

To Organize Desire: What Politics After Anti-Oedipus?

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Abstract

This article offers a reconstruction of the type of political practice advocated by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* which points out how a hasty association between the molar and the reactionary or fascistic ends up producing a normative problem as well as a difficulty for thinking such a politics at scale (both numerical and temporal). Since I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's proposal cannot be properly thought without taking into account matters of scale, I suggest it is this problematic association that must be overcome.

Among the many things that *Anti-Oedipus* is, one of them is undoubtedly a critical diagnosis of a certain way of doing politics, or of a certain kind of militancy, as well as an attempt to develop an alternative conception of militant practice. As Félix Guattari explained in an interview on the occasion of the book's publication, his meeting with Gilles Deleuze took place in the context of "this aborted revolution that was May 68," in which "more than the pooling of knowledge", it was an "accumulation of uncertainties, and even a certain bewilderment with the direction things had taken" that initially moved them (Deleuze; Guattari 2002a: 301).¹ Part of this critical diagnosis had to do with the danger of a kind of militancy based on too many certainties, and the need to open the exercise of politics to uncertainty. In an interview published the following year, Guattari pointed to the "identification with recurrent figures and images" on the part of organizations that had tried to give direction to the revolt as an element of Oedipianization – as if the faithful performance of a certain style were in and of itself a guarantee of achieving the success that this style had found in the past. He concluded: "To be sure, the militants fought courageously with the police. But [...] it must be recognized that the direction provided by some groupuscules approached the youth in a spirit of repression: to contain the liberated desire in order to channel it" (Deleuze; Guattari 2002b: 301).

What I would like to do in this paper is to explore this aspect of *Anti-Oedipus* in order to identify what exactly is at stake in it, both from a theoretical and practical point of view, while simultaneously developing an immanent critique of the conceptual apparatus that the authors construct in the book in order to point out some limits that it inevitably runs

¹ See also: "*Anti-Oedipus* is post-68: it was a time of effervescence, of searching." (Deleuze; Guattari 2003, 162).

up against. The reform or revision of this conceptual apparatus will serve us, in the end, to update *Anti-Oedipus's* analysis and political proposal to a historical and political context that, despite several points of contact with the one in which the work was originally written, is also quite distinct in other respects; and to defend that analysis and proposal from what I find to be some rather common risks of misinterpretation.

I open with a quote:

Revolutionaries often forget, or do not want to acknowledge, that one wants and makes revolution out of desire rather than duty. On this point, as in others, the concept of ideology is an execrable concept which conceals the real problems, which are always organizational in nature.² (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 412)

This passage is notable, first of all, for the emphasis it places on the organizational dimension of politics and the relationship it establishes between that dimension and desire. The question of revolution, or the problem of politics to put it more generally, would consist fundamentally in the organization of desire; or as the collective responsible for the Italian journal *A/Traverso* (2004a: 187), deeply influenced by *Anti-Oedipus*, would put it five years later: "the problem of strategy is the composition of desiring flows in a direction that is that of liberation." But the passage is equally important for the fact that it begins to give us a key with which to understand at once Deleuze and Guattari's answer to the main question the book asks itself and the famous assertion, central to the project of a critique of psychoanalysis and of Oedipalization as a broader social process, that desire is not to be confused with lack.

This key is fully to be found in the distinction, which is only made explicit relatively late in *Anti-Oedipus*, between desire (unconscious) and interest (preconscious). Near the end of the book, Deleuze and Guattari's (1972: 413) write that "[t]here is an unconscious libidinal investment of desire that does not necessarily coincide with the preconscious investments of interest", and this is what explains why these can be "disturbed" and "perverted [...] beyond any ideology". It is this difference of regime, as well as the difference of orientation it makes possible, that answers the "fundamental question of political philosophy", posed at the very beginning, "which Spinoza was able to ask (and Reich rediscovered): 'Why do men [*sic*] fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?'" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 37) The answer, as we finally discover, is this: because it is possible that we desire against our own interests, or, as Spinoza would say, because we do not desire things because they are good, but believe

