

Doing business in a South African Township: Considering a role for resentment as situated narrative and theory of power.

Douglas Racionzer
Ashoka
Ashoka Fellow, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This paper argues for an interpretive approach to theorizing as more than merely the assertion of truth-claims but in addition, as a social process that narrates the ordering and simplification of reality effects. Mary Douglas' (1975) notion of the pangolin as a reflexive mediating concept able to "speak" to both macro and micro social theories is recommended. Resentment as just such a pangolin-like concept is proposed and its usefulness is explored in an organizational case study, made up of three vignettes, of doing business in a South African township. The role for resentment in an interpretive theory of power is considered.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is structured as a set of arguments about what social theorizing entails. The production of competent social theories will be described. These arguments will serve to explore the way in which theorizing may in itself be a strategy of power and requires social power in order to be competently achieved, mediated and shared.

These arguments for the reflexivity of power and theorizing and its indexical properties, it is hoped, will allow us to use the social action of theorizing as a template for any social theory.

Social theories are however, deeply contested fields of academic endeavour; the, now traditional, fissure between micro and macro social theories demands specific attention because few social theories are able to offer insights at both levels of analysis and, more crucially for our purposes, a socio-political theory of power requires the theory to have a pneumatic dynamic where social action located in localized contexts may be drawn into broader and more "macro" discourses. The questions which I want to

ask in this paper would be; how may we translate a micro-social theory such as we will develop, which is focussed on meaning, into macro sociological terms that stresses structure and normative order (Knorr-Cetina, 1981: 1; Dallmayr and Thomas, 1977:1)?

Mary Douglas (1975 in Silverman, 1985: 78) may be used to assist in the task of such micro-macro translation. Particularly useful is her ethnography of the Lele in which she noted the role of the pangolin, a scaly anteater in Lele society. "In her attempt to describe the cosmology of a central African group, the Lele. Douglas (1975) found that the Lele's totem was the pangolin and that much of their worldview related to this scaly anteater. The pangolin does not fit securely into the animal category: it only gives birth to one offspring at a time; it does not run away when hunted; although it is a land animal it has the body and tail of fish. "The Lele's celebration of the anomalous pangolin enabled Douglas to specify her analytic problem. She notes that Levi-Strauss has suggested a natural propensity of mythical thought to postulate entities that mediate between polarities established in cognitive categories. The anomalous pangolin seemed like just such a mediating entity." (Silverman, 1985; pp13-14)" (Racionzer, 2005; p24) I would

Raciozner

suggest the cognitive categories requiring pangolins include micro and macro social theory.

This paper will review the faculties of a particular concept; *ressentiment*, to see if it may do the work of the pangolin and offer explanatory insights into both Macro and Micro social phenomena. Frings points out that “*ressentiment* is a loan-word from the French language and it was Nietzsche who introduced the word as a philosophical term” (Frings, 1965; pp 81-2)

I will argue that *ressentiment* can operate effectively on a micro as well as a macro level of theorizing and thus exploring its translative properties and its meaning may help us to fill the gap in the development of our socio-political theory of power. It cannot be a handicap that *ressentiment* may also offer some insight into corruption.

THEORIZING

Theorizing in the Social Sciences demands of its practitioners a certain battle-readiness, as it is a deeply contested field of knowledge. Alan Blum argues that “Generally, adequate theorizing is identified with deductive explanation...Adequate theorizing is then used as a synonym for adequate scientific theorizing... I merely want to point out that in its historic senses, theorizing as an idea does not necessarily entail any conception of scientific procedure as we currently understand it.”(Blum, 1972;p303)

Blum goes on to argue that not only does *theoria* predate our modern conceptions of science but also there is an honourable tradition that argues the scientific approach explicitly denies the possibility of theorizing. Blum recalls Plato’s ‘thoughts’ about knowledge versus ‘opinion’ Husserl’s ‘fact’ versus ‘essence’ and Wittgenstein’s ‘usage’ versus ‘form of life’. These all suggest in various ways that the common-sense natural attitude necessarily entails the failure to theorize. (ibid)

When developing a socio-political theory of power, I shall take my cue from Blum’s diagnosis of theory’s condition that “most discussions of (social scientific) theory proceed as if the term could be isolated from the analytic tradition (language) in which it normally functions. When Homans, Levy, and Merton inform us as to what a theory is, they are generally talking from within a linguistic framework whose deep structure they have already assimilated into their definition and which they assume without question as the necessary condition(s) of an adequate response.” (ibid, p302).

