

On Anti-Oedipus: Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozism

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Abstract

One of the main themes in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) is their criticism of a psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious, characterised as either a personal imaginary or a symbolic structure. What they put forward instead is the hypothesis of an unconscious whose desiring processes are coextensive with social, political and economic production. In fact, there is no dualism here but rather an imbrication of psychic and social reality which both make up the 'Real in itself', determined under different (molecular or molar) relations. Deleuze finds this univocity of the Real in Spinoza and suggests 'a sort of Spinozism of the unconscious' as an alternative to a psychoanalytic model.

This essay traces the Spinozist elements in *Anti-Oedipus*, which can be detected in three characteristics of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the unconscious: (1) its immanence in nature as production, (2) the engineering or 'machination' of desiring processes, and (3) the mutual presupposition of production and anti-production.

1. Introduction

This essay proposes a somewhat unconventional and creative reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* alongside Spinoza – unconventional because the book is commonly read in the light of a break with Freudianism and Marxism and in connection with Nietzsche. And rightly so, since these are the main reference points in *Anti-Oedipus*. Yet there is a gust of wind coming from Deleuze's intense engagement with Spinoza, entering the flow of thought that makes up the book. It's also a creative reading because not only is *Anti-Oedipus* cast in a new light in this way, but perhaps to an extent Spinoza too.

The point of departure is the question that Deleuze and Guattari raise in *Anti-Oedipus*, which is discussed by Wilhelm Reich and was posed for the first time in Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*: why do people desire their own repression? Deleuze and Guattari call it the "fundamental problem of political philosophy [...] precisely the one that Spinoza saw so clearly" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 29). Let us look more closely at Spinoza's words, because they can easily lead to a different direction, a route taken by many Spinoza scholars, for instance Balibar (Balibar 1997).

The greatest secret of the monarchic rule, and its main interest, is to keep men deceived, and to cloak in the specious name of Religion the fear by which they must be checked, so that they will fight for slavery as they would for their survival, and will think it not shameful, but a most honorable achievement, to give their life and blood that one man may have a ground for boasting. (Spinoza 2016a: *TTP* Pref 68-9)

Spinoza's criticism is directed against those authorities (the State, the Church) who under the pretext of religion abuse their power over people in order to subsume them into the assemblage of the pursuit of their own interests. According to Spinoza, the masses are deceived and held in check by fear. What would Deleuze and Guattari say? Thinking of the organised masses under National Socialism as a paradigmatic case, they claim that it is a simplistic and incorrect understanding to say that the masses have been fooled: desire desired its own repression. They also assert that "desire cannot be deceived. Interests can be deceived, unrecognized, or betrayed, but not desire" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 257). Desire belongs to a molecular, intensive and unconscious order that is free of specious, deceptive images and preconscious interests. Only in certain assemblages, as part of the molar infrastructure, can it be perverted, captured by images and invested in goals that run counter to one's interests. Everything depends on the kind of organization into which desire enters.

What Deleuze and Guattari first and foremost reject is the concept of *ideology*, which "hides the real problems, which are always of an organizational nature" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 344). The concept of ideology presupposes a separation of the objective and the subjective, the real and the imaginary, the socio-economic, material base and the superstructure, the rational and the irrational, science and religion – in their terms, a duality of economic and libidinal production. For Deleuze and Guattari, however, "libidinal economy is no less objective than political economy, and the political no less subjective than the libidinal" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 345). The decisive difference is not between objective and subjective, but between two different modes of investment: unconscious libidinal investment and preconscious investment of interest. Both are investments in the same social reality. The question why people desire their own repression is a problem of desire, of reactionary unconscious investments (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 257) and not of preconsciously invested interests. No deception and no failure of recognition play into this problem. Instead of maintaining the duality between the objective and the subjective, Deleuze and Guattari speak of desire as "the real in itself" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 379). Desire is invested everywhere in the social infrastructure and cannot be separated from socio-economic production.