² See also: "[Organizational questions] appear as secondary, as being determined by political options. Whereas, on the contrary, the real problems are organizational, never made explicit or rationalized, but retrospectively cast in ideological terms. That is where the real divisions emerge: a way of treating desire and power, investments, group Oedipus, group superegos, phenomena of perversion... Only then are political oppositions constituted: an individual chooses one position over another because, on the plane of organization and power, they have already chosen and hate their adversary." (Deleuze; Guattari 2002b: 368).

that they are good because we desire them. (Cf. Spinoza 2002: EIIP9Sch) It is because interest and desire belong to different levels or orders that they can be in contradiction; hence why we see "the most disadvantaged, the most excluded, invest with passion in a system that oppresses them, and where they always find an interest, because that is where they seek it and measure it. Interest always comes in tow [*suit toujours*]" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 415).³ This is not a confusion about how things are, a matter of misconceptions – ideology as Deleuze and Guattari understand the term –, but a problem concerning an effective investment of desire. People do not want one thing because they wrongly think it is another; *they want exactly what they want*, believing it to be for their own good even if it is in fact bad for them. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1972: 37) gloss of Wilhelm Reich: "no, the masses were not deceived; at one time, under certain circumstances, they desired fascism, and that is what needs to be explained, this perversion of gregarious desire."

What does this opposition between desire and interest consist of? For Deleuze and Guattari, it derives from a difference of levels (unconscious for desire, preconscious for interest) that follows, in turn, from the crucial difference between the two regimes according to which social investments operate and can be understood. Interests always refer to ends and goals, and these in turn are formed within a society by selective pressures that define, through the progressive totalization and statistical accumulation of a dispersion of molecular forces and movements, the large molar sets that define what "everybody does" and "everybody wants" – and with it also a distribution of the standard and the non-standard, the normal and the abnormal, the majority and the minority. This is why, incidentally, the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* assert that the interest formed by a society is always properly speaking the interest of the dominant class (the standard, the normal, the majority), and the formation of conflicting interests is always already a counter-investment pointing to another *socius* yet to be constituted – an idea that is not without its problems.⁴

³ "No doubt interests predispose us to such and such a libidinal investment, but they are not to be confused with it. Even more, it is unconscious libidinal investment that determines us to seek our interest in one place rather than another, to fix our goals in a certain direction, convinced that that is where all our chances lie" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 412).

⁴ While it is in some sense true that all the investments of interest convergent with a given social formation ultimately serve the interests of the dominant class best of all, three things should be borne in mind. First, that sustaining consent often entails that the interests of that class cannot be satisfied in an absolute way but must make concessions to the interest of other classes and groups. Second, that both those concessions and the way in which capitalism exploits distinctions in class, gendering and racialization generate contradictory interests insofar as they give a stake in the reproduction of the existing system to individuals who in some other respects we might describe as having anti-systemic interests. Thus, for instance, a staunchly socialist white male worker in the Global North might nevertheless remain largely indifferent to the plight of women, non-whites or workers in the Global South to the extent that the latter's relatively inferior positions offer him some material and immaterial advantages. See, for example, W.E.B. Dubois' (1935:700ff) discussion of the "psychological wages of whiteness", Silvia Federici's (2012) remarks on the exploitation of unwaged reproductive labor, and Guattari's (2003: 80; italics in the original) own examination of the "*material and unconscious*

To the extent that they establish these distributions, however, these molarizing tendencies also constitute, by contrast, a zone of exclusion. That which is outside the standard, the normal, and the majoritarian now presents itself not with the positivity of what is simply other, but with the negativity of that from which something is missing, or which is oriented toward something outside itself. The definition of "collective and personal ends, goals, or intentions" is thus coextensive with the "welding of desire to lack" (1972: 410). In other words, if Deleuze and Guattari say that desire is not to be conflated with lack, this absolutely does not mean that lack does not exist, but rather that it does not belong to the order of desire, only to that of interest. Lack, to be sure, exists. But it is there where it has been placed, where a certain arrangement of social machines has instituted it; whereas desire, in its infinitely expansive dynamics and innocent disregard towards the standard, the normal, the majoritarian, the proper, the adequate and the necessary, is something else. Lack is only said of that which is finite and determinate, but desire is by nature infinite and indeterminate. It is "the statistical transformation of molecular multiplicity into molar whole that organizes lack on a grand scale. [...] There is no society that does not manage lack within itself, through its own variable means" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 409).

