

Deleuze and Guattari's Symptomatology of Power: Paranoia as a Contagious Disease

Dr. Jernej Markelj
Cardiff University
jmarkelj@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article engages with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* to analyse fascism as an illness closely linked to the functioning of power. Instead of examining it as a historical phase or an ideology, my symptomatologic approach diagnoses fascism by focusing on the interaction between the social and the biological. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I explain how fascism, which they align with paranoia, arises when our unconscious vital processes are stalled by social forces. Substantiating the analysis with Deleuze's account of Nietzsche, this article investigates three aspects of fascist paranoia. Firstly, I demonstrate how fascist tendencies are produced by our capitalist social formation. By paying close attention to the contact between the mental and the bodily domain, I then explain the psychosomatic nature of fascism. Finally, my examination offers an account of fascism's contagious character.*

Keywords: *Deleuze and Guattari; Paranoia; Anti-Oedipus; Fascism; Nietzsche*

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Introduction

When it comes to the concept of fascism there is no clear consensus among historians and political theorists. According to Stanley Payne, fascism is, when compared to terms like democracy, liberalism, socialism and communism, 'probably the vaguest of contemporary political terms'.¹ As the word itself is completely devoid of any implicit political reference ('fascio' in Italian means simply 'bundle' or 'union'), it is no wonder that this floating signifier has become a put-down, one which Leo Strauss famously referred to as *Reductio Ad Hitlerium*, employed on all sides of the political compass. 'The problems of definition', suggests Payne, 'are so severe it is not surprising that some scholars prefer to call putative fascist movements by their specific individual names alone without applying the categorical adjective'.² Whatever its exact components might be (totalitarianism, ultra-nationalism, the leadership principle, anti-intellectualism, victimhood etc.), fascism understood in this way consist of a set of ideological manoeuvres and tactics, which are manifested in a particular historical phenomenon (like Hitler's Nazism).³

The account of fascism presented by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* does not seek to provide a universally valid definition, but rather offers a radical account of its emergence.⁴ The radical nature of their approach is, first of all, to be found in their refusal to see fascism as a matter of ideas. For Deleuze and Guattari, then, fascism does not arise when autonomous subjects are swayed by false ideas of ideology and propaganda. Instead, they locate the emergence of fascism at the level of unconscious inclinations, which are in their view always already positively invested in the social formation in which they are inserted. Deleuze and Guattari, thus, not only reject the existence of an aspect of the conscious self that could remain undetermined by its socio-historical context, but also insist that our unconscious desires are inevitably complicit with the given social structures of power, as repressive as they might be. As a result, they are able to proclaim that 'Hitler got the fascists sexually aroused. Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused'.⁵ According to Deleuze and Guattari, fascist desires, therefore, arise in the intimate contact between the socio-political and the unconscious of the body, i.e. the physiological.

By focusing on this intersection, my article examines fascism as a political illness, or, as Elias Canetti puts it, as an 'illness of power'.⁶ Considered as such, this illness cannot be relegated to the isolated domain of individual psychology or physiology but inevitably takes shape within the public domain of our social formation. In other words, I analyse fascism as a disease caused by flags, nations, armies, banks, and other socio-historical vectors. Building on *Anti-Oedipus*, I aim to offer a political symptomatology of fascism as understood by Deleuze and Guattari. In my first section, I examine their analysis of our current social formation to diagnose the political and social vectors that are formative of unconscious fascist tendencies. Secondly, I close in on the role that our cognition plays in formation of these

¹ Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p. 4.

² *Ibid.*

³ For a recent account of the main components of fascism see Jason Stanley's *How Fascism Works* (New York: Random House, 2018).

⁴ It has to be noted that Deleuze and Guattari in their two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* offer two different accounts of fascism. For differences between these two accounts see John Protevi, 'A Problem of Pure Matter: Fascist Nihilism in *A Thousand Plateaus*', in *Nihilism Now! Monsters of Energy*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson and Diane Morgan (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 167–88; and Eugene W. Holland, 'Schizoanalysis, Nomadology, Fascism', in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Nicholas Toburn (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2008), pp. 74–97.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 293.

⁶ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Continuum, 1981), p. 448.

unconscious tendencies. By explicating Deleuze and Guattari's intricate conception of the relation between bodily inclinations and our conscious thought, I explain the psychosomatic nature of fascism. The final section of this paper draws out the contagious nature of fascism, an aspect of this illness that Deleuze and Guattari occasionally hint at, but never fully elaborate.

Deleuze and Guattari ground their understanding of fascism in the innovative model of the unconscious that they develop in *Anti-Oedipus*. For them, unconscious desire should be primarily understood in terms of production. In particular, they see desire as a productive force that is the motor of all activity, the agent of history. This productive desire has no specific aims or objects; it is a pure process that seeks only its own proliferation, the continuation of its own production. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this process also as schizophrenia, which should not be confused with the illness. In fact, they suggest that schizophrenia as an illness emerges only when schizophrenic process is forcefully stalled or prolonged by socio-political forces. The interruption of this productive process also results in other illnesses such as neurosis, perversion, and psychosis or paranoia. It is precisely their understanding of paranoia that Deleuze and Guattari align with fascism.

