

Schizoanalysis of Capitalism and Microfascism

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Abstract

The aim of this contribution is to present Guattari's conception of microfascism and capitalism and how they both refer to what he calls homogenesis. Focussing on their impacts on the process of subjectivation at the micropolitical level, we will highlight how they differ but nevertheless pair and fuel each other as they are both related to the black hole effect. We will therefore explain how this closure to alterity by the erection of a signifier imposing a general equivalence not only erodes the diversity of values and sensitivities, thus leading to an impoverishment of ecologies, but also feeds microfascist crystallisations, leading to a glaciation of the socius. It will also be the occasion to present the passion for abolition and the interrelation between chaos and complexity.

Fascism, Stalinism, were collective hard drugs. The consumer society miniaturizes the race to passivity and death. No more need to build extermination camps; we arrange them in ourselves.

Félix Guattari, 1977

In this new political winter, in the face of profound ecological changes and the return of the fascistic perspectives that characterize it, what can schizoanalysis tell us about these processes? In a world where transformations and the loss of points of reference are going at an unprecedented rate, where the individual and collective subjectivities are more and more closing in on themselves, fed by the consensus of the dominant significations imposed by Capital, what clinic can open us to the possibilities of this world? Actual, but not new, these questions have animated Félix Guattari all his life and he most notably offered a stimulating conceptualization that addresses them in all their complexity. By explaining not only how Capital favours the microfascist tendencies of each one, namely the closing which tends towards the pathological homogenesis, but also how the schizoanalysis makes us aware of the cosmic becoming that passes through us and thus gives us access to the affects that speak through us, namely the opening which allows the

dynamic heterogenesis, Guattari therefore makes it possible to apprehend the problem as well as to machine issues.

The problematic of the affinity of capitalism with fascism crosses Guattari's work so that it is necessary to cover several concepts that will articulate and become more consistent as we move forward. We might be going fast and disregarding shifts in Guattari's thought, but our goal is to articulate his final position in the 90'. Therefore, before directly addressing the schizoanalytic conception of capitalism, it is thought appropriate to briefly present two aspects of Guattarian thought: the collective assemblage of enunciation and transversality. Following his conceptualization of the machinic unconscious, Guattari develops an innovative conception of the processes of subjectivation which he calls the collective assemblages of enunciation. This perspective posits that subjectivity is always collective and emerges from fundamentally heterogeneous elements that act as partial enunciators. It is thus a variegated assemblage, a patchwork, in short, a multiplicity. «A partial subjectivity – pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic.» (Guattari 1995: 21) Against the various forms of reductionism that simplify the richness of subjectivity, Guattari proposes a cartography that makes it possible to apprehend these complex processes of enunciation and to try to enrich them. It must be emphasized that to assert that collective assemblages of enunciation are composed of a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements implies that alterity inhabits subjectivity, it is not an external element, but an internal component which is, moreover, as much linked to complexity as to the threat of chaos, we will come back to it. Furthermore, in the same way that psychoanalysis, courtly love or Christianity have invented new forms of subjectivation, schizoanalysis aims to fabricate a new process of subjectivation that favours the enunciation of new sensitivities and values. Against the apathy of the normopath, they wish to stimulate a reappropriation of the means of production of subjectivity.

Guattari's concept of transversality refers, among other things, to Jean-Paul Sartre distinction between serial-group and group-in-fusion which Guattari respectively calls subjected-group and subject-group, that is to say between the assemblages who passively receive their determination from the outside and these responsible for their enunciation. «One could say of the subject-group that it enunciates something, whereas of the subjected-group, "its cause is heard"» (Guattari 2015a: 107. *Modified translation*) as this one conforms to the usual denotations and that one expresses his own discursiveness. These are thereby two poles between which the assemblages oscillate. In this perspective, the transversality of the subject-group is opposed to the hierarchy of the subjugated group which organizes, subordinates and confiscates the enunciation by homogenizing it, whereas the transversality opens to the constitutive heterogeneity of the enunciation. The "coefficient of transversality" is thus understood as the "degree of openness" (Guattari 2015a: 112; 1995: 69) of an assemblage to the heterogeneity of its elements, to its own alterity. One could say that the transversality of an assemblage is the heterogeneity that is stated therein and thus the degree of nonsense, of dissensus that it toler-

ates. How much does a group impose consensus and allow diverging perspectives to be expressed? So that in the case of the subjugated group, the nonsense, the dissensus, his own finitude is felt like an external phenomenon of which it is necessary to be protected whereas in the case of the group subject it is lived like an internal rupture which allows a (re)singularization. It will be said that the transversality of the subject-group implies a continual resingularization, a movement, while the normopath is a conscious subjectivity subjected to the empty repetition of the signifier. Guattari continually reworked this distinction between two poles involving both a degree of openness and a relationship to dominant meanings, it will ultimately become in 1992 that between homogenesis and heterogenesis.

