremost theorists of charisma (Adair-Toteff 2005) which, as well known, he regarded as one of the three forms of *legitimate* domination. In his lecture *Politik als Beruf* he stressed the close association between revolution and charismatic action: on the one hand, charismatic leaders arise in revolutionary times because it is then that people are most keen to follow extraordinary figures; on the other hand, charismatic action in its turn facilitates unsettling movements and revolutionary events. Within the frame of Simmel’s ‘conflict of the modern culture’, charisma clearly lies on the side of ‘life’ rather than on the side of ‘form’. For Weber himself, charisma is

to be regarded as legitimate power because, although not grounded on general rules, nor on imposition or compulsion, it is based on willing personal devotion to a leader who is extraordinary, who rejects the everyday and the established. Yet when it came to a genuine large-scale political revolution – specifically, the Bolshevik Revolution – Weber suddenly became more concerned with the conservation of state apparatuses than with the action of charismatic leadership. And, in the end, such reaction resonates with his conception of legitimation, which recurrently tends to mix with the notion of (whatever actually existing) order.

Insofar as history is conceived in a modernist way, as a succession of systems, rather than as a coexistence of layers, revolution continues to be conceived as a managed process which evolves towards some final settlement. From this perspective, the typical ingredients of the modern imagine of revolution were efficaciously specified by Hannah Arendt (1973/1963: 47) as novelty, beginning, and violence – elements that are generally combined into violence deployed politically to achieve a new socio-political legal foundation (for a critical take on the processes of excuse, justification and legitimation of violence, see Finley 2006). The foundational character of revolution signals its character of ‘totality’, cutting across the political, the economic, and the social (Castoriadis 1990); and, as widely acknowledged, the twentieth-century political left in Europe has been characterized by a longing for ‘Total Revolution’ (Boltanski 2002). Interestingly, the fact that organizational means are needed for this kind of revolutionary enterprise has been most strikingly pointed out by Lenin (1917: 143): “The less the organizational experience of the Russian people, the more resolutely must we *proceed* to organizational development by people themselves, and not merely by bourgeois politicians and well-placed bureaucrats” – a statement which comes along with the implicit clause that the expertise that people lacked would initially have been provided by the small but well-organized

revolutionary avant-garde party, specifically the Bolshevik Party.

Mention should be made of two other traditions in the imagination of revolution which partially conflict with the official modernist view outlined so far. Both can somehow be linked to the anarchist stance (Guérin 1980[1965]). The first advances a claim for unaccomplished, or permanent, revolution (*révolution en permanence*). It is grounded on belief in the irreducible opposition between established government and the people: “A government can never be revolutionary, and that for the very simple reason that it is a government” (Proudhon 1849: 238). Note that recently Rancière (2006) has advanced a very similar argument with reference to *democracy*. In perhaps more fashionable terminology, true revolution is always *grassroots* revolution. For Proudhon, indeed, revolutions can be neither initiated nor directed by any single formal agency, as they spring spontaneously and, so to speak, physiologically from the people. In this tradition, lack of organization is the guarantee for revolution’s irresistible nature. During the twentieth century, similar ideals of permanent agitation from below were at the core, for instance, of the IWW movement in the US from 1905 to 1924 (Renashw 1968), and of May 1968 in France (Seidman 2004). With reference to the events of 68, Kumar (1976: 258) spoke of “a new concept and to some extent a new practice of revolution”. The same image returns in Negri’s (Negri and Hardt 2004) neo-Spinozist conception of multitude. Recently, Žižek (2002) has proposed to interpret Lenin’s view on the October Revolution in a detranscendentalized sense whereby a genuine revolutionary breakthrough should not to be legitimised or de-legitimised by its outcome, but should be assessed on the basis of its spontaneity as “its own ontological proof”. This point reminds us that permanent revolution has its dark side. Suffice to recall Arendt’s (1951) analysis of the Trotskyist concept of permanent revolution as functional to totalitarianism, insofar as the party or organized movement aims not only at the conquest of the

state, but also, through the crucial action of the party, at the complete absorption of the individual within the state itself (see also Morin 1991). So, later Mao's statement that China might require another cultural revolution every fifteen years merges the concept of permanent revolution, the ancient cyclic theory of revolution, and the Nietzschean image of eternal recurrence.