In their view, paranoia principally corresponds to an unconscious formation in which productive desire is 'turn[ed] back against itself'.⁷ This self-regulation of desire is most concisely characterised by Nietzsche's remark regarding the ascetic ideal: '[a]n attempt is made here to use energy to stop up the source of the energy'.⁸ This attempt to block the sources of its own production is made as a result of desire's investment of a specific object, aim or order of things, or, to put it in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, an investment of a territoriality. Paranoia, therefore, consists of a tendency through which desiring-production represses itself, a condition that comes about due to this desire being directed in a particular way. Yet, as I will discuss in my examination of its contagiousness, paranoid desire also seeks to impose the same kind of restriction on others, thus organising their desire in the same repressive way. It is due to this double direction of repression of desire that Deleuze and Guattari align paranoia with fascism. Paranoia's repressive tendencies, which inhibit one's own and others' vital powers, are also the reason why they see it as an illness in need of ethical and political therapy.⁹

In his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault suggests that its ethical aim is to 'pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body'.¹⁰ He proposes that this corporeal fascism should be seen as '[its] major enemy, [its] strategic adversary'.¹¹ Yet, while this fascism ultimately concerns bodily drives, Foucault rightly indicates that it also resides in our ways of thinking. For him, the fascism at stake in *Anti-Oedipus* is 'the fascism in us all, *in our heads* and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us'.¹² The fascism in our heads, one that concerns the contents of our consciousness, is significant for Deleuze and Guattari insofar as it strengthens our unconscious fascist tendencies. Foucault aligns these tendencies with the love of power that exploits, as they consist of self-repression resulting from an investment of a socially assigned territoriality. My psychosomatic

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 333.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. by Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 84.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari famously conceptualise such therapy under the banner of schizoanalysis.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, 'Preface', in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. xi–xiv (p. xiii).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

investigation of this intoxication with power will shed light on the nature of these fascist tendencies. Foucault suggests that these tendencies are 'the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives', but they are also the ones whose amplification escalates in the historical fascism of Hitler and Mussolini.¹³

Deleuze and Guattari's political diagnosis of fascist paranoia is largely indebted to Nietzsche's symptomatology, which I draw on to complement my analysis.¹⁴ Nietzsche sees symptomatology as a philosophical approach that seeks to examine social, historical, and political forces in terms of health and illness. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze suggests that from the symptomatologic perspective, '[a]ny given concept, feeling or belief will be treated as symptoms of a will that wills something'.¹⁵ According to Deleuze, ideas and feelings, but also, more generally, things, organisms, and societies, are symptoms of two different qualities of *the will to power*. Affirmative will to power is an unconscious process that seeks 'to affirm its difference'.¹⁶ It corresponds to a healthy and overflowing vital force that blindly strives for self-differentiation, and is, as such, akin to the unrestricted desiring-production or schizophrenia as a process. The negative will to power, on the other hand, wants 'to deny what differs'.¹⁷ It relates to an exhausted and degenerated life, which seeks to oppose itself to self-differentiation of life and contain it, a tendency that brings it into line with paranoia.

Symptomatology, therefore, sees a philosopher as a physiologist and physician, who analyses a specific social symptom as the expression of a particular kind of will. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche offers just that: a systematic reading of the history of the West as a triumph of the negative, degenerated life. For Nietzsche, this escalating degeneration of life proceeds in different stages of nihilism, which correspond to different illnesses, but also to different sets of ideas and practices that denigrate and devalue affirmative life. In Deleuze's view, Nietzsche diagnoses the commencements of this downfall in the spread of *ressentiment* and bad conscience, both of which he sees as illnesses, which will play an important role in my analysis of fascism. Nietzsche aligns these illnesses with Judaism and Christianity respectively, and traces their intensification through the rise of humanist morality and modern science to their culmination in the complete resignation of passive nihilism. The symptomatology offered by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* in many ways reflects Deleuze's account of Nietzsche. In addition to explicit or implicit reliance on Nietzsche's symptomatologic concepts, his analytic trajectory is reflected in their sequence of social formations (which are, admittedly, more ideal types than actual historical phases). The analysis of the latter will be, as noted, key to Deleuze and Guattari's diagnosis of fascist paranoia.

The Fascist Paranoia as a Symptom of the Civilized Capitalist Machine

While *Anti-Oedipus* flies in many different directions, its main thrust is presented as a critique of psychoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari's main problem with psychoanalysis is that it causes *oedipalisation*, the process in which desiring-production is repressed by being assigned a particular object. The object of the desire in question is the parent of the opposite sex,

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹⁴ For an exploration of the idea of symptom in Deleuze's thought, see Aidan Tynan's *Literary Clinic: Criticism and the Politics of Symptoms* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), and the 4 (2): 2010 issue of *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* journal.

