TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH
Resisting in order to save (a civilisation, a regime, a motherland, a history...) takes us back, by reference to the Resistance to Nazi occupation, to a collective moral commitment. Resisting in order to challenge (a civilisation, a regime, a motherland, a history...) means, in the postmodern age, to assert personal singularity over the collective constraints. A cultural divide thus opposes two generations and two visions of power and authority. So that the word “resistance” could well be hijacked by partisan rhetoric on both sides, unless they are themselves forced to resist indifference (to the civilisation, to the regime, to the motherland, to history, etc.) that is threatening to take us into nihilistic individualism.

The exemplarity of the Resistance

For a French citizen, the Resistance of 1939-1945 is history, memory, and imagination all rolled up in one. It is part of national history, the history of a great refusal: refusal to be humiliated by defeat, refusal to accept foreign occupation, refusal to collaborate with the enemy. A heavy and complex task consisting in staying in the war, in continuing to fight with the Allies while also conducting a civil war internally. The forces of the struggle fed on fervours that were as powerful as they were divergent but that shared the same purpose: to safeguard the possibility, for the nation, of writing its future history, of creating and assuming the aims for its actions, of being among the players in “la Grande Histoire”, the Great Story of France under the occupation. It was by paying the price in exemplary fashion (the price of torture, deportation, and death) that the Resistance Fighter bore witness to the historical dimension of his or her fight: showing that acceptance of the supreme risk is, for a sovereign State, the necessary precondition for seeing its freedom recognised and respected by others.

This symbolic power of the Resistance, generated by those who bore witness to this truth, by paying the price with their lives, continues today to resist followers of figures and counters of mass death tolls. Although the whole nation did not take up arms, and although it must, in all fairness, be admitted that fear is a much better recruiter than courage, the men and women of the Resistance were, each in their
own individual story, creators of the meaning of the word "resisting". Exemplarity is an unveiling of meaning, a singular manifestation of the objectivity of a value, it arouses approval and adherence, it acts as a call, it mobilises without obliging, and it is disseminated through a communicative symbolic power 1.

In this case, the exemplarity of the Resistance Fighter is of the order of action; resisting in the context of defeat and of the Occupation is firstly to engage and to commit oneself, not to stay back, not to wait and see or to be a free-rider or an opportunist; it is to write history by making it, in an emergency situation, knowing that privation and suffering are the price to be paid for it. Under extreme circumstances, a passion for surpassing yourself can come to you, and choose for you, a passion that cannot arouse a vision that is purely intellectual or abstract, but rather only the living incarnation of an ideal in a reality that is happening: a nation, a party, a city, a local area, a world... Resisting then comes down to making exist what is "eternal", timeless and circumstance-less, due to its continued rebirth; resisting now in existence what the will to destroy wants to annihilate; taking in refugees, hiding children, helping people across borders, uniting by writing and by testifying, is to make exist by making resist.

Resistance after the Resistance

The Resistance is now part of legend, and what is now passed down by memory is an imagined unity, imagined by a French people brought into tune by the same ordeal as if divisions, power struggles, ideologies, and passions could be magically abolished by a common hope bonded together around a shared future. This imagined vision is misleading if it is seen as a reconstruction of the past, but it is faithful to the specifically moral memory of the action of resisting.

The memory of the Resistance is perpetuated through commemoration, through the will to pass on its spirit to the younger generations. The memory work brings together the generations, the generation of those who survived and the generation of those who have not experienced war, in the common admiration and respect

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1. The case of Lucien Vidal-Naquet (father of Pierre Vidal-Naquet) illustrates the exemplarity of the action of resisting. In times when courage deserts most people, the solitary action of publicly manifesting courage gives unparalleled visibility to the principles being defended. “During the Occupation, he showed courage that was almost excessive in that he designated himself to his executioners. When the laws of Vichy forbade him to carry on his profession, he protested publicly, so I am told, at the Law Courts, defying those of his fellow lawyers who passively applied the orders and decrees of Vichy. In Marseille, where his wife’s family lived, he lived in a house occupied by German officers. He hid neither his origins nor his opinions” (Raymond Aron, Mémoires, Paris, Julliard, 1983, p. 162).
for "those who stood firm and said no". "Passing on" or "handing down" presupposes a continuity of culture passed on in a continuity of life styles and of beliefs but, since it is has transpired that the life styles and the convictions have, with time and social transformations, become strangers to one another, what memory can really activate the commemoration?