It was in December 1973 that Guattari presented his idea of a “Micropolitics of Desire” to apprehend capitalism and fascism.¹ It is therefore from the beginning that micropolitics is mobilized to conceptualize capitalism and fascism. He states in his 1973 intervention that the transformation of material processes of production releases flows of desire molecularized, but Capital must then miniaturize his apparatus to capture them. (Guattari 1984: 223) The transformation of the modes of production is also a mutation of the process of subjectivation. The development of sciences, techniques and arts has irreversibly transformed our ways of living opening as much the path to homogenization by conformism than to experimental heterogenization. We must recognize, however, that capitalism excels in its ability to capitalize on development to integrate all human activities into its workings.

This movement of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation is in fact characteristic of Guattari’s understanding of the capitalistic process that he will clearly explain in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*:

The capitalistic drive has always knotted together two fundamental components: one, that I characterize as deterritorializing, of the destruction of social territories, collective identities and traditional systems of value. The other, of the recomposition, even by the most artificial of means, of individuated personological frameworks, schemes of power and models of submission that are, if not formally similar to those that it has destroyed, at least homothetic to them from a functional point of view. It is this latter that I characterize as a movement of reterritorialization. (Guattari 2013a: 37)

This continuous process leads to an ever-greater liberation and molecularization of

¹ “Micropolitics of Desire” is the literal translation of the original title. It’s worth noting that the 1995 translation (“Everybody what to be a fascist” in *Chaosophy*) is from the first version of the talk published in 1974 and that the 1984 one (“Micropolitics of Fascism” in *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*) is the translation of the 1977 augmented republication titled “Micropolitique du fascisme”, but which doesn’t include the discussion. In French, there’s also a third version published in 1980 that is slightly shorter than the previous one. For the sake of convenience, we will refer to the 1984 translation which corresponds to the current French version from the new edition of *La révolution moléculaire* (2012).

the flow of desire, thereby forcing capitalism to continually miniaturize its capture devices. Thus, according to Guattari, unlike Italian fascism and Nazism, which operated with massive repressive apparatuses while mobilizing the masses, «capitalist totalitarian machines, while capturing the workers' desire energy, also set out to divide them, to privatize and molecularize them [...] becoming ensconced at the very centre of their subjectivity and their view of the world.» (Guattari 1984: 227) In such a way that historical macrofascism did not seem able to control in the long run, with the aid of their gross devices, the microfascist desire of the masses they mobilized, while capitalism-totalitarianism, which fears the great mass movements, succeeded in framing the social with such finesse that his micropolitic captures the desire of everyone by settling directly in the semiotics. «In fact, semiotic components of enslavement constitute the fundamental tools that allow the dominant classes to assure their power over the agents of production. The “miracle” of capitalism is that it has succeeded to direct langue.» (Guattari 2011a: 38) The micropolitical level is foremost that of semiotics. Guattari therefore invites us to molecularise the analysis to apprehend the capitalist micropolitic that capture desire but also to «understand more clearly how the same fascism continues to operate today, in other guises, in the family, the school, the trade union.» (Guattari 1984: 222) Since at least 1973, he keeps saying that a new type of fascism is proliferating in our societies: microfascism.