At the same time, the opposition between a desire pertaining to the molecular and interests pertaining to the molar creates a difficulty for thinking through the question of "the organization of desire". This difficulty appears in relation to the power of contagion or the force of implication that desire might have by comparison with molarity; in other words, as a matter of scale. As Deleuze and Guattari (1972: 348) themselves acknowledge, "Hitler made a lot of people horny. Flags, nations, armies, banks make a lot of people horny. A revolutionary machine is nothing if it does not acquire at least as much power of cut and flow as these coercive machines". How, though, to make desire a collective force capable of standing up to molar machines without also passing into the large scale, or macro-behavior from a statistical point of view, and the risks that are proper to these?

A possible solution appears in the passage that seems to me to contain the core of the politics proposed by *Anti-Oedipus*:

Pre-conscious revolution refers to a new regime of production that creates, distributes and satisfies new ends and interests; but unconscious revolution not only refers to the *socius* that conditions this change as a form of power, it refers within this *socius* to the regime of desiring production [...] [I]n one case [that of revolution in the pre-conscious level of

participation" of the working class in capitalism. This is not just a contradiction between interests and desires, but among interests themselves, and recognizing that this contradiction is not just a matter of subjective adhesion but also an objective feature of the system is essential to the work of unmaking it. Finally, we should also consider the possibility that interest in systemic change might be counteracted by the potential cost of going through such a change, so that people will find a stronger interest in continuing to live in a situation in which they have less to gain if they feel they stand too much to lose from seeking one that is qualitatively better. On this point, see Przeworski's (1985: 176ff) discussion of the "transitional valley".

interest] the cut is between two *socius*, where the second is measured by its capacity to introduce the flows of desire into a new code or a new axiomatic; in the other case [that of revolution at the unconscious level of desire], the cut is in the *socius* itself, insofar as it has the capacity to make the flows of desire pass according to its positive lines of flight [...] Now, if the preconscious revolutionary rupture appears at the first level, and is defined by the characteristics of a new set [*ensemble*], the unconscious or libidinal belongs to the second level and is defined by the driving role of desiring production and the position of its multiplicities. (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 416-7)

In other words, the challenge of the "composition of desiring flows in a direction that is that of liberation" depends, on the one hand, on the *convergence* between desire and the interests of emancipation in a given situation – that is, the counter-investment of interest of a dominated or subaltern class –; but it also depends, on the other hand, on an *excess* of desire over this counter-investment. It is not only a matter of desiring (or making desirable) determinate interests that are distinct from those posed by dominant molar arrangements, but equally of keeping active the indeterminacy of desire itself, so as to retain the openness of the new molar arrangement to the molecular movement that escapes and scrambles it. A revolutionary anti-Oedipal practice can thus be conceived by analogy with what Gilbert Simondon (2005: 152-3) says about the difference between physical and biological individuation. Like the latter, it retards the exhaustion of its own potentials (its charge of pre-individuality), extending them in time and opening them up to interaction with the environment, postponing as much as possible its final freezing in a fixed form, or being ready at any moment to call into question the molar sets it has been able to constitute. In other words, it is characterized by what Guattari had, eight years earlier, called "transversality": "a dimension that intends to overcome the double impasse of pure verticality and mere horizontality" and can be reached "when there is maximum communication between different levels and, above all, in different directions" (Guattari 2003a: 80).⁵