When Wilhelm Reich posed the question why the masses desired fascism, he realized that one cannot isolate forms of psychic repression from the social infrastructure. Psychic repression depended on social repression, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it more sharply, "psychic repression is a means in the service of social repression"

(Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 119). While Deleuze and Guattari credit Reich for posing the problem in terms of desire and recognizing the relationship between desire and the social field, they also think that “he had not sufficiently formulated the concept of desiring-production, he did not succeed in determining the insertion of desire into the economic infrastructure itself, the insertion of drives into social production” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 118-19). According to Deleuze and Guattari, Reich remained tied to the duality of the objective and the subjective. He distinguished

Between rationality as it is or ought to be in the process of social production, and the irrational element in desire, and by regarding only this latter as a suitable subject for psychoanalytic investigation. [...] He therefore necessarily returns to a dualism between the real object rationally produced on the one hand, and irrational, fantasizing production on the other. He gives up trying to discover the *common denominator or the coextension of the social field and desire*. In order to establish the basis for a genuinely materialistic psychiatry, there was a category that Reich was sorely in need of: that of desiring-production, which would apply to the real in both its so-called rational and irrational forms. (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 29-30)

In the place of psychoanalysis focusing on familial images, fantasies and inhibitions, Deleuze and Guattari propose a “materialist psychiatry” or “schizoanalysis” that deals directly with desiring-production, the unconscious workings of desiring-machines and their dispersion in the social field.

2. The molecular unconscious

In a 1988 interview with Raymond Bellour and François Ewald, Deleuze says that “*Anti-Oedipus* was about the univocity of the real, a sort of Spinozism of the unconscious” (Deleuze 1995b: 144). Spinoza never used the term ‘unconscious,’ but he plays a role here because of the alternative that he provides in opposition to the psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious that Deleuze and Guattari attack: the one that reduces the unconscious to a personal imaginary, where desire is triangulated by parental images. It is no use replacing this with a structural notion of the unconscious, substituting maternal and paternal symbolic functions that the Signifier distributes. As Deleuze and Guattari state: “we don’t quite see what there is to gain by this, except for the founding of the universality of Oedipus beyond the variability of images; the fusing of desire even more strongly to law and prohibitions; and the pushing of the process of oedipalization of the unconscious to its limits.” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 82) The notion of the unconscious that Deleuze and Guattari put forward is neither imaginary, nor symbolic; it is “the Real in itself” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 53) and its production.

In what follows I will highlight three characteristics of their notion of the

unconscious: (1) a naturalist hypothesis of the unconscious, (2) the thesis of an engineering, or ‘machination’ of desire, and (3) the thesis of the pairing of production and anti-production. In all of these there are Spinozist elements.

2.1. A naturalism of the unconscious.

The first important point is that psychic reality cannot be separated from a field that is social, economic, political, cultural, historical. The unconscious is coextensive with the history of social formations. Deleuze and Guattari refer to psychotic processes as the site where the social libidinal investments in peoples, classes, names of history, continents, and kingdoms return or emerge. “Delirium is the general matrix of every unconscious social investment” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 277), which oscillates between two poles: a paranoiac investment in molar structures, forms of power and gregariousness, the other a molecular schizophrenic line of escape. Each society constructs its own unconscious delirium at the heart of its functioning. The *same* delirious processes operate on a molecular scale in psychic and social reality, though under a different régime. This is why Deleuze and Guattari do not speak of a simple parallelism but of *a single basis for production* that is at once psychic and social.

