

Power Transposition Spell

or

How to Subvert Institutional Authority through Graffiti and Other Tactics in 13 Steps

by the Center for Tactical Magic www.tacticalmagic.org

Authority commonly wields power through the manipulation of sign systems which individuals are collectively programmed to accept as valid structures of discipline and control. Outlined below are a sequence of actions that will effectively illustrate the aforementioned dynamic. Further, the following sequence of actions also serves as a general spell for revealing that “authority” is a subjective force, and that victory is awarded to those who play the ‘Sign Game’ best. While strict adherence to the spell will often yield successful results, an accurate understanding of the underlying principles will allow for delightful adaptations and diverse applications. Have fun & Good luck!

- 1) Choose an institutional target (school, corporation, government agency, etc)**
- 2) Use the pattern provided or create a small label (approx. 3” x 4”) which includes the institution’s seal or logo, as well as the words: Signs or Graffiti Permitted on This Surface (or an appropriate variation of your choosing).**
- 3) Affix the labels to various surfaces within the institution. At first, it is best to target surfaces that have existing postings or writing (e.g. – bulletin boards, bathroom walls, pay phones, etc)**
- 4) Begin responding to your own labels by covertly adding signs, postings, and graffiti. Be sure to vary the content and use multiple scripts or different graphic elements. Some gestures, tags, or styles should appear more prolific than others**

so as to convince the “authorities” that multiple individuals are responding to the labels in no organized fashion.

5) On institutional letterhead, create your own notice harshly condemning the labels, the postings, and the writings. The notice should be brief, but the tone should sound severe and reactionary. Citing non-existent laws or rules that promise extreme penalties should be included to encourage debate. Mis-spelling a key word or two will aid in undermining the voice of Authority, as well as give the impression that Authority is, in fact, a small group of controlling individuals that assert their will on the greater community.

6) Before the institution can respond to the postings and graffiti, covertly distribute this notice as widely as possible. Post it in areas where no previous postings have appeared as well as in the most obvious places. Place notices in employee/student mailboxes, on the windshields of parked cars, or in lunchrooms and other meeting areas. The distribution of this notice should appear obsessive/compulsive.

7) Replace any labels that have since been removed and continue to add graffiti and postings. At this point some graffiti/postings should be direct responses to the “institutional notice”. Some responses should sound incensed, while others should appear mocking. Most likely, other anonymous individuals will have joined in at this point and the debate should be widening.

8) Locate a blank section of wall, or an area where graffiti has been allowed to persist. Using a slightly off-color shade of paint, cover a large, uneven section of the wall. Affix a sign alongside reading, “Wet Paint” and another stating that “any graffiti which does not beautify the area will not be tolerated). This will give the impression that the Authorities are ineptly attempting to cover the graffiti, while simultaneously giving a nod to “acts of beauty.”

9) Create a second notice stating that employees/students/community-members may be subject to random searches for graffiti paraphernalia. Distribute it widely. Additionally, signs should be posted declaring rewards for reporting graffiti as well as phone numbers to call (police, management, etc).

10) Continue to add graffiti and postings, but extend the range outside of the

proximity of the labels.

11) If the debate has become heated enough at this point, create another notice/email in the “voice of Authority” declaring a “town-hall” meeting with attendance required. Be sure to include a sentence indicating that food and beverages will be provided (You may even want to place a large order for pizzas to be delivered). The date of the meeting should give the “authorities” as little time to prepare as possible.

A note on the workplace: If the target institution is the workplace, then give consideration to the scheduling time. A lunch-hour meeting will impose on co-workers and encourage opposition to the institution. A mid-afternoon or mid-morning meeting will result in a period of unproductivity that will provide a much-deserved break for your co-workers. An after-work meeting time should include a promise of overtime wage compensation for all attendees.

12) Have fun at the meeting, but be careful not to take sides in a manner that will draw attention to you. At most, make constructive suggestions or offer compromises such as calling for more communal space or resources (a community center, lounge, or project funding), asking for more community dialogue or representation (push for shared power and self-management), or requesting conditions that are less restrictive/oppressive (more time off, less rules or better use of community funds). Or, just sit back and watch the fireworks.

13) If events haven’t climaxed by this point, create a final notice summarizing the institution’s willingness to respond to concerns raised at the meeting. Declare new policies and promises; be sure to be creative about your desires (designated graffiti/posting zones, slackening of rules or restrictions, school/business holidays, etc.). At this point you and your community are the authorities, so start acting like it by making the necessary changes and organizing for a better tomorrow!

GTg