Giddens, usually a deeply nuanced thinker, nonetheless may be placed with Homans, Merton and other theorists who fail to take seriously the reflexive and indexical nature of their own theorizing when, for example he talks of structure; “Structure thus refers, in social analysis, to the structuring properties allowing the ‘binding’ of time-space in social systems...”(Haugaard, 2002; p 153) or elsewhere about resources; “...the notion of resources can be applied to connect the structural study of domination with the analysis of the power relations involved in social systems”(Knorr-Cetina et al, 1981; p170)

It is at this point that I would normally advance the various arguments about authors such as Giddens (1981) failing to deal the essentially reflexive and indexical nature of their own theorizing. I would usually point to the manner in which theorists such as Giddens (ibid) gloss their topic by using the topic as a resource in an ironizing manner. But my intellectual panic indicates that there are more profound issues at stake here.

As Blum (1972) goes on to observe; “Much of the uneasiness experienced by sociologists with hypothetico-deductive (and many post-modern) models of theorizing has been dumbly attributed to facts like these: that they gloss what we desire to explicate, that they fail to comprehend the “normative” character of action, that they are unable to grasp the “indexical” character of our subject matter, etc...as if we (the reputable ones) never gloss,

as if our descriptions of indexical performance are not indexically tied to the conditions of their occurrence....I take it that the trouble we have with the deductive model stems from none of these concrete sorts of considerations but from the existential fact that we cannot *live* with it as sociologists, we cannot see with it, it chokes us rather than liberates us; we just do not find it compelling." (Blum, 1972; p 302)

When researching for this paper I found some of the arguments made by others interesting and others even useful (particularly Scott, 1990), I was however left with a deep feeling of ennui with respect to the varying theories of power presented in my reading. It is not that there is anything "wrong" or false about them. It is that the languages, the terms in which these theories of power are couched only have a tangential alignment with my experience, my own language of power as I experience it played-out in social life.

The languages of power, the signifiers in which theories of social power are couched require some explanation here. I shall go into some detail as these arguments resonate as a template for theorizing in this paper. The later work of Wittgenstein (1958) with respect to language-usage and language games strongly support and were concurrent with Austin's Oxford lectures published as "How to do things with words" (1962). In these lectures, Austin demolished the logical-positivist notion that truth conditions were central to understanding language (and consequently theories in general).

Austin introduces the class of what he calls "performatives" as opposed to sentences that are "constatives". These performatives cannot be true or false like constatives but may be "infelicitous". One may declare war with Zanzibar but have no army and thus no power to declare war. One may for example name a ship the "SAS Smuts" when it is already named the "SAS Nongoma". That is, some performatives,

while remaining neither true nor false, may fail to actually achieve the thing they declare

"On the basis of these observations Austin declares that (a) some sentences, performatives, are special: uttering them does things, and does not merely say things...and (b) these performative sentences achieve their corresponding actions because there are specific conventions linking the words to institutional procedures. And unlike constatives, which are assessed in terms of truth and falsity, performatives can only be assessed as felicitous or infelicitous, according to whether their felicity conditions are met or not."

(Levinson, 1983; pp229-231)

Austin's lectures then proceed, using examples and progressive argumentation, to collapse the distinction between performatives and constatives. The end result is that "all utterances not only serve to express propositions, but also perform actions." (ibid; p243)

I have spent time and space here to describe Austin's (1962) seminal work on speech acts because it advances what I consider to be a fundamental insight into theorizing. That language and consequently theories, which are invariably described using language, cannot only denote meaning. Theories are used to do things, to account for things done, to plan.

I would like very much to think that theorizing is something akin to speech acts. If we could treat theorizing as not only the gathering of groups of statements that are true or not, but also the process of doing things, then we begin to walk down the path of theorizing which may reflect the nature of power in social life. This paper seeks to consider various socio-political theories of power and the ideas within them while simultaneously affording the opportunity to examine how any social theory may be inductively generated using language and its structure.

Raciozner

An acute analysis of the power of language may be found in Scott's work which refers to official and hidden transcripts where he ventures "a crude and global generalization I will later want to qualify severely: the greater the disparity in power between dominant and subordinate and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more the public transcript of subordinates will take on a stereotyped, ritualistic cast." (Scott, 1990; p3)

Scott's work begins to "speak" the language of power that resonates closely with my experience. Scott however clearly privileges the hidden transcripts as being more "real" than its public alternate and on this point we must differ.