Desire is the immanent principle of this production in general (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 5). – Considered as such, it is inevitable that the notion of desire becomes a metaphysical and genetic principle: “It is indeed true that the social and the metaphysical arrive at the same time, in accordance with the two simultaneous meanings of *process*, as the historical process of social production and as the metaphysical process of desiring-production” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 358). This ambivalence in meaning is a Spinozist thread. Deleuze and Guattari say that they “make no distinction between man and nature” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 4); they deal with the unconscious as an immanent plane of nature: “the schizo as *Homo natura*” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 5). The schizo experiences nature as a process of production that directly connects with his own unconscious processes. As an example, they refer to Georg Büchner’s literary figure Lenz:

Lenz has projected himself back to a time before the man-nature dichotomy, before all the co-ordinates based on this fundamental dichotomy have been laid down. He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species of life. (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 2)

With his formula *Deus sive natura*, Spinoza has famously conceived nature as a plane

of immanence. He does not treat the human mind, its ideas and affects, as something outside nature but, on the contrary, as identical with the common power of nature:

For nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, i.e., the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature. The Affects, therefore, of hate, anger, envy, etc., considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and force of nature as the other singular things. (Spinoza 1985: *E* III, Pref 492)

Spinoza rejects not only the man-nature dichotomy: by refusing “to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion” (Spinoza 1985: *E* III, Pref 491), he also argues against a dualism of nature and culture, or nature and social formations. Everything is nature, or to put it differently, there is only one God or substance. Deleuze and Guattari, instead of referring to a monism of substance, multiply the unconscious to a universal scale. As David Lapoujade puts it, “substance no longer merges with the unlimited whole of Nature (*Deus sive natura*); it is the schizophrenic who becomes *man-nature*, and the new axiom of Spinozism is now: *schizo sive natura*. Schizo is the unconscious of man-nature.” (Lapoujade 2017: 164) The reference here is not to the clinical subject but to schizophrenic *process* as such (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 379), unconscious desiring-production.

Perhaps there is even a Bergsonian influence noticeable at this point. In a letter from 1905, Bergson confesses to his friend William James that he does not agree with James’ notion of the unconscious.

I cannot help but provide a large place for the unconscious, not only in psychological life, but also in the universe in general, as the existence of unperceived matter seems to me to be something of the same kind as that of a non-conscious psychological state. This existence of some reality outside of all actual consciousness is no doubt not the existence in itself spoken of by the old substantialism; and yet it is not part of what is actually presented to a consciousness, it is something between the two, always on the point of becoming or re-becoming conscious, something intimately mingled with conscious life, interwoven with it, and not underlying it, as substantialism would have it. (Bergson 2002b: 359)

Unperceived matter, which includes the room next door as well as distant continents, are as much part of the unconscious, for Bergson, as the whole of the past. Consciousness would just be the tip of a huge cone; and since minds can share the same experiences they would all participate in one universal unconscious that expands beyond any personal entity to become collective. Of course, Bergson does not call it a ‘universal unconscious’ but ‘duration’, a single, universal and impersonal time (Bergson

2002a: 206). As Deleuze summarizes Bergson's hypothesis: "There is only a single time, a single duration, in which everything would participate, including our consciousnesses, including living beings, including the whole material world." (Deleuze 1991: 78) No doubt these ideas feed into Deleuze and Guattari's concept of universal history. The history of social formations that they present as a universal history in *Anti-Oedipus* is at the same time a history of the unconscious, because – as we have seen – social formations not only produce their own deliria but are also the historically determined product of desire. The schizophrenic unconscious is not only *Homo natura* but also *Homo historia* (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 21, 33).

The confusing aspect in this naturalism of the unconscious is an oscillation between a perfectly empirical plane and a metaphysical plane. To the empirical plane correspond, on the one hand, the experiences of the schizo, like the visions granted to the residual subjects of Nietzsche or Hölderlin, on the other hand, the schizophrenic processes and flows that circulate on the social body. The metaphysical plane would be *the common denominator, the common part* of libidinal and social production, that is, desiring-production in general. Only with the assumption of this metaphysical principle can Deleuze claim that "*Anti-Oedipus* was about the univocity of the real" (Deleuze 1995b: 144).