The second tradition maintains, on the contrary, that revolution is only interstitial, it can only exist on the margins. From this perspective, revolution is often seen as being shaped into the form of a more diluted and generalized *resistance* against power, or localized acts of subversion. This is the case, for instance, of carnival (Bakhtin 1993[1965]), of everyday 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1990), and of temporary autonomous zones (Bey 1985) as effervescent moments of insurgent freedom that do not seek to establish themselves as new systems. Notably, the interstice may well be an 'ecological' niche, as in pirate communities (Rediker 2004) and other small-scale collectives advocated by Proudhon. The existence of such communities also makes the case that interstitial does not necessarily mean transitional, as assumed in the modernist view.

Revolution is a word that tends to split persons rather neatly into apologists and detractors. During largely prevailing anti-revolutionary or restorative periods, the occurrence of revolution is and always has been feared as the absence of the rule of law and legal guarantees, with unrest, turmoil, violence and bloodshed. It is only during the relatively short outbursts of revolutionary moments that declarations of *love* for revolution can be spelt out openly, such as that by Marquis de Condorcet (1793) who posited that revolution could only "have liberty as its object", or, in other words, that a revolt qualifies as a revolution only insofar as it is meant to increase freedom. Sorel (1908) grounded his argument in defense of revolutionary violence on precisely this basis: appeals to social peace are anything but forms of compromise among the classes which hamper

the proletariat's quest for freedom.

In contemporary capitalist society, the more unlikely the actual occurrence of any major social revolution has become, the more, accordingly, the image of revolution has been re-evaluated by business, media and popular discourse as a celebration of newness and innovation. Revolutionary images and symbols are routinely expropriated to nostalgic militants and appropriated by advertisement and merchandising, becoming part of the ongoing deterritorializations and subsequent reterritorializations which constitute the quintessential movement of capitalism. Portraits of Karl Marx now star in investment advertisements, and Ernesto Che Guevara appears on hundreds of thousands of t-shirts, indistinguishable from any other product manufactured in global sweatshops and distributed through the same commercial networks as used for any kind of consumerist taste-communities (for full documentation, see the 2006 exhibition *Che Guevara, Revolutionary Icon* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London). Is this a way of reciprocating Marx himself, who after all was the first to call capitalism 'revolutionary'? Companies and entrepreneurs move onto revolutionary symbols in order to have people moved onto their 'revolutionary' business. Revolution can be led by innovative businessmen, and a first-class corporate leader can make good business with it (Hamel 2002). Revolution becomes an iconographic attribute of the creative class (Florida 2002). A similar rhetorics is appropriated by science and especially technological applications: every new scientific discovery is revolutionary, otherwise nobody would ever waste their time talking about it. Therefore, despite these positive connotations that resonate with the word revolution today, there is clearly nothing inherently progressive in revolution if it can be extended to encompass all the different phenomena just described in an undifferentiated way. If the very idea of straightforward progress – the 'arrow' – in the field of morality is rather doubtful, as classically

contended by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it is no less so in the fields of politics, arts, culture, science, economy and merchandising – to mention only some modern fields of application for revolution.

