THE EROS EFFECT

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The purpose of this paper is to develop the concept of the eros effect as an analytical tool with which the now dichotomized field of social movements and collective behavior can be reconceptualized and a portion of the social phenomena covered by this field better understood. Essentially, the eros effect refers to the transcendental qualities of social movements, to what occurs in moments of suddenly popular social upheavals which dramatically transform established social orders. As I will discuss, the eros effect occurs in moments when the basic assumptions of a society--patriotic nationalism and the authority of the government; hierarchy, the division of labor, and specialization--vanish overnight. During moments of the eros effect, popular movements not only imagine a new way of life and a different social reality but millions of people live according to transformed norms, values, and beliefs.

In the context of post-modern society, the eros effect is best represented by the events of May 1968 in France and May 1970 in the United States. (Katsiaficas, 1987) After the global upsurge of the New Left, events like the surprisingly sudden ousters of Marcos, Duvalier and the Shah dramatically portray the phenomenon under consideration in this paper. The celebration of the life instincts occurs in a ritualized form in Mardi Gras in New Orleans, but the origin and dimensions of the eros effect are very different since the latter occurs outside the framework of planning and institutional behavior.

Within the discipline of sociology, the category of behavior which the eros effect addresses was discussed in the epoch of industrialization as crowd behavior, a type of phenomena which was originally understood through LeBon's contagion theory (LeBon, 1895) and later by convergence theory (Cantril, 1941) and emergent norm theory (Turner and Killian, 1987). By critically discussing these previous attempts to understand such episodes of group behavior, a more precise formulation of the eros effect will be constructed. It should be noted that the eros effect is an analytical construct designed specifically to analyze post-

industrial (or post-modern) social formations, formations within which isolated crowds have been superseded by massive collectivities. Through a critical review of the above theories, I hope to make clear that the eros effect is better suited than these previous formulations to understand the possible future outline of social explosions in the context of such post-modern societies.

THE EROS EFFECT AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

As a relatively young science founded in the nineteenth century in reaction to the anarchy of the French revolution and the political turmoil which ensued, sociology has had limited insight into social movements and collective behavior. After all, sociology's original concern was to locate the sources of social cohesion and order, an overriding concern which seriously handicapped the scientific understanding of conflict and disorder.

The world today is changing so rapidly that even the study of change has been compelled to keep pace. It was only a century ago that Gustave LeBon attempted to formulate a theory of crowd behavior. Although his theory was postulated on the basis of extreme anti-democratic biases, his study of crowds helped frame the scholarly activities in the field for decades thereafter. Half a century later, sociological insight into revolutions made what seemed to be a great step forward through the natural history perspective of Crane Brinton and Lyford Edwards. Derived from quite a different set of assumptions than LeBon's theory and seeking to explain longer term processes of change than LeBon, the natural history perspective nonetheless shared with LeBon the value judgment that those involved in revolutions were abnormal and diseased individuals--feverish "philosopher-killers" in Brinton's words, like microbes feeding on decaying flesh, to paraphrase LeBon.

In the 1960s, the eruption of worldwide movements helped transform the theoretical understanding of the role of social movements within the social order. For many, social movements were understood as rational attempts to transform norms, values and institutions, an insight which resulted in breaking off this category of phenomenon from the field of collective behavior (Gusfield, 1968). According to previously

established reasoning, episodes of collective behavior--crowds, fashions, panics, crazes, and riots--were fundamentally spontaneous and emotional phenomena; at a minimum, they were certainly non-rational forms of actions which were to be understood in contrast to normal institutional behavior (Smelser, 1962). The new insight that social movements were founded on a rational critique of the established order meant that they could only be analyzed properly by severing them from the field of collective behavior.

To be sure, there were also contributions to the study of social movements which regarded them as neither rational nor normal. Lewis Feuer's assertion that the New Left was simply a product of the Oedipal complex, although widely discussed, was regarded as ideological and idiosyncratic by the vast majority of social movement analysts. Making social movements "rational," however, meant that they could no longer be considered simple functions of unconscious impulses. Thus, the emotional content of social movements was rationalized, thereby paving the way for the rise of post- 1960s approaches to the study of social movements which emphasize resource mobilization, organizational and informal networks, and frameworks of rational calculations and rising or frustrated expectations.