In Spinoza, the univocity of the real is maintained by defining the essences of modes as degrees of power, intensive degrees that participate in the infinite power of God. On the one hand, this means that modal essences are immanent in God. Deleuze and Guattari praise Spinoza as the philosopher of immanence "who drew up, and thought the 'best' plane of immanence – that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent" (Deleuze; Guattari 1994: 60). On the other hand, it means that the being of modal essences is univocal. Being is said of each mode in a single and same sense, which is to say that each mode is as perfect as it can be according to its degree of power. There is no deficiency or lack, and therefore no rank among them. As Deleuze puts it in one of his seminars: "All beings are the same [*se valent*]. The stone, the insane, the reasonable, the animal, from a certain point of view, from the point of view of Being [*être*], they are the same." (Deleuze 1980: 16 Dec)

Besides this metaphysical dimension of modal essences, or degrees of power immanent in God, the modal universe also has an empirical reality. Modes exist in duration, in space and time equally. Existing modes are composed of extensive parts that are related to one another in a determinate ratio of movement and rest. This is to say that we are bodies composed of a great number of other bodies that operate together under the form of an organism. This is the kinetic aspect of our being, but we also have a dynamic nature, a power of action: as the empirical beings that we are we strive to persevere in Being, to maintain the characteristic relation of our bodily parts and preserve and extend the body's capacity to be affected in a large number of ways. Spinoza calls this dynamic nature 'conatus'; in those cases in which we consciously

experience this striving, he uses the more common term ‘desire’. In fact, Spinoza uses a couple of terms: ‘will’ when the striving refers to the mind, ‘appetite’ when it refers to body and mind equally, and ‘desire’ finally as “*appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*” (Spinoza 1985: *E III*, P9S): “Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetite” (ibid.). The term ‘conatus’ is certainly the most general notion as it refers to this striving indiscriminately. For our purposes, however, it is interesting to see that Spinoza has no qualms about using the term ‘desire’ to characterise this striving which is the most fundamental aspect of our nature insofar as we exist. “But desire is the very nature, or essence, of each [individual]” (Spinoza 1985: *E III*, P57Pr).

This may also sound confusing: did Spinoza not define the essence of each mode as a degree of God’s infinite power? This is certainly so. However, Spinoza speaks of desire as a mode’s essence, *insofar as the mode actually exists*, in other words, as its body endures. Deleuze emphasizes this point in his book *Expressionism in Philosophy*: “A *conatus* is indeed a mode’s essence (or degree of power) *once the mode has begun to exist.*” (Deleuze 1992: 230) Spinoza’s modal universe is maintained by desire, it runs on desire – and as we will see in the next section, these flows of desire vary depending on the assemblage in which they are organized. Spinoza’s *Ethics* is an introduction into the art of organizing flows of desire.

2.2. “Machination” of desire.

For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is neither given as a spontaneous force, originating in the interiority of a subject, nor is it a desire *for* something, an object that is lacking.

Desire is a set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 26)

In defining desire as a set of passive syntheses, what comes to mind is the first synthesis of time in Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*. What happens in the first synthesis is the intensive contraction of present moments of time that envelop virtual events in the biopsychical condition of ‘habit.’ It is through habit that partial, larval subjects or local egos are formed (Deleuze 1994: 97), the products of particular narcissistic satisfactions or bindings.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, there are desiring-machines instead of larval selves. Desiring-machines connect with other machines that emit flows, form transient associations, or

cut flows and cause breakages and failures: eyes and the sun, a mouth and stones, a baby and a breast, a hand and Claire's knee. The crucial questions for Deleuze and Guattari are "How does it work? How do these machines, these desiring-machines, work – yours and mine? With what sort of breakdowns as a part of their functioning? How do they pass from one body to another? How are they attached to the body without organs? What occurs when their mode of operation confronts the social machines?" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 109)