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

which, according to Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex, effectively organizes our desires. As it binds our productive desire to a specific territoriality, psychoanalytic practice is seen as inciting paranoia. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that they 'have never dreamed of saying that psychoanalysis invented Oedipus'.¹⁸ In fact, for them, '[e]verything points in the opposite direction: the subjects of psychoanalysis arrive already oedipalized, they demand it, they want more'.¹⁹ Psychoanalysis, then, is merely a means of strengthening one's own repression, of intensifying the paranoid tendencies, not their actual origin. To situate the effective vectors of *oedipalisation* today and diagnose paranoia politically, we need to take a step back and outline their conceptualization of our current social formation.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to our social formation as 'the civilized capitalist machine', a complex composite of previous social formations.²⁰ Its two main components can be isolated in the nuclear family as the central reproductive unit, and the market as the mechanism for organising social production. As the nuclear family is the agent of repression that effectively shapes our unconscious inclinations from the start, I will explicate its paranoia-inducing effects first. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that capitalism assigns this institution a special function. For them, family is the institution that teaches us 'to desire our own repression'.²¹ The reason for this lies in the way the capitalist family organizes childcare. Unlike pre-capitalist social formations that incorporated childrearing into communal and political life, capitalism isolates human reproduction from the social field and privatizes it in the family.

As a result, in the capitalist family, a child's possibilities for forming productive connections are severely restricted. If in the previous social organisations the desiring-production of a child was put in contact with the rest of social world, free to proliferate and indiscriminately form desiring connections with whatever it can produce with, Deleuze and Guattari see the capitalist family as a stuffy, miasmatic affair. Surrounded mostly by its parents and siblings, a child's productive unconscious can be related to a very limited range of objects. In addition to that, they suggest that these familial territorialities (mummy, daddy, brother, sister) are off limits due to the prohibition of incest. They imagine the boundaries of these familial territorialities being policed by a paranoid father with the incest prohibition on his mind.

Yet, unlike the paranoid father, but also Freudian psychoanalysis, which both assume that our unconscious desires are inherently incestuous or Oedipal, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that desiring-production is 'innocently anoedipal'.²² For them, desire recognises no persons and has no set aims; its only aim is to continue producing itself in relation to whatever is conducive to this production. For that reason, incest prohibition is seen as causing a disfigurement of the essentially anoedipal desiring-production. 'By placing the distorting mirror of incest before desire (that's what you wanted, isn't it?)', Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'desire is shamed, stupefied, it is placed in a situation without exit, it is easily persuaded to deny itself'.²³ It is only in the act of forbidding access to familial territorialities that they are constructed as the objects of child's desire. Repression is thus able to entrap productive desire only by actively constructing its object.

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 121.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 366.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

The dynamics of repression, therefore, depends on 'a displaced apparent image of the repressed' offered by incest prohibition.²⁴ For a boy, this fake image concerns the desire for his mother. Due to the threatening prohibition of the paranoid father, his desiring-production eventually learns to repress any connections directed toward the mother. Significantly, this self-denial of desire is accompanied by an investment of the paternal image and the identification with his authority (erecting the same prohibition within himself).²⁵ In order to maintain the investment of this identification, desire has to continue to suspend any connections that could render its activity incompatible with it (i.e. as incestuous). It is here that we first encounter the unconscious formation that corresponds to paranoia. The latter is, as anticipated, formed through desire's investment of authority, which leads to its self-repression. It is this investment of the image of paternal authority that Foucault links to the love of power that exploits us.

It is precisely by cultivating a desire that seeks the means to regulate itself that the capitalist family teaches us *to desire our own repression*. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that by forming a desire for submission to authority, a docile desire that is 'all warm for punishment', the isolated capitalist family infects us with paranoia.²⁶ This sets in motion paranoid tendencies that seek to restrain themselves by investing a particular territoriality, policing its corresponding order and the limits that define it. It is only through maintaining these limits that subjects are able to maintain their identity. 'What individuals cling to', suggests Lapoujade, 'is the limit that they mark out, that is, the limit that territorializes them. The limit must preserve an identity of unalloyed purity, protect its territorialities from foreign infiltrations or invisible spies; it must shield a healthy body from microbes and filth'.²⁷ He adds that the paranoid is 'the guardian of the limits', a tendency that is set in motion by the capitalist family.²⁸

Deleuze and Guattari theorise the process by which the capitalist family cultivates our desire for repression on two interrelated levels. The process of territorialisation, as Holland suggests, 'operate[s] on physical bodies and involve[s] material investments of energy', and 'involve[s] mere signals and induce[s] meaningless reflexes'.²⁹ Territorialisation, therefore, produces repression that functions by inhibiting the unwanted desiring-connections instinctively, without a recourse to consciousness. In the case of the family, the child's desiring energy is territorialized by being restricted to familial territorialities. Conversely, the process of coding operates 'on symbolic representations and involves investments of mental energy (as in cognition and fantasy)', and is, as such, a matter of consciousness, ideas, and meanings.³⁰ The

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari refer to this process as 'superegoization' (*Ibid.*, p. 348).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁷ David Lapoujade, *Aberrant Movements: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2014), p. 191–2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²⁹ Eugene W. Holland, 'Schizoanalysis and Baudelaire: Some Illustrations of Decoding at Work', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Paul Patton, pp. 240–256 (p. 242); Eugene W. Holland, "'Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life': Deleuze and Guattari's 'Revolutionary' Semiotics", *L'Esprit Createur*, Summer 1987, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 19–29 (p. 28).

³⁰ Holland, 'Schizoanalysis and Baudelaire', p. 242.

family mobilises coding insofar as we assume that the child is to some degree made conscious of the incest prohibition.³¹ Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that coding, too, represses unconscious desire and restricts it to specific territorialities. According to them, 'consciousness applies pressure and strait-jackets the unconscious, to prevent its escape'.³² Insofar the child is aware of the incest prohibition, this awareness itself disfigures and represses the desiring-production, thus intensifying paranoia.