The Resistance Fighter is a subject of admiration, and that is indisputable, but he or she is often admired at arm’s length. We respect what, in him or her, ultimately, we do not understand: dying, sacrificing oneself, losing one’s youth for a moment of heroism or of collective momentum. For many young people today, those Resistance Fighters were indeed capable of dying "for them", i.e. for the generations that followed, but "for them" often means "in place of them", as if to avoid them ever having to deal with the same choices, with the same ultimate decisions, and with the same heroic commitments. Worse still: we sometimes hear voices raised against a death cult that takes away from self-sacrifice whenever it also presupposes sacrifice of others (the enemies), which considerably undermines aspirations of pacifism exclusively understood as a quest for comfort.

And yet these obstacles to memory paradoxically and precisely bring out what is truly the subject of memory, namely a spirit of resistance that unites the moral and the social by realising the moral through the social. In giving themselves to society, those who "say no" accomplish their lives not as biological lives, but as moral existences, ethical substances of the body politic of the French Republic, a union experienced as a common good that is superior to individual interests. Law would be merely a binding abstraction without the power of being a bond, of embodying the feelings of family, social, and patriotic solidarity, and of being a collective experience.

The politically ethical dimension of the action of resisting loses nothing of its topicality or of its exemplarity when it stands up against conformism, cowardice, and submission to illegitimate or unbearable dominations. Luther King, Mandela, or Gandhi illustrate this resistance synonymous with a fight entirely devoted to saving a population and mobilised though a civilising project before which the leader effaces himself to the extent of losing his freedom or his life. Thus, liberation resistance imposes its legitimacy irresistibly when it refuses a perversion of values that is conducted in the name of those
values themselves, a perversion of institutions that is carried out in the name of those very institutions. The constructive aim of saving resistance is not so much the annihilation of an ideological opponent as the realisation of a political project that is highly desired by an entire people.

Resistances

Another meaning became attached to the action of resisting during the second half of the 20th Century. The disasters caused by the two world wars were then attributed to a large extent to Western modernity, decried as being technological, utilitarian, calculating, conquering, and devastating. The Nation State was accused of having "worsened, and perfected in the extreme, cruelty, hatred and negation of humanity through violence" to the extent of being seen as where the true blame for the Holocaust should lie. Republican morals are suspected as having served as an ideological trap for collective enslavement to reactionary values. The history of European reason, from Christianity to the Enlightenment and from the Enlightenment to Marxism, is summarised as the history of a foundation course for totalitarianism.

Resisting, a cultural act

After the War, the capacity to criticise increased, in intellectual circles and universities, with deconstruction of ideologies, questioning and concerns that psychoanalysis interposed between individuals and themselves, awakening to the cultural diversity of the world as told by anthropologists. Resisting is to use these new tools provided by human sciences to disillusion, to decrypt, to uncover, and to denounce.

We are thus struck by the intellectual construction of the contestation of power or authority in all of its forms: administrative, academic, medical, military and even (and above all) cultural. Resisting is no longer so much fighting a political opponent as changing vision, reasoning, references, and way of understanding. It is necessary to reveal what the clear-sightedness of reason, the competence of science and the authority of the State have been incapable of seeing, blinded as they are by their clear-sightedness, their competence, and their
authority. Resisting is to reveal that imposture, illusion, and lies are the genuine masters of power, it is to take away innocence, and to make known what knowledge does not know: what, in it, is unconscious, unthought, anonymous, forgotten, and ignored. Resisting takes on the strange figure of a clash internal to Western civilisation, which is presented as a culture that is set up as a counter-culture relative to itself.