The unconscious coupling of desiring-machines has no meaning; the unconscious is not expressive but productive. This is why Deleuze and Guattari characterize it as a factory rather than a theatre of images. The unconscious has to be thought of as a machine, rather than a structure, least of all a linguistic structure. An essential aspect of this unconscious machine and even a condition of its functioning are the breakdowns, blockages of flows and forms of anti-production. This aspect will be further examined in the third section. Let us for now ask what determines the flows of desire that are engineered by desiring-machines? According to Deleuze and Guattari, there are "myriad little connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions by which every machine produces a flow in relation to another that breaks it, and breaks a flow that another produces." (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 315)

The three unconscious syntheses of connection, disjunction and conjunction show that desire is not simply a natural, spontaneous flow. It is "machined" or engineered through the linkages and breaks between desiring-machines. The first synthesis of connection produces the body without organs, that is, pure intensive matter that fills space. The second synthesis of disjunction records the flows of desire on the body without organs and creates a memory. The third synthesis of conjunction produces a residual subject alongside the desiring-machines, to the exclusion of all other possible conjunctions of flows. The machination of desire distinguishes the nature of this subject from one of internal drives or instincts. As Deleuze says in *Dialogues*: "desire only exists when assembled or machined. [...] It is constructivist, not at all spontaneist" (Deleuze; Parnet 2002: 96). Desire is not a natural and spontaneous reality, rooted in the original interiority of a subject: it is "the Outside where all desires come from." (Deleuze; Parnet 2002: 97)

The term 'outside' does not mean anything transcendent but refers to the extrinsic relations between desiring-machines, working under determinate conditions. "These determinate conditions are [...] the forms of gregariousness as a socius or full body, under whose effect the molecular formations constitute molar aggregates." (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 343) Deleuze and Guattari distinguish three basic types of socius: the body of the earth lived by "primitive" societies; the body of the despot in imperial regimes; and the body of capital-money generated by global capitalism. While in the first two types of social formation, desire is contained through coding and overcoding, it is in capitalism that flows of desire are decoded and deterritorialized. In a simple sense this

means that in capitalism, everything is exchangeable and can become commodity; nothing is sacred or intrinsically meaningful. There is also no external limit to capitalism, only an internal limit that is pushed further and further ahead. According to Deleuze and Guattari, there is no deterritorialization without reterritorialization. Thus under the capitalist regime we still find codes and images: remnants of former beliefs, of the great objective representations or grand narratives (myth, tragedy). Nothing is left of the objective representations other than infinite subjective representations (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 307-8): the various familial images of Oedipus and pure signifiers that capture desire in an interminable psychoanalytic “cure”.

When desire is trapped by images, such as the familial Oedipal triangle, it exists in its most perverted form, alienated from its revolutionary nature. It has become arrested or fixated; it is cut off from the variety of social investments. The political and ethical question that arises at this point for Deleuze and Guattari is: what are the assemblages in which a desiring-production becomes possible again, “gets moving and declares itself. [...] Oral, anal, genital, etc.: we ask each time into which assemblages these components enter, not to which drives they correspond, not to which memories or fixations they owe their importance, nor to which incidents they refer, but with which extrinsic elements they combine to create a desire, to create desire.” (Deleuze; Parnet 2002: 97)

It is perhaps at this point that we can see why Foucault called *Anti-Oedipus* “a book of ethics” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: xiii) – one that counters all forms of fascism, including “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” (ibid.). It is also here that we can see the parallels to Spinoza’s project, since the whole of Book IV of the *Ethics* develops first and foremost the idea of two polar modes of existence: the “free man” versus the slave/the impotent (Deleuze 1980: 9 Dec). These modes of existence do not refer to a particular social status – in fact, the tyrant himself is rather a slave: he lives on sad passions because he fears his own subjects who need to be kept in collective sadness. The book rather treats these modes of existence as ways of life that can only be judged by immanent criteria. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ are not transcendent values, preceding our existence, but values that result from the machination of our desires: “it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it.” (Spinoza 1985: *E* III, P9S)

Desire, for Spinoza – as for Deleuze and Guattari – is without an object; it is *not* the striving for a particular object judged to be intrinsically good and which is lacking. Desire is rather this generic force of striving, which under certain conditions is made to desire certain things. The heteronomy of desire is not to be confused with the notion of a desire that lacks something, a desire born through scarcity and negation.