It is not within the domain of this paper to deal with the variety of theories which try to explain the causes of social movements by locating sources of social strain and frustration, resources which can be mobilized, or protesters' cost-benefit analysis. By developing the concept of the eros effect in relation to classical theories of collective behavior, I hope to renew the tradition of thought which views human beings (not resources, organizations, and/or the ebb and flow of economic wealth) as central to the transformation of social reality.

In contrast to the new generation of theories of social movements, the theory of the eros effect seeks to understand the nature of group behavior in moments of social crisis as attributes of human beings, not simply as caused by social conditions. My theory attempts to reintegrate the emotional and the rational at a level on which emotional and irrational are not synonymous in their usages nor derogatory in their characterizations. I seek to affirm the emotional content of social movements as erotic action, action which may be considered collective liberatory sublimation--a rational way of clearing collective psychological

blockages. As Fanon (1968) uncovered the positive psychological effects on the individual of resistance to colonialism, I will discuss similar positive benefits of group opposition to the established structures of post-modern society and posit that erotic emotions can be a powerful source of constructive collective action.

LEBON AND THE PATHOLOGY OF CROWDS

The origin of the modern study of collective behavior dates from LeBon's analysis of crowds, a type of social behavior he regarded as savage and destructive. The problem which framed his inquiry was to uncover the process through which initially individualized anger and hostility could spread rapidly through a group and be internalized uncritically. According to LeBon, it was the anonymity and suggestibility of crowds which made participants in them susceptible to a process of contagion through which the ordinary behavior patterns of decent thinking and civilized people could suddenly be neutralized, thereby opening the door to depraved acts of brutality.

LeBon formulated his law of the mental unity of crowds to explain precisely how the individual personalities of crowd members could be suspended when a group personality is superimposed onto them. He explained episodes of collective behavior on the basis of the process of contagion whereby moods, attitudes, behavior are rapidly communicated and accepted uncritically (a process not unlike Freud's herd instinct). Sentiments and emotions were regarded as contagious as the most dreaded diseases. The normal process of interpretation vanishes as mere stimulus-response occurs. All persons take one and the same direction as their conscious personality vanishes and the sinister side of the human personality emerges, a sinister side linked by LeBon to nature and emotions (in contrast to rationality and civilization).

Despite LeBon's fundamentally anti-democratic orientation, an orientation indicated by his belief that democracy was nothing but institutionalized mob rule, contagion theory remains a popular interpretation of collective behavior. Its equivalent in the 1960s was the theory of the ever-present outside agitator who was able to bring a contagious disease to a college campus or a ghetto, a disease which would simply overwhelm previously civilized students and African-Americans and make beastly radicals out of them. The assumption,

of course, is that it is leaders who cause revolts, that social movements are not rooted in any popular needs or beliefs but are fundamentally abnormal phenomena artificially brought into existence.

Although Freud did not entirely share the political views of LeBon, he postulated a similar process of crowd behavior. According to Freud, the libido is exposed in crowd situations, and "the mental superstructure, the development of which in individuals shows such dissimilarities, is removed, and the unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone, stand exposed to view." (Freud, 1920) Freud shared LeBon's view that the mental state of crowds was similar to that of children, an assumption which led to the need for father figures. For Freud, the equivalent of outside agitators was an explanation for the emergence of episodes of collective behavior. (Katsiaficas and Kirkpatrick, 1987).

CONVERGENCE THEORY AND CROWD PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Unlike contagion theory's assumption that collective behavior emerges as a result of outside stimulation of latent pathological drives, convergence theory postulates the emergence of episodes of collective behavior on the basis of simultaneously present psychological states of mind and normative orientations among human beings who aggregate. Where contagion theory assumes that a heterogeneous aggregation of individuals becomes a homogeneous crowd, according to convergence theory, episodes of collective behavior simply reveal the true selves of the many actors who find themselves suddenly thrust together. These true selves are understood by convergence theory as containing primitive impulses like hatred and egoism, impulses which are released by crowds. For convergence theory, psychopathology is the direction of crowd analysis and collective irrationality is that which is analyzed, a phenomenon which is contrasted to processes involving reason and insight.