### **The katéchon of revolution**

Even the most modernist, secularized and rationalist concept of revolution rests upon an essentially religious substratum, which should not be overlooked. Thomas S. Kuhn's (1962) famous book was probably one of the first to attract attention to the irrationalist nature of revolutions, even in the field where one would most certainly expect rationality, i.e. science. In his discontinuist theory of scientific development, Kuhn details how scientific innovation does not progress linearly by accumulation, but instead involves break-points which he characterized as paradigm shifts. Kuhn speaks of the shift from one paradigm to another as an *act of conversion*, something akin to what Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* called *the mystical*: the entire world transformed in the eye of the beholder. Because a scientific paradigm resembles a *Gestalt*, a shape that is perceived immediately out of a background without any conscious act of interpretation, it is a transformation of the gaze – a re-orientation, or conversion – which marks the shift to a different way of seeing. It is also worth observing that this metaphor does not allow coexistence of different paradigms over time, because it does not allow pluralism: one can see one or the other shape alternatively, but not both of them at once. Debates on the paradigmatic vs pre-paradigmatic status of the various sciences, and of the social sciences in particular, followed the diffusion of Kuhn's philosophy of science (see Gutting ed. 1980). Scholars started to inquire at what point each particular science or domain of knowledge – ranging from human sciences, through social and political sciences, to natural sciences – could be regarded as emerging from a revolution under the aegis of a single, well-established paradigm.

Interestingly, Kuhn's depiction of scientific revolutions as acts of conversion resonates with Marx's description of social revolution. In the famous, overquoted passage from the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx (1859) describes revolution merely as the realignment between material productive forces and formal relations of production, whose mismatch is the source of all social conflicts. However, the third thesis on Feuerbach sets forth *in nuce* the whole Marxian theory of revolution, which is more complex (Löwy 2003[1970]).

Overcoming eighteenth-century materialism (naïve materialism) and Hegelianism (philosophical idealism), Marx writes: "The coincidence of the changing of the circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionary practice" (Marx 1845: 83). The point is echoed and possibly made even more compelling in *The German Ideology*: "In revolutionary activity the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances" (Marx and Engels 1846: 204). While Marx and Engels' argument is usually taken in the sense that the revolutionary proletarian class transforms not only the socioeconomic structure but also the ideological superstructure, the specific reference to self-change, or conversion of the subject, has a quasi-religious import of which the authors were probably unaware. Yet it is a conception which proceeds hand in hand with the thrust for *total* revolution so characteristic of both Marx's revolutionary messianism and Luther's theology (Kołakowski 1972). De Tocqueville himself remarked that the French Revolution was extraordinarily – and perhaps paradoxically, given its strongly secularized nature – imbued with religious attitude: "The French Revolution was then a political revolution, which in its operation and its aspect resembled a religious one. It had every peculiar and characteristic feature of a religious movement; it not only spread to foreign countries, but it was carried thither by preaching and by propaganda. It is impossible to conceive a stranger spectacle than that of a political revolution

which inspires proselytism, which its adherents preach to foreigners with as much ardour and passion as they have shown in enacting it at home” (de Tocqueville 1856: 113-114). But perhaps the most striking example in this vein is the anonymous 1869 *Revolutionary Catechism*, which is reputed to be the joint work of Bakunin and Nechaev. The catechism asks of the revolutionary rigid discipline and complete dedication to the cause: “Every revolutionary must be a dedicated man. He should have no personal affairs, no business, no emotions, no attachments, no property and no name”. Following a process well analyzed by Dostoevskij in *The Possessed* (1873) and by Camus in *Les Justes* (1949), those who decide to fight against inhumanity are first asked to set their own humanity aside. Black Panthers activist Huey P. Newton claimed that first lesson a revolutionary must learn is that he is a doomed man. Most instructive here are the use of the religious words ‘catechism’ and ‘doom’, as well as the attitude of *contemptus mundi* reminiscent, for instance, of Ignacio de Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*.