How does the heteronomy, or ‘machination’, of desire operate for Spinoza? The ‘conatus’ is first and foremost determined by affections of the body, that is, encounters

with external bodies. From these impacts, resulting in determinate bodily states, follow affects (feelings) and their corresponding ideas. These affects directly influence desire. As Spinoza puts it: “Joy and sadness are the desire, or appetite, itself insofar as it is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, by external causes.” (Spinoza 1985: *E* III, P57Pr) More precisely, the heteronomy of desire can be explained as follows: encounters, for instance, with poisonous food, are detrimental to the particular relation of bodily parts that an individual is composed of. These bad encounters are linked with sad affects and diminish our power of action. According to Spinoza, the wise man seeks to organize good encounters of all varieties – pleasant food and drink, music, sports and theatre, and so on – because the great many parts of the human body “constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things”. (Spinoza 1985: *E* IV, P45S) Good encounters increase our power of action and also enable the mind to a better understanding of efficient causes. Through heteronomy of desire, our power of action is exercised, to be sure, only by passions, yet joyful passions can serve as a kind of springboard to form adequate ideas, the true understanding of causes.

From this very brief sketch of the machination of desire one may have the impression that Spinoza’s ethics is individualist or even bourgeois. But this is not at all the case. The art of organizing good encounters culminates in the guidance of the mind by reason (i.e., the insight into true causes). In fact, according to Deleuze in a seminar on *Anti-Oedipus*, Spinoza “creates a whole theory of reason subordinated to a composition of powers of action. And that’s what will not escape Nietzsche when Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power*, recognizes that the only one that preceded him was Spinoza. Reason becomes a calculation of powers of action, an art of avoiding bad encounters, of provoking good encounters.” (Deleuze 2017: 23)

For Spinoza, reason is not an *a priori* faculty that can be exercised at will. A child is not born reasonable; it has to become so through learning. Experience and apprenticeship are indispensable. What is more, reason is always collective. For instance, in the *Political Treatise* Spinoza argues that the number of those participating in government affairs should be as large as possible and increase in proportion to the growth of those who are governed. When only the few decide on the common good, they decide everything in conformity with their own passions. A large number, on the contrary, will be able to discover what they all approve – “by consulting, listening, and debating” (Spinoza 2016b: *TP* 9/14). In fact, radical democracy – or what Spinoza calls “perfectly absolute dominion” (Spinoza 2016b: *TP* 11/1) – is the best possible political formation. Under this condition, the multitude is the collective bearer of power (*potentia*) and reason, warding off any régime guided by the destructive passions of a single individual or small group of individuals. The way Spinoza uses the concept of the multitude in the *Political Treatise* casts off its traditionally pejorative sense of the vulgar (*vulgus*), the

superstitious and savage crowd that is fearsome if it is not made to fear. Instead, Spinoza considers the multitude as a real power in politics, whose power in the state needs to be restored. Perhaps he intuits that liberation from servitude will be collective or will not be. However, Spinoza's work on the *Political Treatise* was interrupted by his premature death, and the book ends with the incomplete eleventh chapter on democracy. Thus it remains to some extent moot whether he would have formulated a revolutionary theory of the power of the masses. Deleuze and Guattari, however, refer to Spinoza in *Anti-Oedipus* as "the true visionary [...] in the garb of a Neapolitan revolutionary" (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 28).