It is this difference – between a revolution aimed solely at constituting a new *socius* and one that simultaneously seeks to institute a new *socius* and keep it open to the molecular movements of desire – that allows us to distinguish between a group that is revolutionary only from "the point of view of class interest and its preconscious investments," and which could thus "remain even fascist and police-like from the point of view of its libidinal investments" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 417); and, on the other hand, a group that is revolutionary *also* from the point of view of desire. It would be here, then, that *Anti-Oedipus*'s critique of the kind of militancy that Deleuze and Guattari saw as an obstacle to true revolutionary potential would be situated. By remaining stuck exclusively at the pre-conscious level of interest, a revolutionary group would continue to have

⁵ I do not know if Guattari had by that point read *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*, published in 1964, but the talk of "communication of different levels" has strong Simondonian resonances.

All the unconscious characteristics of a subjected group, even if it conquers power [...]: the subordination to a *socius* as a fixed support which assigns itself all productive forces, extracting and appropriating their surplus value; the effusion of anti-production and deadly elements within a system which intends itself as all the more immortal; the phenomena of 'superegoization,' of narcissism and group hierarchy – the mechanisms for the repression of desire. (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 417)

Against this tendency to make revolutionary action necessarily pass through egoic and superegoic (i.e., Oedipalized) investment, transversality is proposed as an opening to the outside and, consequently, to the possibility of one's own obsolescence and overcoming. As Guattari puts it, the question ultimately is always

Whether the group can pursue its economic and social goals while allowing individuals to maintain a certain access to desire and a certain lucidity about their destiny? Or again: is the group able to deal with the problem of its own death? Is a group with a historical mission able to conceive of the end of that mission – the state to conceive of the withering away of the state, revolutionary parties to conceive of the end of their supposed mission to direct the masses, etc.? (2003b: 169)

The strength of this proposal is undeniable, and in general terms it undoubtedly seems correct. Yet it also shows that the relationship between the molecular and the molar cannot be thought in abstract, as if it were merely a matter of striking the right balance between two quantities once and for all, but must be conceived in practice as unfolding over time. And it is precisely at this level of the temporal scale in which the negotiation between preconscious investment (revolutionary interest) and unconscious investment (revolutionary desire) takes place that some of the problems in how *Anti-Oedipus* lays out its political project, and thus also the potential misunderstandings that surround it, become visible.

Deleuze and Guattari (1972: 418) write that there is "a speed of subjection [in what is revolutionary from the preconscious point of view] that is opposed to the coefficients of transversality [of what is revolutionary from the unconscious point of view]"; and they provoke: "what revolution does not have the temptation to turn against its subject-groups, qualified as anarchist or irresponsible, and liquidate them?" Put in these terms, the choice seems very simple; after all, most readers would presumably prefer not to identify with the bureaucrats or autocrats who strangle the revolution. But choices do not always present themselves in such an obvious way. From the fact that one must be prepared to deal with the problem of one's own death it does not follow that one should die at any moment; from the fact that one must maintain an openness to the new and to difference it does not follow that any novelty and any difference is always good; from the fact that one must always seek displacement and transformation it does not follow that

all movement and change are for the better, nor that political processes are also not made of moments of patient construction and consolidation of what has been obtained. Moreover, the judgment that decides whether it is time to move or to stand still is never made from the infinite and indeterminate perspective of desire, but from the point of view of individuals and groups who have no way of foreseeing all the ramifications of their choices, nor to know whether, at any given moment, it is courage or prudence that will be their undoing.

We can illustrate these questions with two episodes taken from Guattari's own life. The first is the schism that took place in the wake of May 68 between him and Jean Oury, who blamed him for the disruption that the protests caused at the La Borde clinic. In François Dosse's account, although Oury was sympathetic to the struggle, he

Felt that the protests forming against institutions like the one he managed were irresponsible and fatal for the future of psychiatry. He hated seeing trainees wake up at noon, when they were supposed to start work at nine, and denounce everyone who was already working as being "alienated by capitalism". (2010: 176)

In the second episode, Guattari himself sounds a note of caution in a conversation in 1980s Brazil. Faced with someone who tells him that they understand that the message of "molecular revolution" was that the groups of gays and lesbians, women and Black people should disinvest from the PT, which reproduced the patriarchal structure in its interior, he replies: "Maybe. But to think that it's good that a movement like the PT should disappear is questionable, to say the least" (Guattari; Rolnik 2007: 125).