The unveiling of this new truth does not express the courage of a subject that is releasing itself from preconceived ideas and alienating convictions, but rather the disillusionment of a subject who is no longer in command of his or her thoughts or of his or her will, who accepts not being in command, weakness, fragility, and finiteness, and who is condemning himself or herself to continuous intellectual therapy against his or her own dreams of lucidity... But, as it is easy to observe, this knowledge of non-knowledge is still knowledge, and this sovereign inscience grants itself a position overlooking the life of society as a whole, and the legitimacy to denounce, to contest, and to rebut the hypocrisy of those who persist in the illusion of thinking that clear-sightedness, competence, and authority are and will remain the genuine bedrock of culture.

Resistances

Since power is no longer seen as a unified force of domination but rather as a system, an invisible system of coordination between knowledge, practices, and morals, multiple resistances need to be put up against such interwoven powers. Since knowledge serves to normalise behaviour and not to instruct minds, since medicine, schooling, and the army produce docile and formatted subjects dispossessed of their critical capacity, it is marginality, delinquency or abnormality that serve as revealers to the processes that subjugate individuals at the very core of their illusion of emancipation. We then resist the illusion of unity, of morality, of solidarity, and of normality by displaying transgression, deviation, difference, and discontinuity. "Former colonised peoples, isolated peoples, women and children, homosexuals, regional and ethnic minorities, thugs and bandits then enjoy favourable preconceptions in the post-sixties movements: they are all considered as being equally oppressed and clothed in the apparel of innocence and of the noble savage."

There are thus resistances, in the plural, instead of a common will for the action of resisting, because the aim is to impose discontinuities,

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happenings and events, and things that cannot be categorised. The courage to say no is not magnified, rather the language and the modalities of authority are thrown off balance wherever it is exerted: at school, in hospitals, in courts... The important thing is to thwart instigated certitudes, know-how, and competences, and to speak out everywhere against the manipulations that govern the relations of power. The figures of the migrant, of the madman, of the homosexual, and of the delinquent... are the writing of a counter-history of freedom, that of the victims produced by power games, whose intolerable nature can then come out.

Resistances are thus possible everywhere where there is power, i.e. everywhere and in particular in words. Speaking out against symbolic power (the power to say, to appoint, to define, to classify, to list, and thus to impose judgements with the help of words) is the subject of careful deconstruction that is enjoying particular success and seductive power. Thus, for example, the representations associated with the words "women", "femininity" and "feminism" (and today with the word "gender") are becoming very fashionable places of resistance. It suffices to "deconstruct" the mountains of sedimentary and unconscious meanings on which they have been built in order to condemn and to censor the odious and derogatory traditionalisms of those who thought naively that such words were banal and innocent. "The heterosexual/homosexual binarism is itself a homophobic production, just as the man/woman binarism is a sexist production"8: imposing another classification also changes the power of the words in a public space entirely occupied by a media war between symbols. The symbolic power can then change beneficiary and go over to the side of those who know how to use the languages and resources of victimism either peaceably or bellicosely.

Resisting

Individualism has thus been seen as a specifically democratic source of resistance to totalitarian, authoritarian, conformist, or populist temptations. Many would like it still to be, and some think that it still is. And yet the symbolic places and the new forms of this political scourge are more of an encouragement now to resist an identity-based hyper-individualism that, whether private or collective, is transforming into counter-democratic behaviour and claims.