The aim of this article is to suggest that the relationship between organization and revolution can be imagined through the lens of a double image: organization is the *katéchon* of revolution, whereas revolution is the *éschaton* of organization. *Katéchon* and *éschaton* are two words that pertain to Christian theology. The word *katéchon* appears in St. Paul (2 Thessalonians, 2, 6-7): “And you know what is restraining him [the man of lawlessness] now so that he may be revealed in his appointed time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it [*to katéchon*] will do so until he [the lawless one] is out of the way”. The *katéchon* is that which holds back the Antichrist, the lawless one (*o ánthropos tês anomías*) who embodies the rebellion against God’s rules, “until the manifestation of his [Christ’s] coming” (cf. Frame 1912). *Katéchein* literally means ‘to restrain’, hinder, keep from happening or from coming. Several alternative identifications of Paul’s restrainer have been proposed (see Cacciari 1985),

but let us confine ourselves to the traditional view, first advanced by Tertullianus. At end of the second century, in AD 197, Tertullianus argued in two works, the *Apologeticum* and the *Ad Nationes*, that Christianity was compatible with the Empire and that honest Caesars would have believed in Christ if only they could have been Caesars and Christians at the same time.

Tertullianus thus shifted the source of evil away from Empire *qua* Empire to prepare for the possible accommodation of Christianity within the Empire. This interpretation was accepted by later Christian Fathers, who attributed the catechetic function to the Christian Roman Empire. In this vein, in the mid-twentieth century, former Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt identified the *katéchon* with the modern nation-state (Schmitt 1968; Grossheutschi 1996). This peculiar antithetical relation which links institutionalized power to evil reveals that, precisely because of its preemptive function, an inescapable double-bind links the *katéchon* to the Antichrist. In other words, the very act of restraining the lawless one entails, on the part of the Church as institutionalized secular power, an act of containing, of being interwoven with him. This is a struggle where the two fighters grapple with each other so firmly and tightly that they cannot be torn apart by any means. Incidentally, a strand of the Lutheran tradition preoccupied with liberating truly Christian spirit from the ruses of secular power used to identify the Antichrist with the Pope. Apparently, this tradition has not died out, as today's religious radicals still contend that the established Church results from a diabolic distortion of the original *ekklésia* (see e.g. Shawyer 2007). In conclusion, the crucial parallel is this: just as the Church hinders the Antichrist by keeping him tied to itself, likewise, in order to hinder the manifestation of revolution, organization must keep it tied to itself.

If organization restrains revolution, it is because, and to the extent that, revolution is the true *effectuation* of organization. Effectuation means that organization provides both the aim and the

means of revolution: in Hegelian terms, it is the *per se* and the *in se* of it. Revolutionary sects in particular, which conceive themselves as avant-gardes of generalized revolution, adopt strict organizational standards for secrecy in communication, decision-making, and all the other activities deemed necessary to achieve their aims (for a historical example, consider the case of the Red Brigades as discussed by Della Porta 1990 and, more recently, Galli 2005).

Consequently, even before and apart from the *moral* dilemmas mentioned above, revolutionary sects must deal with the *logical* paradox that their action systematically reduces their sole *raison d'être* to becoming one organization within another organization, in a virtually infinite *mise en abyme*, which somewhat recalls Luhmann's vision of social sub-systems within systems.

Revolutionaries are catechized: willingly or not, they participate in the dynamics of the *katéchon*.

The relationship between revolution and organization is further complicated by the fact that one revolutionary stage and one organizational stage do not simply mirror each other synchronically.

The organization that revolution seeks to constitute through its organizational means is conceived as an organization qualitatively different from existing ones. Marx was among the first to criticize the characterization of revolution as mere "seizing upon the governmental power" because, according to him, this view failed to see the novelty in the socio-political and arrangement – again, the *material constitution* – that revolution brings forth. The point is made clearly in his comment on the 1871 Paris Commune: "It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness" (Marx 1871: §3). In more theoretical terms, revolution is the incommensurable interval – a sort of bridging gap – that inter-paradigmatically exists between one organization and another organization. Historically and sociologically, this interval is occupied by the unleashing of violence, or better, by the disentanglement of violence

from established symbolic monopoly (the obvious references are Weber 1922: §I, 17 and Bourdieu 1977). In conclusion, the theoretical statement that revolution is the incommensurable interval between two organizations must be qualified with the specification that revolution does not content itself with accomplishing *just another* organization. Quite the contrary: revolution prepares for the advent of an *ultimate* organization.