Should we describe Oury and Guattari on these two occasions as representing the repression of desire, or worse, a "sedentary and biunivocizing investment, of a reactionary or fascist tendency" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 407) and a "paranoid fascizing tendency that invests the formation of central sovereignty [and makes it] an eternal final cause" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 329)? Or should we rather see in both the perfectly reasonable concerns of two finite individuals regarding the finitude of the processes before them, the realization that these were not trivial and that it would be extremely difficult to construct equivalent ones from scratch, and the fear that the expression of desire in this case might threaten structures that served not only as supports for a counter-investment of interest, but also as spaces for the nurturing of desire?

Because after all, as the A/Traverso collective (2004b: 192) would put it five years later, it often happens that, "when desire emerges on the movement scene, it is reduced to mere immediacy; if no strategic practice of desire is made, it ends up leading to anguish and terrorism." Or, as Deleuze and Guattari (1972: 329) remind us, it is not all flight that is revolutionary, but only that which "pulls the towel or makes one end of the system flee". Or again, according to one of the most important (but also most enigmatic) passages in *Anti-Oedipus*: "Despite what certain revolutionaries think, desire is in its essence

revolutionary – desire, not parties [*la fête*]!" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 138).⁶ True desire, not parties; but who is capable of distinguishing between the two in absolute terms, if for the one who believes their desire to be true the other who considers it mere escapism will inevitably appear as an agent of repression, and the latter will only see the search for instant gratification where the former sees an effective line of flight? To which interpreter, then, should we entrust the task of telling us what true desire is and wants – that desire which is not revolutionary because it "'wants' the revolution, [but rather] is revolutionary in its own right and as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants?" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 138).

Let us look at this last passage more closely. Desire is not revolutionary because it has a determinate object, be it revolution or, as the Hobbesian machinery of Oedipus would have it, transgression ("It is annoying to have to say such rudimentary things: desire does not threaten society because it is desire to sleep with the mother"; Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 138). It is revolutionary because of its own indeterminacy, because it is always connecting to other objects, and therefore always flees. The problem is that making flight automatically revolutionary eliminates the possibility of distinguishing between things that one should flee from and those things that perhaps we should hold on to longer; and thereby deprives us of the criteria by which it would be possible to distinguish between good and bad, or at least better or worse, flights. Thus, notwithstanding the subtlety of the concrete analyses of concrete situations that Deleuze and Guattari can offer us, there is a normative issue at the heart of their conceptual apparatus: the dualism between determinacy and indeterminacy, finitude and infinitude, "paranoid and fascisizing" molarity and "schizo-revolutionary" molecularity that they establish suggests a normativity – a "preferential option" for deterritorialization, let us say – that they themselves acknowledge is impossible to sustain in all cases.⁷ To put it differently,

⁶ The translators of the English-language edition of *Anti-Oedipus* understood *fête* in this passage as referring not to parties in general but to "left-wing holidays", presumably thinking of such things as the Fête de L'Humanité that the newspaper of the French Communist Party organizes each year, or its Italian equivalent, the Festa de l'Unità. See Deleuze; Guattari (1983: 116). While conceding that the meaning of the word in this context is far from evident, I am unconvinced by this interpretation.