Resisting indifference

Individuality, singularity, and originality, because they are inimitable, look like self-assertion capable of countering the massification that is characteristic of the emergence of totalitarian mentalities. Since the spirit of independence is a claim specific to modernity, it seems natural to suppose that post-modern individualism, because it is in revolt against everything that oppresses the life of desire, including the will to be individually responsible, extends the history of that spirit. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s statement that “obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom” is thus rejected by post-modern singularism, or indeed an oversimplification might associate Rousseau only with Robespierre, and Kant only with Marx and Stalin, thereby magically and superficially reducing the Enlightenment and the Republican ideal to vectors of terrorist absolutism. Against this caricature of freedom, the cult of self-worship can easily seem like a driving force for boundless liberation that no longer comes up against any resistances to one’s fantasies.

And yet, the obligation to always be unique (always unique like everyone) no longer really seems to be an obstacle to conformisms, to ideological hijacking, and to enslavements of all kinds. The duty to be happy and original at any price ends up working as a factor of disintegration and of atomisation, individuality ultimately destroying subjectivity and the rights of the individual by delegitimizing human rights. In the 1960s, citizens were cultured enough and republican enough to offer themselves the luxury of complaining and of arousing a counter culture to marriage, to the family, to national, unity, to erudition, and to consensus. But today, deculturation, unbonding, "demarriage", depoliticisation of life in society… are arousing indifference rather than revolt, apathy rather than thinking, and a wait-and-see attitude rather than commitment.

Resisting counter-democracy

It is thus the atrophy of a certain capacity to resist that must be resented today. “Fundamentally allergic to all totalitarian projects, the postmodern subject is not prepared to fight them either. Defending democracy does not mobilise him or her any more than subversion of its values. […] The offhand indifference to grand causes has as its


10. "Self-determining freedom […] has been one of the intellectual sources of modern totalitarianism, starting, one might argue, with the Jacobins. And although Kant reinterpreted this notion of freedom in purely moral terms, as autonomy, it returns to the political sphere with a vengeance with Hegel and Marx." (Charles Taylor, The Malaise of Modernity).

11. Irène Théry, President of the Working Group “Filiation origine, parentalité, le droit face aux nouvelles valeurs générationsnelles” (Original filiation, parenthood, law faced with new generational values), 2014.
counterpart abdication in the face of force, and the fanaticism that is disappearing from Western societies might well give way to another disease of will that is hardly less worrying: the spirit of collaboration. That thought, expressed in 1987, finds a new meaning today, with indifference taking the paradoxical form of a cult of difference (by indifference) and becoming the silent or unconscious accomplice of fanaticisms that it believed it was stopping.

Democracy becomes "impolitic" when the social absorbs the political (demand for benefits prevails over safeguarding freedoms), when public life succumbs to cultural practices being rendered increasingly infantile, when surveillance of politicians (whistle-blowing, ridiculing, hounding by the media) replaces participation in a political life together, when the expression of protest (voting "against" rather than voting "for") delegitimizes the exercise of being in power and when judicialization continuously subjects the State to the threat of a lawsuit. Citizenship is then reduced merely to a single practice: being against authority, whatever it is and whatever it does.

Resisting this depoliticisation is to find the political fullness of democracy again, and to return to living our life together as a specifically political life, i.e. as a place where action has meaning. Divergences have their place there when, instead of aiming to destroy, they aim to construct a public space for thinking and for mutual trust, when the judgments make up a whole by their very opposition, when the common world, which is not an inert residue, is unceasingly recreated by the views, opinions, debates, and initiatives that define the roles and the places of everyone, forming a context for thought and for action where others await, understand, and discuss our interventions, a place that make the polarities of life collectively significant, from birth to death.

Resisting counter-democratic indifference is then to find, once again, the force of power or authority in the political sense, "capacity of humans to act and to act concertedly. Power is not an individual property; it belongs to a group and continues to belong to it so long as the group is not divided." Thus, resisting violence is not a sign of weakness but a proof of strength when power and authority are seen as an experience of a unity that we are not subjected to, but rather that we generate together.

14. Hannah Arendt, Du mensonge à la violence (From lies to violence), Pocket, 1972, p. 144.