### **The *éschaton* of organization**

Now to be analyzed is the second statement: namely that revolution is the *éschaton* of organization. Whereas the *katéchon* concerns the mundane order, the *éschaton* concerns the divine order. The word *éschaton* is the Greek term for ‘the last’, ‘the final’. It appears *passim* in the Gospels and it plays an important role in St. John’s *Apokalýpsis*, the Book of Revelation, where it denotes ‘that towards which everything converges’, i.e. the end-time of Revelation, the Day of Wrath. For John, the end of history will be marked by the *parousía*, i.e. Christ’s second Coming (Charles ed. 1920), which will testify to the final defeat of the Antichrist: “The Lord will destroy the lawless with the breath of his mouth and will annihilate him with his glorious appearance at his coming” (Paul, 2 *Ts.*, 2, 8). “What interests the apostle – Agamben (2005c: 62) observes – is not the last day, it is not the instant in which time ends, but the time that contracts itself and begins to end (1 *Cor* 7.29), or if you prefer, the time that remains between time and its end”. Contrary to the modern image of revolution, on this foundational Christian view the process whereby organization is obtained from revolution cannot be said to be a dialectic because it is not based on Hegel’s triadic scheme of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The lawless one will simply not be part of the *Aufhebung* and will not be synthesized in any way. The process involved does not resemble a dialectic process, but rather an *alchemic* one whereby a superior organization emerges through the *distillation* of former organizational forms. Notably, there is a

shift here from the mundane level to the divine. In the *Opus alchemicum*, carried on in the *Krater*, or *vas*, vessel of spiritual transformation and womb of renewal, distillation is a drop-by-drop disjuncture of elements which entails their transmutation (as described, for instance, by Fulcanelli 1964; see also Jung 1944): that which was imprisoned by the *katéchon*, can eventually – in the time of the *éschaton* – be freed and expelled, thus at last making the organizational type pure. Simply as a cursory remark, it worths remembering that alchemic knowledge has been documented as being at the root of various modern revolutionary groups, like for instance the Diggers movement, one of the most radical factions during the English Revolution of the 1640s (cf. Mulder 1990) – but the interplay between alchemy and politics still today fascinates various contemporary underground groups.

As in the case of capitalist de/re-territorializations recalled above, so revolution deterritorializes itself (it uncouples desire from former organizations) in order to reterritorialize itself (it organizes new desire couplings directed towards ‘nobler’ organizations). In doing so, revolution plays a dangerous game in-between the *nomic* (the norm-making act) and the *anomic* (the lawless act). Whereas the *nomic* represents the foundational act, the moment of imposition of a formal constitution upon a material constitution through a collective performative act, the *anomic* always retains the possibility of its suspension and the opening of states of exception (Schmitt 1935, 1968, 2005; Agamben 2005b). The *anomic* moment is thus exposed almost by definition to the *nemic*, the moment of historic *némesis*, or vengeance (incidentally, the two words derive from the same root). It is hardly surprising, then, that so many revolutionary sects have played a substantial part in the theatre of political reaction and restoration, especially when one considers that reaction itself is not mere *status quo* conservation but always involves active counter-revolution. Counter-revolution is the *némesis* of revolution not simply because it follows

revolution like its shadow, but because it is implicit as a possibility in each anomic moment.

Therefore, the *nemic* moment of revolution corresponds to a nomic definitional space in public semantics that always leaves a way open for the anomic, recognizable as its seal.

### **Revolution to diavolution**

Discussed thus far have been revolution and organization. The last part of this article focuses on diavolution *vis-à-vis* revolution and organization. What is *diavolution*? The cross-breed term replaces the Latin prefix *re-* with the Greek prefix *dià-*, which means ‘through’. The Latin root *volvo*, *-ĕre*, which means ‘to turn’, remains. Accordingly, I propose to introduce the neologism *diavolution* to address, for essentially descriptive purposes, the incessant activity of *going through* the problems that characterize the relationship between the nomic and the anomic.