⁷ To be clear, the question here is that, while the recurrent references to George Jackson ("all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon") and the theme of an "active" or "revolutionary" flight (Deleuze; Guattari 2002b: 376) clearly show that they do *not* consider all flight to be automatically revolutionary, not only do Deleuze and Guattari fail to specify the criteria that would allow us to differentiate active from passive forms of flight, they also define the basic conceptual distinction between the molar and the molecular in terms that appear to suggest that no such distinction is needed. What could the traits through which we recognize active flight be? If we attempt to reconstruct them from Deleuze and Guattari's statements on the subject, we can speculate that they involve an objective relationship to what one flees from rather than a merely subjective attitude – they must effectively "make the system flee" instead of being just an imaginary rejection of it – and an offensive rather than merely defensive stance – not just a retreat that can be easily accommodated within the system but an attack to the extent that it has the potential to undermine it. That is why they can be distinguished from the "junky flight" and "hippie micro-societies" (see Deleuze; Guattari [2002b: 376] and Deleuze [2002: 341]). The latter implies, finally, a certain relationship to scale: not that active flight is necessarily large scale – Jackson was after all a single exemplary individual – but that that it has some degree of intentional

through reference to a slogan quite popular in the context in which the book was written, the problem is that, if things are put in this way, it is not the case that it is right to revolt against reactionaries, but rather that by definition the one against whom one revolt is automatically reactionary. With this, it becomes impossible to draw a distinction between "just" revolt ("real desire") and its "unjust" counterparts ("parties"), and building *any* process in the long run will always necessarily appear worse than simply fleeing, that is, not building.

The issue becomes even clearer when we pay attention to the other dimension discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in the passage presenting "the general features of a molar formation". The "totalization of molecular forces by statistical accumulation obeying the law of large numbers" constitutes units that can be "the biological unit of a species or the structural unit of a *socius*: an organism, social or living, is found composed as a whole, as a total or complete object" to which lack will then apply (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 409). The point here is, first, that this means lack cannot therefore be said solely to be managed by the social structure. Lack does not come to us solely "from without", that is, from the *socius* within which we live, but also "from within", in that it is intrinsic to our condition as finite biological beings. This imposes on us, in Spinozian terms, an essence as *conatus*, that is, as a striving to persist in existence; and hence also some interests which, if they can be given determinate forms by the society in which we exist, remain partially invariable regardless of our changing circumstances insofar as they pertain to our very continuity as organisms. (Society decides whether we eat organic or processed food, but not that we need to eat.) Not only would this seem to give lack a biological substrate beyond or beneath the social, it complicates the attribution of interest exclusively to the dimension of the *socius*: there are biological interests that underlie whatever social interests we might have.

But the most important point here is something else: the implicit (but easier to make than when we are talking about the social dimension) acknowledgment that a certain closure in relation to the outside – to the infinitely productive and essentially indeterminate dynamics of desire – is not just an obstacle to be overcome, but also a positive condition for the existence of any given thing. It is *because* there is molarity that "generic" (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 8) or "anorganic life" (Deleuze; Guattari 1980: 628) can acquire plateaus of minimal consistency in organisms, and thereby gain complexity – even if that complexity will then often bypass the limits of the organism in order to unfold. Plane of organization and plane of consistency are not opposed, but interpenetrate; molarity is not just a limit to the expression of the molecular, it is also a condition of possibility for it to express itself.

publicness and would have the potential to produce systemic change were it to be inscribed in a large enough number of individuals.

Ultimately, then, it becomes apparent where the crux of the problem lies: in *Anti-Oedipus's* all-too-quick identification of the molar with the “paranoid and fascisizing” and the molecular with the revolutionary. For what this association does is both to moralize the distinction between the two levels (thus inevitably suggesting that there is a choice to be made between them) and obscure the ways in which they are necessarily entangled. Accepting that entanglement, on the other hand, confronts us with the need for a decision. Either we accept the automatic equivalence of the molar with the Oedipal, the “paranoid” and the “fascistic”, and then we are forced into the paradoxical (and unpleasant) conclusion that a little Oedipus, paranoia and fascism is always necessary; or else we make the opposition run through molar social investments themselves, and admit of two different ways in which the molecular can be subordinated to the molar: one that does so through paranoid horror in the face of any movement of desire, and one that does so through care, caution, and the search for consistency. While it is obvious that one can easily become the other, it is nonetheless essential to recognize a difference in principle between the two, and the zone of indiscernibility that can exist between them for any situated observer – such as Oury and Guattari and those they opposed in the two moments recalled above.