To understand how the capitalist market, the other key component of our social formations, mobilizes these two repressive processes, we first have to establish what differentiates it from pre-capitalist formations. In general, maintaining a particular social organization requires desiring-production to be properly channelled and regulated. Pre-capitalist social formations aim to maintain the established order and contain this productive desire by linking it to pre-determined territorialities. The despot, for example, uses a variety of intimidation techniques and displays of violence to channel desiring-production into the domain of required labour and away from rebellion. Such stabilization of desire is achieved through a more or less unchanging constellation of symbolic codes, which prescribe what should (and should not) be done – today, tomorrow, and forever.

Capitalism, on the other hand, is the first social organization, whose functioning depends on constantly rearranging its social order and disrupting the hierarchies that ground it. To organize social production and realise profit, capital needs to recurrently assemble labouring bodies, raw materials, machines, and know-how. These means of production are mobilized purely on the basis of quantitative monetary considerations (such as cost-effectiveness), which is a criterion that trumps religious, moral and political (i.e. qualitative) factors.³³ Marx and Engels, consequently, suggest that

[c]onstant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air.³⁴

³¹ Holland lists family as one of the main three spheres of (re)coding operations under capitalism (the other two are production and consumption), but then adds in a footnote that '[m]ore properly speaking, the nuclear family is for schizoanalysis the prime locus of re-territorialisation rather than re-coding' (Eugene W. Holland, 'The Anti-Oedipus: Postmodernism in Theory; Or, the Post-Lacanian Historical Contextualization of Psychoanalysis', *boundary 2*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2, (Autumn, 1985 - Winter, 1986), pp. 291–307 (p. 306)). For him, family restricts desire by acting directly on the material dimension of the body (i.e. by fixing bodily inclinations to an object). Holland, in fact, suggests that it is difficult to clearly differentiate between the effects of coding and territorialisation. 'To what extent does advertising "re-code," and to what extent "re-territorialize"? Does it operate through real signs and create "meaning" or does it involve mere signals and induce meaningless reflexes', he asks (Holland, "Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life", p. 28). For reasons that will be explained below, Holland suggests that capitalism relies more on territorialisation than it does on coding.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 338.

³³ Jason Read points out that such monetary calculations, or, to put it in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, axioms, 'are distinct from codes in that they do not require belief in order to function. Axioms relate to no other scene or sphere, such as religion, politics or law, which would provide their ground or justification' (Jason Read, 'The Age of Cynicism: Deleuze and Guattari on Production of Subjectivity in Capitalism', in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 139–59 (p. 145)).

³⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, on *Marxists Internet Archive* <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>> [accessed on 26/8/2020].

In addition to production, consumption, too, is organised by money and subject to ceaseless revolutionizing as managing of consumer tastes constantly refreshes demand for ever-new products and services.³⁵

By organizing society *via* monetary calculations, the capitalist market frees desire in two different registers. It *decodes* desire by overruling the traditional ideas about how things should be, thus destabilizing the established hierarchies of norms and identities, and it *detrterritorialises* desire by removing bodies from material constellations that organised desire in a particular way. As desire is released from the vectors that used to direct it, its production is free to proliferate and form new unrestrained connections. Since stable subjectivities take shape only due to the fixed investments that underlie them, this unleashing of desire also brings about disentangling or schizophrenization of paranoid subjectivities. Deleuze and Guattari consequently suggest that capitalism 'produces an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy'.³⁶ Yet, they also immediately add that 'it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear' against it.³⁷

In the same movement that frees individuals from the constraints of established order, the capitalist dynamic reinserts labouring bodies into new exploitative constellations and seeks to recapture their productive energies. As it frees women from the constraints of unpaid domestic work and their dependence on man as a provider, for example, capitalism immediately *reterritorialises* them in the textile industry. Conversely, the process of *recoding*, the re-establishment of meanings and beliefs done away by the meaningless calculus of the market, has for Deleuze and Guattari a secondary function under capitalism. Holland remarks that recoding 'remains a much weaker force than reterritorialization', which effectively orders capitalist society.³⁸ Recoding merely supports the capitalist production by providing an improvised set of beliefs that allow individuals to identify as workers, consumers, and law-abiding citizens. 'Capitalism', suggest Deleuze and Guattari, 'restores all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities, thereby attempting, as best it can to recode, to rechannel persons who have been defined in terms of abstract quantities'.³⁹ These fragmented make-shift beliefs, which include everything from fashion trends to folkloric nationalisms, make 'the ideology of capitalism "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed"'.⁴⁰

If decoding and detrterritorialisation constitute the schizophrenic pole of the capitalist dynamic, recoding and reterritorialisation correspond to its paranoid pole. Paranoia, as Deleuze and Guattari understand it, is thus first incited by the family, which habituates us to a restricted organization of desire, and then catered for by the repressive pole of capitalist dynamic. Yet, these paranoid tendencies, which instinctively seek to enforce a particular other of things, are constantly weakened by the schizoid pole, which undoes or destabilises the vectors that organize desire. To uphold itself and reinforce its repression, paranoia seeks out repressive processes of recoding, which also include psychoanalytic practice. I have already indicated that repressive ways of thinking are capable of 'straight-jacketing' desire and reinforcing paranoia. Yet, to elucidate the nature of this influence, and expand on paranoia as a psychosomatic disease, I need to

³⁵ Holland suggests that it is the quantitative axioms that determine the qualities of the elements involved in production as well as consumption: 'the qualities of the product ("use-values"), as well as the qualities with which the consumer is endowed by consuming it ("taste"), and also the qualities of the labour-power ("skills") and of the capital invested in machinery ("technologies") required to produce it – all depend on the conjunctions effected beforehand in the market via the medium of money as abstract universal equivalent' (Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 66).