Typically, convergence theorists postulate that it is the lower class and those marginalized from the orderly workings of the social system who partake in episodes of collective behavior. The continuity between "deviant" individuals and "abnormal" group behavior serves as proof of convergence theory's hypothesis.

Because convergence theory assumes the uniformity of the crowd, outside agitators and leaders are

unimportant to its analysis. Rather the presence of deviant insiders uncommitted to normal values and norms have become the focus of analysis, and the question guiding the analyst becomes the possibility of identifying "crowd-prone" personality types, a question answered in the 1960s in the numerous profiles of "rioters."

EMERGENT NORMS AND GROUP DIVERSITY

While the above two theories differ on how the uniformity of crowd behavior is achieved, i.e. whether it is outside influences which spread or previously existent needs which are facilitated, emergent norm theory questions the uniformity of crowds and stresses the multiple sources of crowd formations. If contagion and convergence theories assume that crowds are composed of originally free-standing individuals who somehow develop into a unity, emergent norm theory extends the assumption of free standing individuals even into the peak of crowd activity. This theory asserts that new norms emerge during episodes of crowd behavior, but questions whether the acceptance of this new norm is uniform or unanimous among all those who happen to be part of the crowd.

Regarding those who do accept the new norm, normative theory regards them as creating a new group, one regulated by the search for new social norms. This creation of a new norm has very little to do with convergence theory's notion of the spontaneous facilitation of existing norms or with contagion theory's imposition of the crowd's pathology onto the individual since it is a new--or emergent--norm which is at stake. Nonetheless, according to emergent norm theory, collective behavior still remains exceptional--it is still contrasted with normal institutional behavior. As Ralph Turner put it: "Because the behavior in the crowd is different either in degree or kind from that in noncrowd situations, the norm must be specific to the situation to some degree--hence **emergent** norm." (Turner, 1964, p. 330).

Because emergent norm theory took care to reconsider the labelling of collective behavior as abnormal and pathological, it did so, in large measure, by refocusing the nature of inquiry from psychological to sociological variables--from unconscious impulses to symbolic cognitive exchanges. Through an emphasis on cognitive dynamics, normative theory sought to expose the continuity between group and crowd behavior.

Such a step, however, effectively undercut the significance of the domain of the unconscious in crowd behavior. The focus of inquiry for emergent norm theory is how existent norms become neutralized, a condition which must exist for newly emergent norms to become generalized. Once a norm emerges, normative theory assumes that individuals conform to it by suppressing any "inappropriate" mood rather than through reference to any psychological process.

PACESETTER-FOLLOWER CONTAGION

In the 1960s, the growing perception of social movements analysts was that protesters were rational actors. One of the theorists who put forth this position was Anthony Oberschall (1973). Interestingly, Oberschall has more recently developed the concept of the pacesetter-follower contagion in relation to his study of the social movements of the 1960s (Oberschall, 1978). Although more recently developed than emergent norm theory, this theory reverts to LeBon's framework in several important ways. First, it constructs a hierarchy of social movement leaders and followers. According to Oberschall, political entrepreneurs (activists) assemble "transitory teams" who provide labor and "conscience cnstituencies" who provide money which together constitute the infrastructure of social movements. A "star system" created by the mass media, regarded by Oberschall as central to the social movements of the 1960s, stimulates a "bandwagon effect" and a "pacesetter-follower dynamic." The "decreased reaction time" of media-induced stimuli results in a centralized stimulus-response dynamic between initiators and recipients.

While Oberschall's theory has the merit of attempting to understand the media as significant communication channels in post-modern society, he does so by incorporating them into contagion theory. His top-down leader/follower dichotomy is a restatement of LeBon's notion that crowds superimpose their values onto individuals, except that it is now the media's images which are superimposed onto activists. He argues that the intentions of activists are not relevant to what is essentially an externally defined behavior pattern.