MICRO AND MACRO SOCIAL THEORY

It is no coincidence that these arguments about theorizing are neatly paralleled in some of the debates about power. As Bourdieu (2002) argues, in social scientific theories there are micro-sociologies and macro-sociologies. These have been characterized as the Macro-Micro debate. These debates are not merely abstruse delineations but are routinely used within academic institutions to populate departments and social science faculties. A researcher's, often nuanced position with respect to the Macro-Micro debate, will largely determine their career and the colleges or universities where they can find work. The Macro-Micro debate is used as arbiter of power in these institutions.

Knorr-Cetina (1981) takes Dahrendorf's exposition of the division in modern social thought between integration theories and coercion theories and argues that both are rooted in a normative paradigm of social reality. "The normative conception of order is at the same time a macro-level conception of order. Society is integrated (or rent apart) by shared values and obligations (which) determine individual conduct. Compared with the normative conception of order, the cognitive turn, which I have attributed to micro-sociological approaches,

is marked by a shift of interest towards language use and cognitive process that represent and interpret the relevance of values and obligations... Not only has order become a cognitive (including linguistic) rather than a normative phenomenon, it has also become in addition a man-made rather than only a man-coercing matter: it is produced, contested, repaired organized and displayed in concrete situations whose definition become the subject of continual accomplishment and interruption."(Knorr-Cetina, 1981;pp2-6)

Social theories that put human actors as creators and wielders of power have always attracted me, not least because it increased my sense of personal mastery. The placing of the individual person and the intersubjective creation of social life has always seemed to me to be more ethically just. "Instead of being seen in a monolithic system which regulates individual action, order comes to be seen as an upshot of concrete communicative action. In a sense, the problem of social order (as Hobbes saw it) is redefined by turning the traditional approach to social order on its head. Social order is not that which holds society together by somehow controlling individual wills, but that which comes about in the mundane but relentless transactions of these wills." (ibid;p7)

There are those who argue that social order is the effect (or effluent ?) of power in social interactions. That is, in Sausurian terms, that the signifier; 'social order' is causally linked to the signified; 'power'. Giddens for example, talks of "structures of signification"

Bourdieu describes his work as overcoming the opposition in social theory that posits "a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notably those we ordinarily call social classes." (Bourdieu, 2002; p 230)

These arguments about social order and the theories developed to explain or understand society are fundamentally about power. In most

instances we could simply replace the words 'social order' with the word 'power' and the various arguments and stances can still be sustained. I'm not suggesting here that I conceive power as the same as social order. I am rather arguing that the signifier; 'social order' is linked to another signifier 'power' as can be found in intersubjective scenes where strategies of power and "power-plays" are enacted. There is, to my mind, a definite linking of social order to power but the linking is between two signifiers not between a signifier and a signified. The meanings remain unresolved because they depend utterly upon context and the specifics of daily life. Describing context and developing theory through induction and analysis is the particular strength of case studies and vignettes.

CASE STUDY OF POWER, WEAKNESS AND RESENTMENT IN A TOWNSHIP

A method for studying social phenomena such as power involves the use of case studies. Schafer (1994) argues that case studies, including ethnography are criticized by many on the basis that case study findings cannot be generalized to other settings. Many would argue against this, saying that case study findings can be validly applied in other settings. Qualitative researchers prefer to use concepts such as "transferability" or "fittingness" to describe external validity. Some feel that "rich and dense" grounded theory will suggest in itself its own sphere of relevance and application. Perhaps the pivotal insight into the case study method is that case studies may be generalizable to concepts (such as power) and cannot be generalizable to populations.

I have elsewhere argued for case studies and in particular I argued for case studies using Yin who suggests that "in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on

a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1984; p17).