Nevertheless, beyond this distinction between fascist regimes and totalitarian-capitalist regimes, both are based on what Guattari calls the black hole effect. «This black hole effect is produced by the node of resonance that emerges when a point of re-centering is constituted between semiological redundancies.» (Guattari 2011a: 210) It proceeds by a reification of the signifier concomitant to a refusal of the problematic, that is to say by a homogenization which reduces the complexity and allows a resonance of elements which are thereby disempowerment. «It is the same black hole effect that unfolds a transcendent form, a delimitation of objects, spaces and time, a subjectivity, a conscientiality, systems of signification and interpretation.» (Guattari 2013b: 536) Microfascisms as well as capitalism operate through the resonance of black holes that proceeds through a system of totalization that is homogenization by resonance. The reification of signifiers that disempower comes with the erection of hierarchies and binarisms so that the black hole «deploy a molar world of simulacra whose tiniest recesses are haunted by the passion of abolition secreted by the subjective black hole.» (Guattari 2011a: 215) Before turning to what Guattari means by passion of abolition, let's say a few words about the molar world of simulacra. We must also add that although the concepts of black hole and microfascism almost disappear from the Guattarian vocabulary, his conception of capitalism remained, as we shall see, inseparable from them.²

² The term “black hole”, central in *The Molecular Revolution*, *The Machinic Unconscious* and in its seminars of 1981, is found only three times in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (71, 76, 197), only a very important occurrence in *Chaosmoseis* (56) and is absent from *What is Ecosophy?* with the exception of the unavoidable text on this subject, but not dated *Rhizome and tree* that Stéphane Nadaud locates in

The black hole «constitutes a point of semiological powerlessness in the same way that it constitutes a point of machinic superpower» (Guattari 2011a: 210), that is to say as much a molar subjection as the liberation of flows of molecular desire. What characterizes according to Guattari the molar «is the constitution of a world of stratified, identified, or hierarchized objects and subjects» (Guattari 2011a: 48), while for the molecular it is «the degree of flexibility of the assemblages to give in to the various powers of subjection and enslavement» (Guattari 2011a: 49). The molar/molecular distinction does not refer to the macro/micro opposition, «but arises from an alternative of a micropolitical order, an alternative choice of consistency.» (Guattari 2011a: 48) An assemblage will then be said molar when it operates around a black hole and that it will be, so to speak, stabilized, whereas a molecular assemblage is not centred and is in movement. «Molar politics is the degree zero of molecular politics; it leads to rigidity or to the black hole.» (Guattari 2011a: 155) These are therefore two poles of a continuum where it is all about passage of thresholds. Thus, the molar/molecular distinction of Guattari's micropolitical as his speculative schizoanalytic cartographies aim foremost to be war machines against the dominant significations imposed by the power structures.

In a first sense, the vertigo of abolition is linked to normal homogenesis insofar as it is inseparable from the black hole that characterizes the conscientious personal framework of capitalistic subjectivity. The black hole effect inevitably implies semiological powerlessness, a semiological collapsus that Guattari describes as the Sartrean experience of the nausea, the abolition of the I. (Guattari 1981) It's that implosion that liberates molecular flux and drive the black hole effect to cast a molar world to make up for the collapsus. Therefore, the affirmation of a discursiveness is linked to the abolition of the I in the world: «I am in the world because I am the world» (Guattari 2003a: 2; cf. Guattari 1995: 80). This is what Guattari calls territorialisation, homogenesis or chaotic dive. This homogenesis is said normal to the extent that it stops itself from going too far and too long in the chaosmosis by conforming to dominant signification. That is to say that it is not tending too much towards the chaotic microfascism, the pathological homogenesis, the abolition, or neither towards the complex heterogenesis, the creation. The chaotic dive is a back and forth at infinite speed between complexity and chaos, everything *and* nothing, and capitalism represses it, frames it to capture it.

To the immanent form of the everything *and* nothing we must oppose the transcendent form of the everything *or* nothing. The transcendence of the signifier reified molar segmentarities with couples such as good/bad and true/false, which then presents itself as eternal. In such a case of abnegation of its own complexity, the assemblage is abol-

the 90s with Chaosmosis, while it seems to us rather bound to the publication of *A Thousand Plateaux* and in reaction to the reception of *Anti-Oedipus*: «This idea of rhizome should answer the malicious objection of saying that we preach “anything and everything”.» (537)

The expression “microfascism”, also central in *The Molecular Revolution*, appears only once in *The Machinic Unconscious* (184) and is completely absent from *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* and *Chaosmosis*, but Guattari uses it in two interviews of the 90s (Guattari 2013b: 135, 297) and particularly in his last article to reaffirm his thesis of 1973 (Guattari 2013b: 497).

ished in the chaos of the random by sinking into binarism, renouncing, so to speak, its enunciative capacity by adopting the usual denotations. The segregationism binarism of the transcendent form works with a process of everything *or* nothing: either all the dominant signification or the end of the socius, either the I or the collapsus. The capitalistic drive is thus a break with the fluxes by repressing access to the complex potentialities, thus blocking the creation of new territories, and by subjecting to simulacra of territories, thus blocking the chaotic experience of existential anguish potentially leading to a resingularization. In other words, it prevents heterogenesis and condemns to homogenesis, an empty repetition by resonance that becomes more and more pathological. The question is therefore that of an opening to both chaos as finitude and complexity as potential, to hopefully bring resingularization.