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By way of contrast to the above theories, the eros effect postulates that the category of phenomena

under scrutiny are simultaneously natural and non-pathological, rational and emotional. Rather than conceiving of group behavior as being artificially stimulated by the mass media, spontaneously facilitated, induced through contagion or the product of a new norm, episodes of the eros effect are regarded as the collective sublimation of the instinctual need for freedom. In contrast to the traditional positing of the irrational as evil and the non-rational as unworthy of respect, the eros effect reflects an understanding that inner nature is a source of rational action--of freedom--an insight which leads to the postulation of a liberatory dimension to certain types of popular outbursts. In moments of the eros effect, there is simultaneously a negating of the systematic institutionalization of the "survival of the fittest" as the organizing principles of society and a spontaneous cathexis between human beings at fundamental levels of social solidarity. Mobilization for action occurs through participants' intuition as much as through their rational beliefs, and this intuitive species identity forms a basis for collective activity.

What LeBon and Oberschall view as externalized behavior, I view through the eros effect as action which emanates from and reaches into the deepest dimensions of the souls of human beings. What is universally viewed as episodic, I view as historically continuous, whether spread by word of mouth, intuition, or paleosymbolic intergenerational transmission. Thus, the eros effect postulates that popular movements spontaneously internalize new levels of activity which previous episodes of revolutionary struggle already developed, thereby explaining why newly-emergent movements have continually identified with their predecessors.

The transformation of self-interest into species-interest is the essential dimension of the eros effect. An example of this type of activity occurred in May 1968 in France, specifically during a march in protest of the expulsion from France of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a German-born Jew who was one of the leaders of the student revolt which sparked the strike by ten million workers. The crowd as a whole--including a prominent contingent of Arabs--began chanting: "We are all German Jews." In this situation, an intuitive process of identification occurred in which individual and group self-interest were transcended as the universalized interest of the species emerged. It was not only the case that a new norm was created: Within a matter of

days, the entire value system and the institutions of France were transformed in the everyday lives of millions of people. Patriotic nationalism was swept aside by internationalism, and as self-managed factories, universities, and cities suddenly appeared, France was suddenly on the brink of revolution.

How do we explain this sudden transformation of the whole society? Previously developed theories simply do not provide us with an explanatory framework. Clearly this was not a pathological imposition of the savage instincts of the herd; neither is there any evidence that there was a massive predisposition to revolution or disorder (in fact, there is much evidence to the contrary); nor can the cognitive reformulation of normative variables explain these events. To complicate the question, it should be remembered that the eros effect of 1968 was not simply a national phenomenon, spreading as it did throughout the world (Katsiaficas, 1987).

Another example of the eros effect, one which has bearing at this point, occurred in September 1970, when the Black Panther Party called for a "Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention" and over 15,000 people gathered in Philadelphia. One of the most prominent contingents to march into the meeting hall was composed of gay people who made their entrance chanting "Gay, Gay Power to the Gay, Gay People! Power to the People!" Despite the well known antagonisms between the black movement and homosexuals, in this moment of the eros effect, existing social divisions vanished. It was not the civilized fineries of individuals which vanished as a group identity formed--as LeBon hypothesized--but social divisions created by the world system and centuries of superstition and stratification. In this moment of the eros effect, the potential unity of the human species was momentarily enacted. Human beings became human beings regardless of the social categories created in the past.

Ironically, it is in post-modern society, whose fundamental characteristics are a decentered objectivity and deconconstructed subjectivity, that the reconconstruction of the species can occur through the eros effect. (Touraine, 1988) The instinctual species unity manifested in the above examples is at the same time a lived experience of freedom-- freedom understood as the dialectical unity of what are generally regarded as opposites: autonomous individual existence and collective solidarity. Using a similar coupling of

contradictory concepts, Denise Levertov has explained poetry as "a way of constructing autonomous existences out of words and **silences**." (Levertov, 1981, my emphasis).

The significance of this formulation is incomprehensible to traditional theorists because they are unable to resolve contradictory concepts--i.e. to bridge the gap between micro and macro levels of analysis. The eros effect is derived from the understanding that revolution is the process through which nature becomes history (**Aufhebung der Naturwuchsigkeit**), an understanding of the transformation of the human unconscious through the flowering of its erotic capabilities. Such a view of the emotional side of human beings as an impetus to the ascent of the species is foreign to previous formulations of theories of collective behavior.