Despite its powerful assertion of the importance of organizational issues, it is in moments such as this that *Anti-Oedipus* shows the mark of its time in the form of what I have elsewhere called “trauma of organization” (Nunes 2021: 34ff): a legitimate but excessive response to the defeats and disasters of the 20th century’s attempts at large-scale social change that comes to regard organization and scale only as risk, threat or cause for suspicion, and also not as an enabling condition and a necessity for acquiring some degree of consistency.⁸ While no doubt correct in criticizing the political and psychoanalytical experts whose pleas for “realism” amount to little more than asking us to reconcile ourselves and identifying with our own limits, it is as if Deleuze and Guattari overshot their reaction, occasionally losing sight of two elementary facts. First, that the very thing that allows us to say that a molecular transformation has taken place is the fact that it has inscribed itself in a sufficiently large number of bodies so as to produce a statistically observable change in behavior (multitudes taking to the streets, for example, or people losing respect for authority). Consequently, if we take molar statistical accumulation to be automatically synonymous with discipline and capture – or worse, fascism – we are turning the very idea of a “molecular revolution” into a *contradictio in adjecto*. And second, that while opening politics to desire entails opening the finite and

⁸ This is not the only trace of the trauma of organization in *Anti-Oedipus*. A tendency to wish away the problem of scale (and therefore of organization at scale) is also evidenced in such statements as “no society can support a position of true desire without its structures of exploitation, subjection, and hierarchy being compromised” (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 138) and “a single living desire would be enough to blow up the system, or to make it flee over an edge through which everything would eventually follow and fall into a hole” (Deleuze; Guattari 1972: 404). The implication is, of course, that if the molar arrangements of our societies are so fragile, the struggle could bypass scale entirely.

determinate to an infinite, indeterminate process, this is still done from standpoints that are cognitively, positionally and existentially finite – which both raise questions about the need to retain some minimal consistency and produces the indiscernibility and perspectival undecidability that we discovered in those examples taken from Oury's and Guattari's lives.

This reform of *Anti-Oedipus's* conceptual apparatus – which in all fairness would be partially undertaken in *A Thousand Plateaus* (for example, in the discussion of stratification and destratification) – seems to me fundamental if we are to defend the politics that the book attempts to formulate from two fairly common misinterpretations. The first is the one that assumes that an anti-Oedipal exercise of politics can only take place in a very specific context of practices, and thus limits it to artistic or very small-scale forms of activism that would be “micropolitical” in opposition to other forms that would always necessarily be “macropolitical”, assuming that the point is to choose one over the other rather than using the former to inflect the latter (and vice versa). The second is the one that reduces it to an intransitive commandment abstracted from any context of application (“always deterritorialize”), turning it into an essentially parasitic activity, capable of criticizing what exists but not of committing to the construction and maintenance of anything concrete – or worse, a non-situated, no-skin-in-the-game wager on an infinite potentiality that never assumes any determinate form because only permanent indeterminacy on a par with the radicality of desire.

When Guattari put the ability to deal with the problem of our own death (and that of our investments, wagers, beliefs and desires) at the center of politics, he clearly had in mind the fear we experience in the face of finitude, the difficulty we find in letting go, and the potential for paranoid and reactionary investments that lies therein. But we should remember that there is another way in which this fear can express itself: that which consists of indefinitely postponing any finite commitment, as if one could remain forever in a state of potentiality in which it is impossible to be wrong because one never affirms anything, or never bears out the consequences of doing so. If I propose this critique of *Anti-Oedipus* here, it is so that we can rescue the anti-Oedipal exercise for the purposes of a practice that fully embraces the absence of guarantees because it does not shy away from taking risks – even or especially the risk of becoming its own enemy.

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