Then there's also another type of relation to the vertigo of abolition that is a passion for abolition. Guattari posits «the existence of a certain type of subjective black hole that [he] will describe[s] as microfascist» (Guattari 2003b: 201), namely «molecular assemblages of desire crystallising subjectivity in a vertigo of abolition.» (Guattari 2003b: 203. *Modified translation*) Guattari thus speaks of signifying drugs and distinguishes hard drugs, that he identifies with this microfascist crystallization as they are inhibiting and thereby confine to loneliness, and soft drugs, that he presents as disinhibiting as they promote molecular revolutions and are more likely collective. In this sense, capitalism and fascism are both hard drugs since their modes of semiotisation depend on a central point of anguish and guilt. They are thus inhibiting as they crystallize subjectivity in a passion for abolition. As with fascism, capitalism can motivate people only by engaging in a course for survival. The everything or nothing nourishes by a perpetual feeling of catastrophe.

Guattari provocatively argues that microfascism «appears to come from outside, but its energy comes from the core of desire within each one of us.» (Guattari 1984: 229) The desire for abolition is the desire for absolute deterritorialization, the death of an assemblage by the loss of its consistency. It is to be ready to do anything to abolish an alterity understood as threatening on the basis of a binarism that obscures complexity and as it endangers the world of simulacra, that is to say everything, and risk of to reveal powerlessness, the anguish of nothingness. The assemblage thus sinks into a loneliness without measure. However, schizoanalysis does not consider the passion of abolition as the psychoanalytic death drive, but «as the degree zero of machinic desire, which can moreover coincide with its point of maximum intensity», it is in fact the «question of crossing thresholds of intensity» (Guattari 2011a: 356n22). The abolition of an assemblage, the intensity zero, is not, in this sense, distinguishable from the consolidation of a new assemblage which supposes the abolition of the preceding one.

Let us remember that at the micropolitical level, the success of capitalism is the totalitarianism of Capital as a signifier that brings a semiotic subjugation and impotence by the imperative of the generalized equivalence of values. Capital mobilizes the pathologi-

cal aspect of homogenesis and succeeds in blocking heterogenesis. «To choose Capital, the Signifier or Being, is to participate in a similar ethicopolitical option. Capital smashes all other modes of valorization. The Signifier silences the infinite virtualities of minor languages and partial expressions.» (Guattari 1995: 29) The subjection is axiological, semiotic and ontological. Capital homogenizes values by putting them in resonance, it is thus the degree zero of valuation, as the signifier is the degree zero of discursiveness and the Being that of becoming, the cancerous bodies without organs that cultivates the passion of microfascist abolition.

In fact, capitalistic value is neither separate nor tangential to systems of valorizations; it constitutes their deathly heart, corresponding to the crossing of the ineffable limit between a controlled, chaotic deterritorialisation – under the aegis of social, aesthetic and analytical practices – and a vertiginous collapse into the black hole of the aleatory, understood as a paroxysmically binary reference, implacably dissolving the whole consistency of Universes of value which would claim to escape capitalistic law. (Guattari 1995: 55-6)

In this perspective Guattari states that «Alterity tends to lose all its asperity.» (Guattari 2000: 27) The reductive capitalist homogenesis dissolves the territories so that the ecological crisis is as much that of the loss of biodiversity as that of the loss of cultural diversity. Schizoanalysis thus invites us to tackle jointly the impoverishment of environmental, social and mental ecologies, the three ecologies or ecosophy, in its relations with capitalism. It is therefore a question of experimenting with enunciation that circumvent and thwart the effects of black holes, to give consistency to new sensibilities and values, which risks bringing the passage to an alteration.