2.3. The pairing of production and anti-production.

The main point of critique here is the Freudian assumption that unconscious phenomena could be understood through opposition and conflict. Deleuze and Guattari reject the conflictual model of drives, the dualism of life and death. There is no abstract principle such as the death drive. According to their own conception of the unconscious there is something they call the 'model' and 'experience' of death in the unconscious. The latter refers to an experience of disindividuation, a steep fall of intensity to such a degree that it shatters any fixation or identity (intensity = 0). The underlying cause is a machinic dysfunctioning, the breakdown of an ensemble of desiring-machines. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'model' of death, immanent in life: anti-production. It manifests itself as the interruption of a process: this can be the explosion of pleasure that ends the process of desire, or it can be the repulsion of organ-machines by the paranoiac who no longer tolerates their functioning. On the social scale, it manifests itself in feasts of anti-production, like capitalism's expenditure on bureaucracy, militarisation and war. According to Deleuze and Guattari,

it is *in order to function* that a social machine must *not function well*. [...] Here it becomes apparent that the social machine is identical with the desiring-machine. The social machine's limit is not attrition, but rather its misfirings; it can operate only by fits and start, by grinding and breaking down, in spasms of minor explosions. The dysfunctions are an essential element of its very ability to function. (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 151)

Likewise, the dysfunctioning of the desiring-machines is a necessary condition for their functioning: there first needs to be a cut or break, a return to a zero degree of intensity, in order for a passage or becoming to be possible. Under this condition, the body without organs can again exercise its forces of attraction and desiring-machines can enter into new assemblages. Repulsion and attraction are two complementary forces, only apparently opposed, that act within the unconscious: "the return to

repulsion will condition other attractions, other functionings, the setting in motion of other working parts on the body without organs” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 331).

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish this model and experience of death in the unconscious from death that always comes from outside. The latter amounts to an impersonal event that has no relation to ‘me’; it occurs in the form of ‘one dies,’ not in the form of ‘I die.’ It is not part of life, and there cannot be any striving in life for death.

There is an interesting parallel here to Spinoza. Spinoza is very explicit that “*no thing can be destroyed except through an external cause.*” (Spinoza 1985: *E III*, P4) This must be the case: every mode is a degree of power and strives to persevere in its being. It cannot contain anything that is contrary to its existence. This follows from Spinoza’s definition of a mode’s essence, a degree of power as “*quantum in se est*” (Spinoza 1985: *E III*, P6) – a quantity of “being in itself”, which is actually the technical phrase defining the being of substance. But the essences of modes are part of divine substance; they are a quantity of God’s infinite power. As such they cannot be destroyed or contain anything negating their existence. Only as existing modes, endowed with bodies that endure, can they be destroyed. But this destruction always comes from outside, through external causes. The phenomenon of suicide cannot disprove Spinoza’s argument:

No one, therefore, unless he is defeated by causes external, and contrary, to his nature, neglects to seek his own advantage, or to preserve his being. No one, I say, avoids food or kills himself from the necessity of his own nature. Those who do such things are compelled by external causes, which can happen in many ways. Someone may kill himself because he is compelled by another, who twists his right hand (which happened to hold a sword) and forces him to direct the sword against his heart; or because he is forced by the command of a Tyrant (as Seneca was) to open his veins, i.e., he desires to avoid the greater evil by [submitting to] a lesser; or finally because hidden external causes so dispose his imagination, and so affect his Body, that it takes on another nature, contrary to the former, a nature of which there cannot be an idea in the Mind (by IIP10). But that a man should, from the necessity of his own nature, strive not to exist, or to be changed into another form, is as impossible as that something should come from nothing. Anyone who gives this a little thought will see it. (Spinoza 1985: *E IV*, P20S)

The last case is the most interesting: it is possible that external causes influence a being in such a way that it takes on another nature, incompatible with the former. This can only be explained by Spinoza’s conception of an individual as always composed of other bodies. The characteristic form of relation among the body’s parts defines the individual. However, this relation proves to have a certain tolerance for variations. As Deleuze puts it:

Spinoza suggests, in fact, that the relation that characterizes an existing mode as a whole is endowed with a kind of elasticity. What is more, its composition, as also its

decomposition, passes through so many stages that one may almost say that a mode changes its body or relation in leaving behind childhood, or on entering old age. Growth, aging, illness: we can hardly recognize the same individual. (Deleuze 1992: 222)