Nietzsche offers us a warrant to use trade as a legitimate context for the study of power relations; "for barter and trade to be possible at all, he argues, the debtor must be able to remember his promise of remuneration...In case where the debtor is unable to repay his debt, however, a creditor is entitled to inflict all manner of mutilation and dishonour upon the debtor's body; for example, 'cutting as much flesh off as seems appropriate for the debt', and this 'economic' bargain constituted the basis for various primitive and classical codes of law. It is this economic notion of justice that the Venetian merchant Shylock appeals to in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, when he claims a pound of Antonio's flesh as forfeit for his failure to repay a loan. The underlying logic of such economic compensation, Nietzsche argues, was to replace payment for goods with an increase in the creditor's feeling of power..." (Spinks, 2003; pp68-9)

The case study worked-up in this paper is divided into three vignettes and some background information may be useful to orient the reader; When black people were forcibly removed to designated townships and Bantustans in the 1960's, the Apartheid planners generally failed to establish commercial zones or properties designated for retail shopping in these townships. The whole reasoning was that black people must be utterly dependent upon white business. Section 10(1) of the Urban Areas Act and subsequent regulations severely restricted all forms of trade in townships;

"Trading and professional activities may be carried on only on premises allocated for the purpose (this and other regulations do not apply to the sale of milk by residents). Business hours for traders are determined by the authorities. The trader must keep proper books, open for inspection by the authorities, and must observe regulations for health and sanitation. No one may without permission canvas orders for any trade that is not conducted within the township... No companies, partnerships,

Raciozner

financial institutions, wholesalers' businesses, or industrial concerns may be established in urban townships, nor may one man carry on more than one business. No business may be conducted for any purpose other than that of providing for the daily essential domestic requirements of the African residents." (Horrell, 1969; p 98)

It is no accident that Metro Cash-n-Carry started business in 1969 with a business model that sited their discounting wholesale operations in industrial estates known as "border industrial areas"²⁴ (Horrell, 1969; p 68) situated just outside the urban townships.

Nattrass notes "prior to the late 1970's, the attitude of planners and administrators in South Africa to small urban black business was generally hostile" (Nattrass, 1990; p218)

Residents of townships responded to gaps in the provision of their needs by establishing their own system of commerce and services. Khosa argues "apartheid policies as applied to black cab owners in central city areas severely stunted the growth of black entrepreneurship in the paratransit sector. However, the residential segregation of South Africa's urban landscape and the removal of black townships to the urban fringes, paradoxically re-created the conditions for the development of a dynamic black taxi industry." (Khosa, 1990; p 214) The taxi industry is widely recognized as an example of an endogenously organized industry displaying the genius of African entrepreneurship.

"By the early 1980's, the (Apartheid Government) policy was transformed into one of acceptance, encouragement and

upgrading of small black enterprise activity." (Nattrass, 1990; p 218)

The cumulative effect of the consumer boycotts from the mid-1980's meant that merely by opening small convenience stores at one's home, township residents were undermining and resisting the Apartheid system. Any action that lessened the dominance of white business over township residents was a threat to Apartheid. The small retail outlet was however still dependent on supplies from large discounting wholesalers such as Metcash.

This system of supply known as the "supply chain"²⁵ still operates today as the template for supplying products and services in South African townships.

Given this history, the operation of non-formal retail outlets in townships suggests that special social and organizational skills are required to maintain such operations. The three vignettes that follow have been written based upon real-life experiences during 2003 with a marketing and distribution company called EMS which specialized in supplying products and services to township-based retail operations known as "Spaza's" or "Tuck-shops".

The following three vignettes display the complex interplay of intentions and structures in a township business context:

Vignette #1: Sisters Spaza & Take-away

Sister runs a spaza shop and sells beer and spirits from her premises. EMS supplies Sister with products and helped her set-up a take-away operation under the African Burger brand. Sister is married and has three children who all live on the premises. Sister's husband, John works in Germiston and visits most weekends. Sister and John and their family moved to Nelmapius from Mamelodi when the low cost housing estate was built. In Mamelodi, sister used to run a spaza shop and sell alcohol.

²⁴ Horrell notes that businesses siting their operations in these "border areas" received a range of benefits including tax concessions, payment of lower wages, housing developments for black staff, subsidized land lease and purchase schemes and the provision of basic services at subsidized rates. (Horrell, 1969; p 69-69)

²⁵ It must be noted that many of the marketing and sales terms used in the retail industry reflect the use of power. Thus it may be argued the word "chain" connotes a form of slavery to a system of supply.

When they moved to Nelmapius, Sister simply re-opened her operation.

As the African Burger outlet started to produce increased profits, Sister found she was making more money than her husband and started to improve the property. John, her husband would visit on weekends, invite all his friends over and drink all the profits and any money left over, he would take back to Germiston with him. When Sister protested, John beat her.

Sister was unable to continue running the take-away outlet as her cash flow had been taken by John. Sister reflected that at least if she was poorer than her husband, she would not get beaten.