Moreover, Guattari asserts that the coexistence between the complex and the chaos, «between the greatest complexity and its abolition is possible. [He] call[s] it chaosmosis» (Guattari 2013b: 252). So that the complex always threatens to be abolished from within, to become chaotic, to be binarized in a homogenetic resonance. Capitalistic subjectivity is therefore «both a historical horizon, whose appearance is dated, and an axiological vertigo that goes back to the dawn of time. Everywhere, there has always been a threat of internal abolition of qualified complexity. Chaos inhabits the complex; the complex lives in chaos.» (Guattari 2013b: 292) It also means that it is always possible to complexify, to engage in creative, heterogeneous processes. Microfascist is the perpetual threat the back and forth between complexity and chaos of the chaosmosic deterritorialization tend towards the degree zero understood as the abolition of the assemblage rather than passing a threshold of consistency where a molecular difference brings an alteration, a heterogenesis understood as the creation of a new existential territory. Therefore, microfascism cannot be abolished but only continuously counter.

Capitalism thus extends its hold by obscuring alterity and finitude. By imposing a strict conformity to the dominant significations, he represses access to potentialities and

thus block the process going from existential anguish to a potential resingularization. Moreover, by condemning to homogenesis, capitalism continually reinforces its segregation while inexorably impoverishing ecologies. In this way he favours the microfascist tendencies: «What brings collective stupidity of Le Pen's style? The fact that all the factors of alterity, all the factors of singularization are systematically extinguished, turned down on the social "normality", the conformity to the standard models.» (Guattari 2013b: 219)³ By blocking subjectivities on an exclusive binarism, all forms of alterity become dangerous insofar as they threaten the dominant reality. Sensing the catastrophe as always imminent, the subjectivities crystallizes thus on a passion of abolition which can be actualized in any types of xenophobia and lead to unbounded repression. If Guattari is reassuring, «the microfascism is always reborn but not necessarily macrofascism» (Guattari 2013b: 297), it is nonetheless pessimistic, since lack of urgent commitment to alterity and the creation of practices resingularizing life, he considers that «chaosmosis will continue to turn on itself and lead to systems where Hitlerian and Mussolini fascisms will appear to us as a joke in comparison to astounding systems of savagery.» (Guattari 2013b: 348) It is therefore more than necessary to value the heterogeneity, the dissensus against the homogenetic consensus, to support the enriching heterogenesis against the reductive capitalist homogenesis. Guattari's ecosophy thus indicate «the prospect of an ethico-political choice of diversity, creative dissensus, of responsibility concerning difference and alterity.» (Guattari 2015b: 98). Against the apathy of the normopath, it wishes to stimulate a reappropriation of the means of production of subjectivity.

In conclusion, let me mention two aspects that go in the direction of heterogenesis. By situating his analysis at the micropolitical level, Guattari reveals the importance of semiotic issues and thus the prepersonal aspects of subjectivity, that is to say of the subjection to the signifier Capital, which blocks the expression of other discursivities, other subjectivities, by preventing the enunciation of other values and sensitivities, others pathic and non-discursive (proto)subjectivities that are the affects understood as cosmic becoming passing through us. Thus, considering the semiotic subjection, «Like the symptom for Freudianism, the rupture of sense, the dissensus, becomes a privileged primary material.» (Guattari 1995: 128) They are as many opportunities to experiment with mutant affects and to enrich discursiveness, each rupture of sense is potentially the enunciation of an unprecedented pathic subjectivity and the expression of a discursiveness that played out usual denotations. Olivier Zahm therefore considers that Guattari is aiming at «a permanent production of breaks in established equilibrium. Schisms, breaks, fractures within the growing capitalistic homogenesis that undermines subjectivity, standardizes» (Zahm 1993: 48). In this respect, Guattari argues that Art is a precious help since it opens us to our own heterogeneity, that is, to the multiplicity that we are and allow us to experiment the transversality of affects and thus the polyphonic aspect of

³ Jean-Marie Le Pen was president of the far-right French party Front National from its creation in 1972 to 2011.

enunciation. «[Pathic subjectivity] is something that is worked at. This is art, this unnameable point, this point of non-sense that the artist works.» (Guattari 2011b: 47) Therefore, art is of paramount importance to Guattari, not because of intrinsic value, but as a functional element. This is not because it has «a monopoly on creation, but it takes its capacity to invent mutant coordinates to extremes». (Guattari 1995: 147) The art allows experimentation, it allows to reclaim the means of production of subjectivity. In short, «Art moves in the direction of heterogenesis against the homogenesis of capitalism.» (Guattari 2011b: 42)

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