Deleuze and Guattari: An introduction

Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism is a schizophrenic system. Because it is interested only in the individual and his profit it must subvert or deterritorialize all territorial groupings such as the church, the family, the group, indeed any social arrangement. But at the same time, since capitalism requires social groupings in order to function, it must allow for reterritorializations, new social groupings, new forms of the state, the family, or the group. These events happen at the same time. The life of any culture is always both collapsing and being restructured. The point of the distinction is to allow for a post-Marxist analysis which can be social and materialist without accepting the historical inevitability of the dialectic.

Lacan's psychoanalytic method unites Freud (desire) and Marx (politics). He likens psychological repression to political repression, and his Freudo-Marxism leads to certain archaic notions about the goodness of nature and the evil of society.

Lacan had argued that desire is not a natural drive which society itself impedes. Instead, repression precedes and accounts for all forms of social oppression. Like Plato, he argued that desire was constituted as a lack, and was impossible to fulfil other than in dreams.

Deleuze and Guattari (a Lacanian psychoanalyst) in the *Anti-Oedipus* undertake an analysis of desire that is distinctly political. According to them, desire may fix on one of two alternatives. It may affirm itself, or it may choose power as its centre and the establishment of order as its purpose.

The failure of the imminent revolution in France in 1968 is behind their analysis. The proletariat had failed to fulfil its historic role as predicted by Marx. Instead of claiming the freedom of the anarchic moment, people chose to reestablish the repressive order that had existed before. They found their answer in Nietzsche's Master-Slave relationship, and their entire analysis is strongly rooted in Nietzschean thought. Their position is both post-Marxist and post-Freudian.

For a Marxist, any human discourse cannot be the final word. It must be located within the relations of production, so that there is an opposition between production and ideology. For a Freudian, consciousness is not reliable because it is produced from outside by unconscious desire. The decisive oppositions are desire and consciousness. Thus the political economy of Marx is balanced by a Freudian libidinal economy. Deleuze and Guattari argued for a "productive desire" which rejected the Marxian notion that desire belonged to ideology. It also rejected the Freudian notion of an unconscious and hence, except in dreams, unproductive desire.

The "productive desire" of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis is, in fact, another form of Nietzsche's will-to-power. The will-to-power of productive desire is balanced by a reactive desire for repression, the slave mentality. The controllers (priests, gurus, mystifiers of all sorts) turn the active strength of productive desire against itself and create the illness called guilt which accompanies any active expression of the will. For Deleuze and Guattari, Schizophrenia is the model for the production of a human being capable of expressing productive desire, but it is an active schizophrenia and not a medical schizophrenia to which they refer.

For Deleuze and Guattari, history is a process of deterritorialization. At the beginning is the primitive tribe (the primitive territorial machine) in which everything is coded. The society is static, and every gesture, action and even the body is governed by rules. This occurs both at the level of
economic production and libidinal production. Everything is social. The territory is clearly marked out.

At another level, the tribe gives way to the despot, (the barbaric territorial machine) who deterritorializes the tribe, but continues to maintain social order through a highly coded production. Desire is inscribed on the body of the despot, which is to say, what he says goes.

The end of history is Capitalism (the civilized capitalist machine) which radically decodes and deterritorializes social life. It invents the private individual, owner of his own body and its labour. In order to accomplish this deterritorialization, everything sacred, ritual or traditional has to go. Capitalism has no need of any sacred system of belief. It is the most radical of all systems, since it undercuts anything that represses the autonomous individual.

And yet, say Deleuze and Guattari, the reality of capitalism is the greatest repression of desiring production in history. Presumably, it should have led to an absolute, nomadic freedom, but it has not.

The reason is the schizophrenic structure of capitalism. Deterritorialization is accompanied by a continual reterritorialization, a recoding of ancient forms. The state, the fatherland, the family continues to reappear in modified form, but equally rule-governed and equally repressive. The neurotic is then the normal person, one whose desire has been shaped by a social grid. The child must have an ego, a subject position to experience the world, and this ego will be shaped by the child's relation with the parent of the same sex in competition for the parent of the opposite sex (the Oedipal encounter) Here, a fictitious original guilt arises from incestuous desire and patricidal or matricidal urges.

Lacan had argued that desire is constituted as a lack, and went further to suggest that the psychotic is one who confuses the imaginary lack (fear of castration) with real lack (actual castration). Having failed to symbolize his lack, he goes mad for lack of a lack. Deleuze denies this entirely, arguing that this is the priest's position.

Deleuze is not a Marxist. There is no class struggle because there is only one class, the class of slaves, some of whom dominate others. Almost no desiring individuals can ever fulfill their desires. In part, this is because each individual moves between two poles, between schizoid desire, which is revolutionary but anti-social and paranoid desire, which is social but codified and demands its own repression.

Nor is he a Freudian. The Oedipal prohibition which produces the neurotic who has internalized guilt in order to repress desire is not a fact of nature but the result of social codification.

In practice, Deleuze and Guattari have created a new vocabulary to permit them to speak about psychoanalysis and society without falling into either Marxist or Freudian ideas:

Machines: A term coined by Guattari to escape the Lacanian notion of the "subject" which is often mistaken for consciousness itself. A machine is any point at which a flow of some sort (physical, intellectual, emotional etc:) either leaves or enters a structure. A baby's mouth at its mother's breast is a mouth machine meeting a breast machine. There is flow between these two machines.
Desiring machine: a machine connected to a "body without organs."

Body without organs: A phrase from Artaud. Any organized structure, such as a government, a university, a body, or the universe. Desiring machines and the body without organs are two different states of the same thing, part of an organized system of production which controls flows.

Paranoic machine: A state in which the body without organs rejects the desiring machines.

Miraculating machine: a state in which the body without organs attracts the desiring machines.

The Socius: a body without organs that constitutes a society, as in the body of the earth of primitive societies, the body of the despot in barbaric societies and the body of capital in capitalist societies.

The nomadic subject: the free autonomous subject which exists momentarily in an ever shifting array of possibilities as desiring machines distribute flows across the body without organs.

Desiring machines: those that are engaged in productive desire