Diavolution is thus a movement that intersects the trajectories of these problems in multiple directions, or slantwise. From this perspective, diavolution can be described as a non-anomic way to avoid the nomic. Diavolution does not stand in opposition to revolution: it addresses a moment of desire which is present in many revolutions. Diavolution is not reformism, it is not withdrawal. It does not express an option for sub-optimal results or compromise, it does not aim at any paradigmatic settlement. Diavolution addresses those conceptual movements and practices whose outcomes are anything but certain because they are neither directed from a centre – as *emanations* – nor bound to a *éschaton-katéchon* dynamic. Diavolution is the immanent and a-centric presence of *volution*. It can only come about when a shift from the third to the second person takes place: *de te fabula narratur*. In other words, inhabiting without belonging is what diavolution is all about. Whereas revolution seeks the radical *resolution* of organizational problems and organizational contradictions by overcoming the organization that has generated those problems and contradictions, diavolution enables people to *inhabit* those problems and

contradictions by transforming – one might also say, *transvaluating* – them. The diavolutionary genre of inhabiting is not sedentary dwelling. It implies the continuous activities of border-crossing organizations and their respective revolutions.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, revolution and diavolution can be ultimately compared as two *styles* of inhabiting organization – in other words, as two opposite choices about desire. Revolution is an eschatologically nomic desire which katectically needs the anomic to prepare for its own occurrence: it thus produces extrinsic, vertical deterritorialization. Diavolution expresses the desire for intrinsic, horizontal deterritorialization: it subtracts itself from the alternative between the nomic and the anomic in that it rejects the idea that inhabiting the organization means belonging to it. A different conception of relational space underlies the distinct attitudes of revolution and diavolution. Territories are always relative to boundaries: indeed, they are thoroughly constituted by boundary-drawing. Zones, by contrast, are borderless: they are fuzzy ensembles of places and positions and encounters happening within those places. Zones are defined by intensities, territories by relational thresholds (Brighenti 2006b). Revolution is territorial, diavolution is zonal. Because of its non-territorial *Stimmung*, diavolution reintegrates a series of characteristics that were removed from the official modern revolutionary agenda, such as being marginal, interstitial, unaccomplished and unaccomplishable. Diavolution includes sets of practices that insist on one's subtraction from the regime of command and on escape from the *stings of command* (Canetti 1960; Brighenti 2006a). From this point of view, diavolution is resistance, not in the widespread sense of a practice that stands against change, but rather in the more human sense of an inherently transformative action (Brighenti 2008). Diavolution is resistance: resistance, not as opposition, but as creation.

Imagination is a resource for both revolution and diavolution. The role of imagination in

revolutionary processes has been stressed by several authors. For Sorel (1908), what counts is neither the content nor the truth of a revolutionary myth, but the capacity the myth has to initiate action. In the case of the French May 1968, Seidman (2004) argues that the imagery of revolution, its representation, and the value been attributed to it by observers and commentators were in the long run more important as factors of effective social change in France than immediate legal and economic transformation. The interesting point emerging from these examples is their suggestion of the practical nature of theory. The fact that thinking and theorizing are of practical nature is crucial to diavolution. From this point of view, diavolution can be placed within a network of resonating concepts which include Guattari's (1977, 1992) *molecular revolution*, Vaneigem's (1971) and the Situationist International's (1959-1968) *revolution of everyday life*, and, to some extent, Badiou's (2005[1988]; 1991) *événement*. Guattari views molecular revolution as consisting of desire-struggles (*lutttes de désir*) which call the most immediate social relations into question, enacting a series of *remises en question de la vie quotidienne*. The author's insistence on small-scale relationships – which proceeds from his and Deleuze's critique of the psychoanalytic tradition – is quite valuable, but Guattari (just as Negri) still ends up by thinking in aggregated terms and is consequently caught up by the old revolutionary problem of the best forms of organization for molecular revolution and the social movements supporting it. It is the very concept of movement as coalition of interests that diavolution supersedes. Vaneigem and the Situationists went one step further by imagining a set of practices and games, such as the *dérive* (drifting) and the 'random meeting', which enhance intrinsic deterritorialization. It is precisely in the domain of practice, though, that their shortcomings became apparent as they eventually transformed themselves into a self-purging, monocratic Stalinist organization (cf. Home 1988). Finally, Badiou (2005[1988]) views the event