Comment

It is clear that Sister's runs a popular local shop that is patronized by about 200 homes in her neighbourhood. The African Burger take-away operation was a success from a profit and business point of view. However the family circumstances from which Sister operates is unable to sustain her success. Her husband's jealousy and alcohol problem literally killed the operation.

Sister's resentment was displayed in her reflection that at least she wasn't getting beaten if she made less money than her husband.

It is my experience that Sister's circumstance reflects the context in which many township business operations are run and highlights the kinds of pressures entrepreneurs find themselves subjected to should they become "too successful". This situation is generally referred to as "jealous down" in township parlance.

Vignette #2: Brothers Tuck-shop and Taxi-stop

Brother runs a tuck-shop some 700 meters away from Sister's Spaza shop. Brother is well known as a BMW enthusiast and has a number of stores and owns some taxis in Mamelodi.

Brother's Tuck-shop is run by a constantly changing staff of Mozambican migrants who sleep in the store. These men are not legally here and live in constant fear of arrest and deportation. The tuck-shop is popular as it is situated at a local informal taxi-rank organized by the taxi association to which Brother belongs. Alcohol was sold from the premises but of late no alcohol is available at the tuck-shop.

EMS supplies a variety of products to the tuck-shop and to other stores in Brother's chain of outlets. EMS also has an advertisement hoarding outside the shop and shares the rental revenues from the signage with Brother. Brother did not buy-in to the African Burger take-away brand but offers bread and polony to customers.

Brother is a member of the Nelmapius Community Policing Forum (CPF) at Silverton Police Station. Brother often recruits individuals to join the police reserve at Silverton although he is not a reservist himself. Brother is a successful township entrepreneur with a variety of business interests.

Comment

Brother is in many ways an example of a typical "successful" township entrepreneur. His use of illegal migrant labour provides an immediate pecuniary advantage because he can pay low wages to these desperate and willing employees but their lack of local language skills and their essentially temporary circumstances ensures that the patrons of his shops do not develop good relations or rapport with the shop-keeper (as customers are able to do with Sister).

I think that Brother's involvement with the taxi association reflects a common resentimental tactic that insists on membership of organized bodies for mutual support and to give individuals a "voice" because Brother feels that alone, he would not have any power.

The community policing forum involvement seems odd as invariably, spaza-shop owners steer clear of formal relationships with police and the state. Few township shops

Raciozner

operate with a trading licence, fewer still have liquor licences. Becoming involved with formal state structures and particularly the repressive state apparatus of the police would potentially threaten the business interests of most township shop owners.

It is doubtful that this may be characterized as a psychological reaction-formation (Freud, 1936) where the values of the powerful are adopted because of anxiety about the threat of punishment from authorities as “this type of counter-tendency among normal people and others who are not psychotic is questionable. Clinical case histories and accounts of diagnostic conferences appear to indicate that the concept of reaction formation is over-used...” (Levitt, 1971;pp70-1)

Vignette #3: Police Raid and Inspector Douglas Fivaz

One Monday morning, some weeks after the closure of the African Burger take-aways at Sister’s, a director of EMS received a call from Sister to say that the police had raided her shop on Saturday, confiscated her beer stock and arrested her. She had spent the weekend in the police cells and needed R500 for bail.

After securing Sister’s release, EMS directors began to investigate the problem. One of the Directors met with Inspector Douglas Fivaz who runs the liquor licence unit at Silverton Police station.

Inspector Fourie explained that there had been pressure applied from a City Councillor who was a prominent member of the ANC Women’s League and an avowed anti-alcohol campaigner. He pointed out that while any home could brew their own beer, a licence was needed to sell alcohol. The single police officer in Mamelodi tasked with policing the sale of alcohol was unable to do his work effectively²⁶. The result was the flourishing of illegal shebeens in Mamelodi. Nelmapius as a post-apartheid low cost

housing development falling within the Silverton policing area was populated with ex-Mamelodi residents and he was not going to allow the bad habits learned in Mamelodi to spill-out into Nelmapius.

It also transpired that Inspector Fourie had been given a list of spaza shops selling alcohol by Brother, a member of the local community policing forum.

Inspector Fourie was amused at the irony that allowed him to strictly apply an Apartheid-era bye-law in Nelmapius and thus please the local councillor as well as further the interests of members of the local community policing forum. This was good community participation to his mind.