³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 34.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus*, p. 81.

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

unpack Deleuze and Guattari's complex conceptualization of the relation between conscious thought and unconscious desire.

Psychosomatic: that boy needs therapy?

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze asserts that consciousness is 'nothing but the symptom of a deeper transformation and of the activities of entirely non-spiritual forces'.⁴¹ The conscious self is, therefore, not seen as given and autonomous but produced by the unconscious vital instincts that traverse the body. Deleuze goes on to suggest that for Nietzsche the development of human consciousness is concurrent with the triumph of negative, degenerated life.⁴² The root of this triumph lies with the spread of *ressentiment*, which he sees as the proto-disease that founds humanity. *Ressentiment* is for him a condition in which one is unable to instinctively respond to a stimulus, but consciously perceives it instead.⁴³ Yet, while the weak and sickly are incapable of formulating a response by acting and affirming their difference, they are simultaneously endowed with a different set of capacities. These capacities concern the expansion of human cognition and the related faculties such as intellect and conscience. While consciousness is not the site of genuine activity, it still plays the key role in development of humanity.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, too, Deleuze and Guattari see human subjectivity as constituted by the kind of unconscious investments that underlie it. We have noted that under capitalism all investments fall on the spectre between the extreme poles of schizophrenia and paranoia. To restate and expand, paranoid investment consists of 'molecular' elements of desiring-production (of 'singularities', i.e. the operators of the unconscious, or, *via* Nietzsche, 'the sources of energy') investing, or being subordinated to, a 'molar aggregate', a specific unified and clearly delimited territoriality (or the image of the latter). This socially constituted aggregate can refer to a kind of race, nation, class, species, but also to persons and objects. Schizophrenic investment, conversely, consists of molecular desiring-production overthrowing molar aggregates, using them for its own elaboration. In line with Deleuze's account of Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that 'there is no fixed subject unless there is repression'.⁴⁴ A fixed or stable subject for them depends on paranoid tendencies that keep in place and police the coordinates of the invested molar aggregates. On the other end of the spectrum, molecular desire that freely proliferates with whatever molar aggregates are at hand knows no permanence of investment. The schizoid subjectivity produced by such investments corresponds to a kind of permanent revolution of psychic life as the latter is produced afresh with every new desiring-connection.

Under capitalism, the paranoid desire produced within the family finds its outlet in the repressive tendencies of capitalist dynamics but gets eroded by the schizoid vectors of the market. It is this constellation of unconscious investments that grounds our conscious intentions, aims, and interests. According to Deleuze and Guattari,

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 39.

⁴² According to Deleuze, '[r]essentiment is not part of psychology but the whole of our psychology, without knowing it, is a part of *ressentiment*' (*Ibid.*, p. 34).

⁴³ Deleuze stresses that this is 'a formula which defines sickness in general' and adds that 'Nietzsche is not simply saying that *ressentiment* is a sickness, but rather that sickness as such is a form of *ressentiment*' (*Ibid.*, p. 114).

⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 26.

[w]e see the most disadvantaged, the most excluded members of society invest with passion the system that oppresses them, and where they always find an interest, since it is here that they search for and measure it. *Interest always comes after.*⁴⁵

Since desire always inevitably invests the existing social order, even the most deprived individuals do not rebel against the system that ruthlessly exploits them, but manage to find their interests within it. All those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, to use Wilhelm Reich's example, precisely because their unconscious inclinations are fully co-opted by the social formation. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari insist that desire is always positive and productive.

The idea of lack, which typically underlies philosophical notions of desire, for them appears only at the level of conscious interest. In their view, the sense that one lacks something arises only as a result of desire already investing a set of repressive limitations imposed on it by the given molar aggregates. 'Nothing makes this more obvious than the effects of marketing', suggests Daniel Smith, which create 'a fervent interest in having my teeth cavity-free and whiter than white, and my breath fresher than fresh', but also 'the sense of lack I feel if my teeth aren't whiter than white, or my breath fresher than fresh'.⁴⁶ The durability of these interests is determined by the intensity of paranoid unconscious investments that underlie them. Insofar as desire is unable to repress itself but 'behaves as a molecular phenomenon devoid of any goal or intention', conscious interests (be it in honouring a promise, repaying one's debt or buying a particular toothpaste) are not sustainable.⁴⁷

Paranoid unconscious investments, therefore, assign and distribute conscious intentions. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, the former 'prepare the way' for the latter.⁴⁸ Their main example of paranoid investments fueling conscious interests is the docile, family-shaped desire's tendency for repressive arrangements, such as that of psychoanalytic recoding. Yet, since we have observed that psychoanalysis inculcates us with ideas that repress or 'straight-jacket' desire, it has to be noted that the influence between the conscious and unconscious domain goes in both directions. Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that the former 'condition[s]' the latter.⁴⁹ In *Anti-Oedipus*, they present an extensive analysis of the repressive ways of thinking employed by psychoanalysis. They examine this repression in terms of three 'illegitimate' syntheses that impose meaning onto the immanent (and hence 'legitimate') syntheses of desiring-production.