Traditional theories, even those which postulate the rationality of social movements, fail to comprehend the merger of instrumental and aesthetic rationality during moments of the eros effect. The transformation of what began as a serious political challenge into playful love at the barricades in 1968 was dramatized by the use of the Odeon Theatre's costumes by demonstrators who appeared in the streets of Paris clothed in a variety of attire. The contours of these events resemble those of jazz, surrealism and performance art more than they conform to categories of crowd contagion, frustration or normal group dynamics. (Willener, 1970) The emergence of an emotional rationality in the midst of political struggle itself transcended the categories of action which established theories of social action and collective behavior assume.

This short exposition of the eros effect leaves many questions to be answered. Can it be empirically verified? One such possibility is through an investigation of what should be (and what appear to be) lowered rates of anti-social criminal offenses during moments of the eros effect. The problems of data would be immense in any case since the existing methods of measurement would surely have been disrupted.

How do we differentiate the eros effect from its opposite, the thanatos effect, which would be postulated, to use one example, as the driving force of lynch mobs? To be clear, I do not assume that crowds are a uniform social phenomenon, and even if we accept the standard typology of different types of crowds,

that there is one set of explanatory variables.

There are two other levels of analysis on which the eros effect needs to be considered: as a social movement tactic and on a philosophical level. With regard to the former, the eros effect becomes an analytical concept which seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Unlike previous social movements tactics such as armed insurrections, protracted revolutionary wars, coups d'etat, parliamentary struggles or general strikes, the eros effect is a new tactic of revolutionary movements, one which emerges in post-modern social formations. As the general strike represents the apex of class struggle in the era of industry, so the eros effect is the form of the contestation of the structures of post-modern society. The synchronicity of life in mass mediated societies, the immense influence of mass institutions, and the transformation of secondary groups into mass organizations are preconditions for the emergence of the eros effect but these conditions alone do not explain its existence.

In May 1968 in France as in May 1970 in the United States, public space and domains of everyday life were contested. Whether it was the streets of Paris or the freeways of the United States, the relationships between men and women or young and old, the social space as a whole was contested by an activated population whose new needs and norms constituted a determinate negation of the existing social reality, a negation which not only protested the state of the world but which involved millions of people reorienting their daily lives in fundamental ways. In place of top-down political, economic and social structures and of the previously dominant norms and values, there was a transformation of the everyday lives of the millions of individuals involved in these spontaneously generated upheavals. Since the movements of 1968, it is the case that the eros effect has been intuitively internalized by popular movements in Iran, the Philippines and Haiti as a means of overthrowing entrenched regimes. As the concentration of wealth, power and media coverage within the world system increases, it seems relatively clear that the eros effect might emerge in more contexts than previously considered.

Traditional theory's inability to bridge the micro-macro gulf leaves it unable to comprehend the continuity in the above events or the synchronicity of what occurred in 1968. Essentially the New Left was a

world historical movement, a term which refers to movements which profoundly affect the social orders in which they arise. Not called into existence by leaders not aimed at mere changes in existing top personalities or social institutions but at the qualitative transformation of institutions, norms and values of societies, such movements have "failed" more often than they have "succeeded" in the last two centuries if one considers the events of 1848, 1905 and 1968. In each of these periods, movements were unsuccessful in seizing political power, but each of these movements profoundly changed existing social structures and human beings. In 1848 and 1905, there were only limited connections between the various members of the world system, but in 1968, the slogan, "The whole world is watching!" is but one indication of the extent to which the world system is increasingly tied together, a development which indicates the distinct possibility of the recurrence of the eros effect.

On the philosophical level, the eros effect provides the solution to the riddle of the Cartesian subject-object dualism, a dualism which characterizes the sociological study of social movements and collective behavior. Through the eros effect, new insight can be derived into human nature and the understanding of the rational-emotional dichotomy which forms the sub-stratum from which theories of collective behavior are articulated. Looked upon as the self-formation of the human species, the process of social change can be understood as different than a natural process. Soviet Marxists, of course, emphasize the historical role of labor in this process. More recently, Habermas (1971) has explained the role of communication and Herbert Marcuse (1972) the role of art in the transformation of the human species into a species-being. The eros effect is derived from a similar understanding--the understanding that revolution constitutes another domain through which the human species emerges from its naturally conditioned evolution and becomes a species-being.

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