Brother merely shrugged off suggestions that he was abusing the community policing forum to further his business interests by saying that people like Sister “ought” not to be breaking the law. When it was pointed out that Brother was employing illegal aliens in his stores and other business operations and was also breaking the law, he defended this by saying that he was giving people jobs.

Comment

Brother’s strategy for dealing with competitors in Nelmapius is now revealed as involving an engagement with official state bodies such as the local police. Brother’s supplies the police with enough information to trigger a raid from the liquor licence police. This also explains the stopping of alcohol sales from his store some weeks prior to the raid. I suspect that Brother recognized his inability to openly and fairly out-sell his competitors. This weakness drew him to join the community policing forum and inform on his competitors’ illegal activities so as to put them in to some financial and legal difficulties that would handicap their operations thus affording Brother a trading advantage over them.

The police Inspector, Douglas Fivaz, was aware that changes to the liquor legislation had not completely regularized the situation between townships such as Mamelodi and

²⁶ The particular bye-law in question is

suburban and new low cost housing developments such as Nelmapius. These changes were only passed into law later in 2003.

These circumstances created an opportunity for the Inspector to conduct a raid on Nelmapius traders, all of whom had relocated from Mamelodi and all of whom (except Brother) were thus under the impression that the same laissez-faire approach to alcohol sales applied in Nelmapius as had applied in Mamelodi. It seems that Brother used his knowledge and connections to engineer a situation where Inspector Fourie felt a raid would be beneficial to the interests of his unit. A moratorium on liquor raids has since been established to allow shopkeepers time to legalize their operations.

Upon reflection, it seems plausible that Inspector Fourie was frustrated at the new political dispensation in South Africa (in his interview with me he intimated this) and felt a loss of power. The low cost housing development of Nelmapius was perceived as a "threat" to Silverton as the unregulated practices of Mamelodi residents would now flow into his policing area. The resentment that Inspector Fourie acted upon was based upon fear of being overwhelmed by the illegal shebeen situation. This fear alone would not have triggered the raid though as he needed local information supplied by Brother and political pressure to authorize a raid.

The political pressure was applied on police by the vehemently anti-alcohol member of the Pretoria City Council was used as the originating impetus for the raids by inspector Fourie. This City Councillor was the survivor of an abusive relationship with an alcoholic. Newspaper reports to this effect are extant. This councillor referred to her marital experiences at the launch of a family crisis and trauma counselling service in the Metro. The Councillor's resentment had, as Nietzsche suggests, converted her weakness into a virtue and as a result she became involved in various programmes to support victims of family violence. This

councillor's anti-alcohol stance was manifested in pressure being applied to local police to "clean-up" the shebeens.

In the subsequent interview the Inspector was fully aware of the impending changes to the law, the general confusion and lack of information among Nelmapius traders concerning their right to sell alcohol and that the information was provided by a local trader with his own business interests. Inspector Fourie saw it as a "fortunate" concatenation of circumstances that allowed him to conduct the raids.

These three vignettes comprise a triptych of resentment that affords us the opportunity to contribute to a theory of power.

CONSTRUCTING A THEORY OF POWER AND A THEORY OF WEAKNESS USING RESENTMENT

The vignettes presented above include micro-sociological phenomena such as intentions and interactions of people in a setting as well as macro-sociological phenomena including statutes, the repressive state apparatus and social forces.

Resentment is described as "an emotional reaction against someone or something...it is lived or felt before a practical reaction could or does take place...it is an emotional response taking place always during a span of time." (Frings, 1965; p82) This emotion is able to be converted into structural dynamics; "the significance of resentment lies in its formative power as the moral valuation and sources of moral judgement..." (ibid; p83)

Scheler defines resentment as a personally felt emotion, "a psychic self-poisoning, which originates by a systematical withholding of an inner explosion...reactive in nature...always the result of weakness.." (ibid) The pain of this emotion is mediated as a moral force. What is becomes what ought to be.

Raciozner

Choosing resentment as a candidate pangolin for our theory of power and weakness may be fruitful because, as a concept, it has a transformational character. Yet if resentment is to have any value in our analysis, it must be able to function as the pangolin does among the Lele; it must be able to be put to work in a variety of what I call category sets.

An example of a category set is offered by Scott (1990) who argues for transcripts. Hidden transcripts of those in power and their subordinates. Public transcripts for both groups.