Yet, Deleuze and Guattari do not confine paranoia-inducing nature to psychoanalysis alone but extend it to representational thinking as such. In this investigation of familial repression, I have noted that repression does not bear directly on desiring-production. Instead, the latter can be repressed only by being given a representation, which works by constructing an image of what was desired (in case of nuclear family and psychoanalysis this false image concerns incest).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁴⁶ Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Toward an Immanent Theory of Ethics' in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.175–88 (p.186).

⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 343.

⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), p. 36.

⁴⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 36. It has to be added that while Deleuze and Guattari claim that conscious aims reinforce and fundamentally conceal the paranoid investments under different forms of rationalisations, they also stress that the former does not necessarily overlap with the latter. '[W]hat is reactionary or revolutionary in the preconscious investment of interest', they claim, 'does not necessarily coincide with what is reactionary or revolutionary in the unconscious libidinal investment' (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 347). The conscious (or preconscious) interests that are effectively revolutionary can thus, for example, co-exist with unconscious investments that are paranoid or reactionary.

It is this constructed molar image, which desire is tricked into investing in, that effectively directs and restrains its production. As molar representations that constitute our conscious thought can never faithfully render or express molar desire, the latter is inevitably disfigured and repressed by the former. It is for this reason that the schizoanalytic project presented by *Anti-Oedipus* can be seen as a quest for, to paraphrase Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, a 'desire without an image'.⁵⁰

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze expresses similar reservations regarding consciousness and representational thought. He suggests that, for Nietzsche, every stage of nihilism manifests itself in different set of ideas, all of which seek to fixate, delimit and thus negate the affirmative self-differentiating force of life. While these stages of nihilism are grounded in ideas such as God, reality, being, truth, good and evil, Deleuze makes it clear that negation characterizes representational thought itself. Akin to the men of *ressentiment*, who cannot affirmatively respond to stimuli, but can only contemplate them, negation is the quality of the will to power that is linked to thinking and knowing. For Deleuze, affirmation is '*ratio essendi*', or the primary quality of existence, of the will to power, while negation is the '*ratio cognoscendi*' of the will to power, the quality through which the will to power is known to us.⁵¹ He consequently suggests that negation cannot be a mere category of thought, because 'the categories of thought [...] – identity, causality, finality – themselves' are derived from negation, which underlies all of our conscious thinking.⁵² Since our mental representations unavoidably impose limitations on the ever-changing forces of life that articulate our existence, Deleuze frames Nietzsche's project as a pursuit of affirmative, non-representational, way of thinking.

Yet, I maintain that this categorical dismissal of representational thought as inevitably paranoia inducing can be nuanced. To differentiate between more and less paranoid ways of thinking, we can turn to Deleuze's great inspiration Benedict de Spinoza. According to (Deleuze's account of) Spinoza, conscious thought, or imagination, is indeed the site of several illusions (such as, e.g., the illusion of freedom, which presents images passively produced by affective encounters as autonomously formed). Yet, while imagination corresponds to ideas that Spinoza understands as inadequate, he insists that adequate ideas cannot be formed without it. A proximate differentiation between more and less paranoid ideas can be established through a brief examination of what Spinoza sees as the first step in formation of adequate ideas. It is by means of the latter that passive emotions are converted into active ones. For Spinoza, activation of passions begins by relating a given emotion '*to more and different*' causes, thus affirming the complex multiplicity of causes that articulate it.⁵³

This activation can be examined through the example of hate. This emotion, according to Spinoza, consists of a decrease in our power of acting (or producing) coupled with the idea of the cause of this inhibition. If my neighbours are loud and thus prevent me from studying, for example, this might fill me with hatred for them. My hateful reaction is produced passively (without my conscious effort) and implicitly contains two assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed the inhibition of my capacities is caused exclusively (and perhaps even intentionally) by my neighbours, who are seen as unrestrained autonomous agents. Secondly, there is an implicit assumption that my own affective disposition is neutral.

⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 2001), p. 276.

⁵¹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 173.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵³ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. by Michael L. Morgan, trans. by Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), pp. 213–382 (p. 368). [translation modified by me]

For Spinoza, activation of my passive hate consists of detaching the causality from my neighbours alone and reconnecting it to the vast network of causes that shaped their actions and my affective response to them. Perhaps my neighbours are hosting friends they have not seen in decades; conversely, perhaps I grew up a quiet household and have a low tolerance for noise etc. To think more actively and adequately is to seek to grasp the impersonal multiplicity that feeds into my affective encounter with the noisy neighbours. As this kind of thinking binds desire to a higher number of territorialities, thus disfiguring it to a lesser degree, I suggest that it can be seen as less paranoia inducing.