The important point here is that every transformation requires a decomposition of relations to a certain extent. What is more, the decomposition need not be clearly visible at a molar scale. The body can still endure but the nature of the individual can have changed entirely. As Spinoza says: “I dare not deny that—even though the circulation of the blood is maintained, as well as the other [signs] on account of which the body is thought to be alive—the human body can nevertheless be changed into another nature entirely different from its own. For no reason compels me to maintain that the body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse.” (Spinoza 1985: *E IV*, P39S) At the limit, this change in nature may reach such an extreme that the resulting body actually opposes the former one – a body without organs repelling the organ-machines.

Spinoza’s conception of composition and decomposition of relations, defining an individual body, allows for a model and experience of death immanent to life. In this Spinozist vein, Deleuze and Guattari can attack fascism as a cult of death as well as all other suicidal undertakings and affirm the identity of process and life. In a seminar on *Anti-Oedipus* from May 1980 Deleuze explains that their common interest in psychosis is rooted in understanding schizophrenia as a process of desiring-production. Schizophrenic lines of flight have to trace new paths of life and not end in a pure line of death. Then Deleuze quietly passes over to Spinoza and asks: “what does it mean today to be Spinozist? There is no universal answer. But I feel, I really feel Spinozist, in 1980 [...] Well, that means being ready to admire, to endorse if I could, the phrase: ‘death always comes from outside.’” (Deleuze 2017: 17)

3. Conclusion

Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the unconscious in its three major aspects exhibit clear influences from Spinozism. Spinoza inspires one of the main problems in *Anti-Oedipus* – as Guattari puts it in a round-table discussion in 1972: “Under certain conditions, the desire of the masses can turn against their own interest. What are those conditions? That is the question.” (Deleuze 2004: 217).

There cannot be any revolutionary movement that serves the interests of the oppressed classes as long as it remains unconsciously complicit with repressive structures. This is why schizoanalysis as a practice is necessary: “In contrast to psychoanalysis, which itself falls into the trap while causing the unconscious to fall into its trap, schizoanalysis follows the lines of escape and the machinic indices all the way to the desiring-machines.” (Deleuze; Guattari 1983: 339) According to Guattari, referring to

his own group practice as psychiatrist and political activist, the ideal starting-point for schizoanalysis are groups (cf. Deleuze 1995a: 19). The question has to be how individuals connect their desire with other individuals so as to produce a more powerful group-individual – or, in Spinoza’s terms, a multitude. Of course, the main inspiration for Guattari is arguably Sartre, more so than Spinoza, as he creates his fundamental concepts of the subjugated group and the subject-group with recourse to Sartre’s notions of seriality and group-in-fusion (cf. Donzelot 2001: 638-9). A subjugated group is one that, even if it seizes power, serves only its preconscious interests and continues to block desiring-production. Like Sartre’s serial gatherings it remains a molar assemblage, invested in forms of power and gregariousness. Subject-groups, on the contrary, invest in a molecular multiplicity of desiring-machines and succeed in mobilising flows of desire by breaking up repressive social structures. Under certain conditions, the masses should be capable of releasing a revolutionary desire that clears away obstacles and opens up new horizons.

Let’s conclude with the words of Guattari, who says in the 1988 interview with Raymond Bellour and François Ewald on *Anti-Oedipus*:

We set against this fascism of power active, positive lines of flight, because these lines open up desire, desire’s machines, and the organization of a social field of desire: it’s not a matter of escaping ‘personally’, from oneself, but of allowing something to escape, like bursting a pipe or a boil. Opening up flows beneath the social codes that seek to channel and block them. Desire never resists oppression, however local and tiny the resistance, without the challenge being communicated to the capitalist system as a whole, and playing its part in bursting it open. (Deleuze 1995a: 19)

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