(*événement*) as a disruption of being and its meaninglessness, or emptiness. The event is not being, but a sort of ‘trans-being’ in which, through loyalty (*fidélité*) (Badiou 1991), a non-individual subject constitute itself into a domain of activity. Yet, while an unbridgeable gap between different states of affairs characterizes the occurrence of diavolution as well as that of revolution, diavolution requires no loyalty to anyone or anything. Diavolution does not even need the idea that being equates with formal, organizational emptiness or mere coherence. Indeed, being can be alternatively seen, with Deleuze, as crossed by immanent becoming – i.e., as a form of abundance rather than the form of paucity that Badiou’s position entails.

Diavolutionary practices are those practices that ensue from recognition and the awareness that the most serious threats to freedom do not reside in the fact that each majority contains a number of minorities, but in the fact that within each minority there lurks the spectre of a majority. On the one hand, this is why diavolutionary practices do not constitute revolutionary sects, which always end up being one organization within another organization, within another organization, *ad infinitum*, where each organization is minoritarian when seen from above and majoritarian when seen from below. On the other hand, diavolutionary inhabiting within organization should not be confused with some kind of new age harmonic relationship. In fact, inhabiting means resisting. Diavolution has to do with active, transformative resistance, and the only thing one can resist is the present, the present *qua* organization of the present and, at the same time, present organization. Diavolution cannot be reduced to revolution, insofar as it is not the future of revolution – which in most cases is but a failure – that explains why today people engage in transformative action. Diavolution shows the *otherwise* of revolution and organization. From this point of view, diavolution resembles what Canetti (1975) calls *transformation*, Deleuze (1995) *immanence* and Agamben (2005) *potenza*, or potency. Immanence addresses the

within rather than the beyond. For Deleuze, immanence is life and, at the same time, a moment of suspension: it is not one's life or the other's, but *a* life, an indeterminate life, life without qualification and identification. Consequently it is non-representational and – *pace* Badiou – non-subjective. At a certain point Deleuze speaks of life as 'pure power', but one should not be misled by the word: it indicates infusion of power into life, life as infused with a power that becomes indistinguishable from life itself. This is why Deleuze also speaks of 'bliss', *immanation* rather than *emanation*. I suggest that immanence should be regarded as a type of life which is neither nomic nor anomic, as a non-anomic condition. Immanence is thus avoidance of the nomic. Likewise potency, as described by Agamben, is potency of acts, but it does not extinguish itself in the acts of which it is potency. In other words *potenza* is a regime of existence which refers to a reservoir of being outside effectuation. Being outside effectuation means in the first place being outside history, power and command. The nature of this 'outside', however, does not imply any form of transcendence but can be best imagined as a practice of contingent subtraction, as transformation in Canetti's sense. Transformation is life, life inherent not to the individual but to the mass, which for Canetti (1960) corresponds to an unstable stage of transformation, thus potentially of subtraction from power. Canetti (1975) portrayed the writer as the 'keeper of transformation' (*Hüter der Verwandlungen*). It is because the writer, or the artist, is the keeper of all the acts of resistance to the present. I shall simply conclude by suggesting that the 'writer' of which Canetti speaks can be understood, not as a specific professional category, but rather as an activity, a practice which escapes representation and may be far more widely distributed among human beings than it is usually assumed.

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