Powerful Public Transcripts	Subordinate Public Transcripts
Powerful Hidden Transcripts	Subordinate Hidden Transcripts

Scott suggests a number of things; that the greater the disparity of power between dominator and subordinate groups, the more ritualised and formalized will be the public transcripts (p3); and that “a dialectic relationship between public and hidden transcripts is obvious” (p27).

Scott’s analytic scheme between powerful & subordinate and public and hidden is a useful, if flawed analysis. Flawed because it privileges the public transcript as more powerful than the hidden transcript and it privileges the hidden transcript as more authentic than the public transcript. Scott’s analysis prejudices social discourse so that the authentic transcript is constitutionally weak and the public transcript, though inauthentic, is powerful. This social analysis is essentially tragic irony and must be rejected because it leaves no space for the authentic social life to be powerful. Surely both public and hidden transcripts are social productions and therefore authentic and powerful social productions? Scott’s most useful idea is of public and hidden transcripts. These correspond to Garfinkel’s

use of formal norms and normal forms or Baccus’ analysis of formal logics and situated logics. Here seems to be a genealogy for this analytic distinction going back at least to Scheler and Nietzsche.

Resentment may be identified as having some analytic use when Scott describes “for most bondsmen through history, whether untouchables, slaves, serfs, captives, minorities held in contempt, the trick to survival, not always mastered by any means, has been to swallow one’s bile, choke back one’s rage, and conquer the impulse to physical violence. It is this systematic frustration of reciprocal action in relations of domination which, I believe, helps us understand much of the content of the hidden transcript.” (p 37)

The role of resentment in Scott’s category set is as an “active ingredient” resolving the disparities between intention and reality as “wish fulfilment”. Indeed Scott provides a qualified acknowledgement of his use of resentment in this manner. (Scott, 1990; p 38n 38)

How else might resentment help us one develop a theory of power and of weakness from the materials found in the case study? We have examined the details of each vignette and have tracked the movement of each participant in this three-part drama. What we are left with is a story and a tangle of relationships, resentment and tactics. A theory to my mind turns this “mess of pottage” the stuff that makes up reality into a coherent whole, a language. A theory allows us to put all these things into what Callon and Latour describe as a “black box” (1981; p).

Theorizing, I would suggest, is a movement to generate power through the simplification and editing of the messy details of daily life. Theorizing is about organizing social phenomena into some more easily grasped and usable schema. Theorizing, to my mind, is not the uncovering of truth as much as it is the creation or deployment of a language, of signifiers, of myths that have truth claims. Resentment allows us to simplify the messy

details of everyday life, in Callon and Latour's terms, resentment may be legitimately deployed without cynicism and without irony, as an analytical concept that allows social actors to account for the actions of socially weaker actors as resentimental.

The "power" of a social concept such as resentment lies in its ambiguity, that it is ambiguous enough to do things such as make truth claims at both the micro and macro levels of social analysis and is able to mediate or give form to our experience of power as well as weakness, recommends it as a candidate social concept that may contribute to a theory of power. Initially fashioned by Nietzsche and then significantly remodelled by Scheler and others, resentment offers us a pangolinic (Douglas) concept that allow us to account for a variety of social experiences of power and weakness. Such ambiguity can be seen when Frings suggests "resentiment builds up very easily as soon as there is a difference between the constitutional rights of people and their factual position in their communities" (1965; p 86). Frings here is using an emotional condition (resentiment) as predicated upon a social, structural phenomenon and, in turn the social phenomenon becomes predicated upon resentment.

Other approaches to resolving the micro/macro debate have been proposed by the post-modern dualists such as Bourdieu, Haggard and Giddens. These generally fail the pangolin test as concepts such as "habitus" and "fields" (Bourdieu) or "structuration" and "practical social consciousness" (Giddens) prove to be less useful because they fail to offer an integration of micro and macro sociological theory. By insisting on the differences their analyses maintain them without translation and transformation.