To examine representational thinking that strengthens paranoid investments to a maximum degree, I turn to Elias Canetti. In his masterful *Crowds and Power*, Canetti declares that paranoia is 'an illness of power' and demonstrates how its symptoms can help us understand the psychic life of power.⁵⁴ Among other signs that he diagnoses, such as an inability to forget or forgive, Canetti suggests that the paranoiac exhibit 'a mania for finding causal relations'.⁵⁵ 'Nothing that happens to him is chance or coincidence', he proposes, 'there is always a reason, which can be found if searched for'.⁵⁶ For paranoiacs, every transformation that they perceive is there with the purpose to deceive them. Canetti suggests that a paranoiac 'suffers from the atrophy of transformation [...]. Even things which are really different he tends to see as the same. In the most varied figures he finds the same enemy'.⁵⁷ In opposition to Spinoza's approach, for which causality ultimately lies with the infinite web of causes, the paranoiac thus identifies one and the same cause everywhere.

This paranoiac loop of validation operates via what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the exclusive disjunction.⁵⁸ The latter compels a choice between, on the one hand, something (enemy, truth, reality etc.) and, on the other hand, nothing (not-enemy, falsehood, nothingness etc.). By means of exclusive disjunction, the paranoiac eventually reduces everything to the same enemy. 'As the rigidity of [the paranoiac's] system increases', writes Canetti,

the world grows poorer and poorer in real figures, until only those remain who have a part to play in his delusion. He can get to the bottom of everything and he ends by explaining everything away. Finally he is left only with himself and what he rules.⁵⁹

Once the paranoiac establishes with certainty that the same enemy is behind every change, all the difference in the world shrinks to this one identity. As such paranoid thinking associates everything with one and the same idea, it straight-jackets desiring-production to the highest degree. If we accept that representational thinking can be more or less paranoid, we might briefly note that there is an affinity between unconscious paranoid investments and conscious thought predicated upon the logic of identity (and not multiplicity and difference).⁶⁰ As unconscious paranoid investments 'prepare way' for our conscious activity, the intensity of the former corresponds to the dominance of the

⁵⁴ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, p. 448.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 75.

⁵⁹ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, p. 454.

⁶⁰ This conclusion is in line with one of the seven principles for non-fascist life that Foucault puts forward in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*: 'Develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization' (Foucault, 'Preface', p. xiii). Yet, if we remain faithful to Deleuze, we have to acknowledge that, as rightly pointed out by Buchanan, 'action, thought and desires do not all belong to the same plane; therefore, they are not commensurate concepts in the way Foucault assumes them to be and cannot be used interchangeably' (Ian Buchanan, 'Desire and Ethics', *Deleuze Studies*, Volume 5: 2011 supplement: 7–20 (p. 14)). Still, if we accept my suggestion, then we can say that both, our conscious thought as well as our desires and actions are more non-fascist when predicated on difference and multiplicity rather than identity.

logic of identity in the latter. Conversely, the dominance of the logic of identity in our thinking strengthens the intensity of the underlying paranoid investments. This feedback loop that operates between conscious thought and unconscious investments constitutes the psychosomatic dynamics of paranoia.

The Contagiousness of Fascist Paranoia

The final aim of this paper is to theorise fascism, or paranoia, as a contagious illness. While the concept of contagion is only hinted at in *Anti-Oedipus*, my contention is that this concept, when supplemented with Deleuze's account of Nietzsche, allows us to understand the transmission of paranoia. The concept of contagion is brought up by Deleuze and Guattari in relation to psychoanalysis. In their critique of the latter, they associate it with

the hatred of life and of all that is free, of all that passes and flows; depression and guilt used as a means of contagion, the kiss of the Vampire: aren't you ashamed to be happy? follow my example, I won't let go before you say, "It's my fault" [...].⁶¹

I explained above that for them psychoanalysis is essentially a paranoid project as it restricts desire. Psychoanalytic practice in their view recodes desire and thus strengthens its self-repression. Yet, in the above passage, Deleuze and Guattari indicate that this hatred of freely-proliferating desiring-production and love for repression is not directed only toward itself but is also facing outward. Insofar as anti-productive states such as guilt, depression, but also paranoia, are directed toward others, they suggest that they function as a means of contaminating others with the same inclinations. To unpack their suggestion, I engage with Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche's masters and slaves conflict, which is hinted at in the above passage.

For Nietzsche, the faith of humanity was determined by the outcome of the primordial battle between weak and sickly slaves (who typify negation) and strong and uninhibited masters (who typify affirmation). The slaves are the men of *ressentiment* and are, as such, characterized by the negative exhausted life, which is incapable of desiring-production.⁶² Instead, they develop cognitive capacities, which allow them, by means of slave morality, to negate and defeat the masters. Deleuze claims that 'slaves triumph not because of the composition of their power but because of the power of their contagion'.⁶³ According to him, slaves do not overpower the affirmative masters by joining forces and becoming stronger, but do so by making them weaker. This is done by stalling their desiring-production and infecting them with negative degenerated life (or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, fascist paranoia). It is this contagion unleashed by the slaves that constituted humans as essentially negative creatures.

This power of contagion, wielded by the slaves, is linked to their morality, which Nietzsche terms *the morality of compassion*. The root of this morality is to be found in the condition of *ressentiment*. This proto-illness, as noted, inhibits slaves from

⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 268–9.

⁶² Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, who see this incapacity as a consequence of repression, Nietzsche ascribes it to the biological condition of slaves.

