

# Culture Jammed. The Art of Subverting Violence

Andreas Oberprantacher, University of Innsbruck

Not driven by the earnest of apocalyptic zeal, but rather by the messianic pleasure of disconcerting hegemonic power, practices of *détournement*, adopted by many contemporary protest movements, aim at “jamming” cultures of violence – but without the visionary pretension of simply having these cultures replaced with a new Truth. Similarly to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s and Jean-Luc Nancy’s formula that “diversion [...] borrows a concept [...] in order to make it serve other ends”, the aesthetics of catachretic re-appropriation and re-signification, be it in the form of *subvertising*, of *adusting*, of *reclaiming the streets*, of *hacktivism* etc., also calls for social and political action that is based on “impure” mimicry. In fact, the very act of repeating hegemonic messages, images and discourses, preferably by means of exaggeration and strategic distortion, has become a prime mode of expressing dissent and re-defining a participatory politics that is truly capable of subverting violence.

In view of these general remarks, the aim of this contribution is to (a) provide an overview of contemporary practices of *détournement* against the background of relevant working principles and philosophical debates, (b) to assess these practices in view of René Girard’s warnings of the danger of *mimetic rivalry* invested in the production of culture and (c) to discuss their potential of re-formulating a politics of non-violence that changes without repeating the very culture it stands for.

Andreas Oberprantacher, PhD: senior researcher at the *Department of Philosophy*, University of Innsbruck, Austria; core faculty member of the UNESCO Chair in Peace Studies, University of Innsbruck, Austria; senior lecturer in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Oslo University College and Kulturstudier, Pondicherry, India; senior lecturer at the *Institute of International Studies*, Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, Thailand; senior lecturer at the MA Program in Peace, Security, Development and International Conflict Transformation, University of Innsbruck, Austria; his latest publications include: with Marie-Luisa Frick (eds), *Power and Justice in International Relations: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Global Challenges* (2009); with Wolfgang Palaver and Dietmar Regensburger (eds), *Politische Theologie vs. Politische Philosophie?* (to be published in 2010); *Iste ego sum. Notizen zum unmöglichen Selbstsein* (submitted); “Beyond Rivalry? Rethinking Community in View of Apocalyptic Violence”. *Contagion. Journal of Mimesis, Violence and Culture* 17 (accepted, to be published in 2010).