I must agree with Baudrillard's analysis that "We have lost the advance ideas had on the world, that distance that makes an idea stay an idea. Thought must

anticipate, be exceptional, and in the margin – the projected shadow of the future events. Yet, today, we are lagging behind the events. They may sometimes give the impression that they regress, that they are not what they should be. In fact, they have passed over us for a long time. The simulated disorder of things has gone faster than us. The effect of reality has disappeared behind the acceleration of things – an anamorphosis of speed. What happens to the heterogeneity of thought in world that has converted to the craziest hypotheses and to an artificial delirium? In their accelerated occurrence, the events have in a sense swallowed their own interpretation. Things have been cleansed of their own meaning. And consequently, they are like black holes and can no longer reflect. They are what they are, never too late for their occurrence, but always beyond their meaning. What is late rather is the interpretation of things. Interpretation is then merely a retro figure for an unpredictable event." (Baudrillard, 1994; p 5)

Unlike Baudrillard, I would argue that this was always so and that modernism and the enlightenment crumbled precisely because it could not sustain the (necessary?) illusion that ideas and theories preceded and were somehow distinguish-able from action.

REFERENCES

(Please note that I have included material that I have read that may not be directly referenced in the paper because I believe that my understanding of the topic has involved a wider reading than the texts quoted)

Callon, M & Latour, B, (1981). Unscrewing the big Leviathan: how actors macro-structure reality and how sociologists help them do so in Knorr-Cetina, K & Cicourel, A.V. (Eds) *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Towards and Intergration of Micro-and Macro Sociologies*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, pp277-303.

Antonio, R.J. (1995). Nietzsche's Antisociology: Subjectified Culture and the End of

Raciozner

- History, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 101; pp1-43.
- Antonio, R.J. (2000). After Postmodernism: Reactionary Tribalism, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 106; pp40-86.
- Baudrillard, J. (1992). *Reversion of History*, <http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/baudweb.html>
- Bernstein, M.A. (1991). These children that come at you with knives, *Ressentiment, Mass culture and the Saturnalia in Critical Inquiry*, Winter 1991; pp 358-385.
- Bourdieu, P. (2002). Bourdieu', in M. Haugaard (ed), *Power: A Reader*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp225-244.
- Douglas, M. (1989). The background of the grid dimension. *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 50, pp 171-176.
- Douglas, M (Ed), (1982). *Essays in the Sociology of Perception*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Foucault, M. (2002). 'Foucault' in M. Haugaard (ed), *Power: A Reader*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp181- 204.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Society must be Defended' in Truth and Power: The essential Foucault*, eds M. Rabinow and N. Rose; New York: The New York Press, pp 294-318.
- Fowler, B. (1997). *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations*, London: Sage.
- Frings, M.S. (1965). *Max Scheler: a concise introduction to the world of a great thinker*, Pittsburg: Duguesne University Press.
- Giddens, A, (2002). 'Giddens' in M. Haugaard (ed), *Power: A Reader*, Manchester : Manchester University Press, pp146-165.
- Haugaard, M. (2002). *Power: A Reader*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Horrell, M. (1969., *The African reserves of South Africa*, Johannesburg: SAIRR.
- Lukes, S. (2002). Lukes' in M. Haugaard (ed), *Power: A Reader*, pp38-57.
- Morelli, E. M. (1998). *Ressentiment and Rationality*, brandon.multics.org/library/misc/morelli1998**ressentiment**.html.
- Morphew, D. (1989). *South Africa: the powers behind*, Cape Town: Struik Christian Books.
- Nietzsche, F, (1977). *A Nietzsche Reader*, 2nd edition 2003 Selected and translated by Hollingdale, R.J., London: Penguin.
- Porter, J. (2001). Virtue Ethics in Gill, R (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, pp96-109.
- Racionzer, D. (2005). *Solidarity, Subsidiarity – What is it ? The significance of these social principles to South Africa: Assignment written for Business Ethics B; St. Augustine College, Johannesburg, Unpublished.*
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Silverman, D. (1985). *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology*, Gower: Aldreshot.
- Smith, A. (2003). *The Wealth of Nations*, New York: Bantam Books.

- Spinks L. (2003). *Friederich Nietzsche*, London: Routledge.
- Tillich, P. (1954). *Love, Power and Justice*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strunk, O. (Ed), (1971). *The Psychology of Religion*, Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Weber, H.R. (1989). *Power: Focus for biblical theology*, Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Taylor, C. (1991). *The Malaise of Modernity*, Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press.
- Wink, W. (1986). *Unmasking the Powers: the invisible forces that determine human existence*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Douglas Racionzer is an Ashoka fellow who has worked in South African townships for the past 12 years creating sustainable livelihood opportunities at the Base of the pyramid. Currently on contract with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), Douglas is helping to establish the School for Democracy. Last year Douglas completed a Masters Degree in Applied Business Ethics at St. Augustine College in Johannesburg.

Copyright of TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science is the property of TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.