⁶³ Gilles Deleuze, 'Nietzsche', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 53–102 (p. 75).

responding to a stimulus; their reaction is instead felt and the digestion of this felt response results in suffering.⁶⁴ A man of *ressentiment* will, therefore, 'feel the [affecting] object as a personal offence and affront because he makes the object responsible for his own powerlessness' to respond.⁶⁵ It is this venomous and depreciative disposition that, with the help of the Judaic priest, manifests itself in the formulation of the morality of compassion. Deleuze sees this morality as a subtle elaboration of the 'It's your fault if I'm weak and unhappy' recrimination.⁶⁶ In the spirit of paranoid mania for causality, the men of *ressentiment* construct their morality to accuse what they set up as the cause of their suffering. Slave morality indicts the affirmative masters for their joyful (and sometimes inadvertently destructive) activities, and praises slaves for their meekness and humbleness, thus rendering their powerlessness as a voluntary achievement. As holding back from potentially harmful activity is set up as morally superior, Deleuze suggests, '[a]ction becomes shameful: life itself is accused'.⁶⁷

Yet, he adds that this accusation issued by slave morality is coupled with a promise. According to Deleuze, slave morality

is inseparable from a ghastly invitation, from a temptation and from a will to spread an infection. It hides its hatred under a tempting love: I who accuse you, joined with me, until you yourself become a painful, sick [...] being, *a good being*.⁶⁸

By constructing the ideal of benevolent morality, slaves manage, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, to trick the desiring-production of the masters to invest the territoriality delimited by this morality. In capturing their desire, they succeed in convincing them that they in fact lack morality and have a corresponding intention of becoming moral. Masters thus end up pursuing the recognition of identity 'freely' offered by the slaves. They can do so only because their desire is already paranoidly repressing itself by shutting off every singularity productive of what is deemed as 'immoral' behaviour.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, this contamination of masters is framed as a development of bad conscience, which is seen as the illness that extends *ressentiment*. Similar to paranoia, bad conscience consists of the 'turning back against itself' of the affirmative will to power. 'All the instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward', suggests Nietzsche, 'that is the origin of the "bad conscience"'.⁶⁹ This internalisation of some instincts, which results in pain that is no longer corporeal but spiritual, corresponds to the moment when masters finally acknowledge slave's accusations and admit: 'It's my fault!'. '[R]essentiment', suggests Deleuze

is really only appeased when its contagion is spread. Its aim is [...] for those in good health to become sick. [...] It is in bad conscience that *ressentiment* comes into its own and reaches the summit of its

⁶⁴ Deleuze proposes that '[t]he man of *ressentiment* in himself is a being full of pain: the sclerosis or hardening of his consciousness, the rapidity with which every excitation sets and freezes within him, the weight of the traces that invade him are so many cruel sufferings' (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 116).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Deleuze, 'Nietzsche', p. 77.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77–8.

⁶⁸ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 128.

⁶⁹ Quoted by Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 128.

contagious power: by changing direction. It cries "It is my fault, it is my fault" until the whole world takes up this dreary refrain.⁷⁰

After infecting and neutralizing the masters, Deleuze claims that – with the arrival of the Christian priesthood – *ressentiment* too changes its direction. As the masters can no longer be blamed for their suffering, the slavish power of *ressentiment* gets redirected from the other toward oneself. Slaves now find the cause of their suffering in themselves. According to Deleuze, '[b]ad conscience suggests to [the slave] that he must look for this cause "in himself, in some guilt, in a piece of the past, he must understand his suffering as a punishment" (GM III 20 p. 1 40)'.⁷¹ It is with the invention of Christian idea of sin, which renders one's suffering as a result of one's own wrongdoings, that the whole world proclaims 'It's my fault'.

These manoeuvres of the men of *ressentiment* can also help us elucidate the contagion of fascist paranoia. When discussing the latter in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari point to 'the double direction given to *ressentiment*, the turning back against oneself, and the projection against the Other'.⁷² As it should be clear by now, paranoia does not only repress itself, but also seeks to enforce the same restrictive organization in relation to the desiring-production of others. 'Repressing desire, not only for others but in oneself, being the cop for others and for oneself—that is what arouses', suggest Deleuze and Guattari.⁷³ It is the pole of paranoia that concerns the policing of others that grounds the contagious nature of this illness.

To be sure, this tendency to infect others with fascist paranoia is cultivated by the capitalist formation from the very start. I have noted that the nuclear family produces paranoia by compelling the investment of the image of paternal authority, which is a movement that is doubled by psychoanalysis.⁷⁴ As a result of investing this authority, which prohibits the mother as the object of desire, paranoid desire comes to police itself, suspending every desiring connection with the mother. This restrictive organization of desire is in turn imposed on others. Psychoanalysis in fact suggests that the identification with the father comes with a promise that the child one day will find his own partner, which will be a substitute for his mother. In this new familial constellation, the paranoid policing of desiring-connections will not be turned against himself, but in relation to the couple's eventual child. The boundaries enforced by the father will be in turn internalised by the child, who will, as an adult, apply them on his own children. *Etc., ad infinitum.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 346.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁷⁴ As we have seen, psychoanalysis, with its idea of Oedipus complex, by means of (re-)coding retraces the same movement that the capitalist family performed *via* (re-)territorialisation.

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