

INTRODUCTION

by Mark Seem

"We must die as egos and be born
again in the swarm, not separate
and self-hypnotized, but individual
and related."

—Henry Miller, *Sexus*

The Anti-Ego

"Lie down, then, on the soft couch which the analyst provides, and try to think up something different. The analyst has endless time and patience; every minute you detain him means money in his pocket. . . . Whether you whine, howl, beg, weep, cajole, pray or curse—he listens. He is just a big ear minus a sympathetic nervous system. He is impervious to everything but truth. If you think it pays to fool him then fool him. Who will be the loser? If you think he can help you, and not yourself, then stick to him until you rot."^{1*} So concludes Henry Miller in *Sexus*, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are quick to agree in their attack on psychoanalysis' own Oedipus complex (the holy family: daddy-mommy-me), an attack that is at times brutal and without pity, at other times sympathetic and full of a profound love of

*Reference notes begin on page 383.

life, and often enormously amusing. An attack on the ego, on what is all-too-human in mankind, on oedipalized and oedipalizing analyses and neurotic modes of living.

In confronting and finally overturning the Oedipal rock on which Man has chosen to take his stand, *Anti-Oedipus* comes as a kind of sequel to another similar venture, the attack on Christ, Christianity, and the herd in Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*. For who would deny, *Anti-Oedipus* begins, that psychoanalysis was from the start, still is, and perhaps always will be a well-constituted church and a form of treatment based on a set of beliefs that only the very faithful could adhere to, i.e., those who believe in a security that amounts to being lost in the herd and defined in terms of common and external goals? But where do such beliefs originate? What are they based on? For it is absolutely hopeless to think in terms of security, as Miller states in *Sexus*; "there is none. The man who looks for security, even in the mind, is like a man who would chop off his limbs in order to have artificial ones which will give him no pain or trouble" (page 428). No pain, no trouble—this is the neurotic's dream of a tranquilized and conflict-free existence.

Such a set of beliefs, Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate, such a herd instinct, is based on the desire to be led, the desire to have someone else legislate life. The very desire that was brought so glaringly into focus in Europe with Hitler, Mussolini, and fascism; the desire that is still at work, making us all sick, today. *Anti-Oedipus* starts by reviving Reich's completely serious question with respect to the rise of fascism: 'How could the masses be made to desire their own repression?' This is a question which the English and Americans are reluctant to deal with directly, tending too often to respond: "Fascism is a phenomenon that took place elsewhere, something that could only happen to others, but not to us; it's *their* problem." Is it though? Is fascism really a problem for others to deal with? Even revolutionary groups deal gingerly with the fascisizing elements we all carry deep within us, and yet they often possess a rarely analyzed but overriding group 'superego' that leads them to state, much like Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment*, that the *other* is evil (the Fascist! the Capitalist! the Communist!), and hence that *they themselves are good*. This conclusion is reached as an afterthought and a justification, a supremely se//-righteous rationalization for a politics that can only "squint" at life, through the thick clouds of foul-smelling air that permeates secret meeting places and "security" councils. The man of *ressentiment*, as Nietzsche explains, "loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert entices him as *his* world, *his* security, *his* refreshment; he understands how to keep silent, how not to forget,

how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble."² Such a man, Nietzsche concludes, needs very much to believe in some neutral, independent "subject"—the ego—for he is prompted by an instinct of self-affirmation and self-preservation that cares little about preserving or affirming life, an instinct "in which every lie is sanctified."³ This is the realm of the silent majority. And it is into these back rooms, behind the closed doors of the analyst's office, in the wings of the Oedipal theater, that Deleuze and Guattari weave their way, exclaiming as does Nietzsche that it smells bad there, and that what is needed is "a breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world."

In examining the problem of the subject, the behind-the-scenes reactive and reactionary man, *Anti-Oedipus* develops an approach that is decidedly *diagnostic* ("What constitutes our sickness today?") and profoundly *healing* as well. What it attempts to cure us of is the cure itself. Deleuze and Guattari term their approach "schizoanalysis," which they oppose on every count to psychoanalysis. Where the latter measures everything against neurosis and castration, schizoanalysis begins with the schizo, his breakdowns and his breakthroughs. For, they affirm, "a schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch. . . ." Against the Oedipal and oedipalized territorialities (Family, Church, School, Nation, Party), and especially the territoriality of the individual, *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to discover the "deterritorialized" flows of desire, the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticized territorialities, the *desiring-machines* that escape such codes as *lines of escape* leading elsewhere.

Much like R.D.Laing, Deleuze and Guattari aim to develop a materialistically and experientially based analysis of the "breakdowns" and the "breakthroughs" that characterize *some* of those labeled schizophrenic by psychiatry. Rather than view the creations and productions of desire—all of desiring-production—from the point of view of the norm and the normal, they force their analysis into the sphere of extremes. From paranoia to schizophrenia, from fascism to revolution, from breakdowns to breakthroughs, what is investigated is the process of life flows as they oscillate from one extreme to the other, on a scale of intensity that goes from 0 ("I never asked to be born . . . leave me in peace"), *the body without organs*, to the nth power ("I am all that exists, all the names in history"), *the schizophrenic process of desire*.

The Experience of Delirium

In order to carry out this ambitious undertaking, *Anti-Oedipus* makes joyously unorthodox use of many writers and thinkers,

whose concepts flow together with all the other elements in the book in what might well be described as a carefully constructed and executed experiment in delirium.

While Deleuze and Guattari quote frequently from Marx and Freud, it would be an error to view *Anti-Oedipus* as yet another attempt at a Freud/Marx synthesis. For such an attempt always treats political economy (the flows of capital and interest) and the economy of the libido (the flows of desire) as two separate economies, even in the work of Reich, who went as far as possible in this direction. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, postulate one and the same economy, the economy of flows. The flows and productions of desire will simply be viewed as the unconscious of the social productions. Behind every investment of time and interest and capital, an investment of desire, and vice versa.

In order to reach this conclusion a new confrontation was required. Not the standard confrontation between a bourgeois Freud and a revolutionary Marx, where Freud ends up the loser, but a more radical confrontation, between Marx the revolutionary and Nietzsche the madman. The result of this confrontation, as the authors demonstrate convincingly, is that Freud and psychoanalysis (and perhaps even Lacan, although they remain ambiguous on this point) become "impossible."

"Why Marx and Nietzsche? Now that's really mixing things up!" one might protest at this point. But there is really no cause for alarm. Readers of Marx will be happy to learn that Marx fares quite well in this confrontation. One might even say he is trimmed down to bare essentials and improved upon from the point of view of use. Given Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, this confrontation was inevitable. If one wants to do an analysis of the flows of money and capital that circulate in society, nothing is more useful than Marx and the Marxist theory of money. But if one wishes also to analyze the flows of desire, the fears and the anxieties, the loves and the despairs that traverse the social field as intensive notes from the underground (i.e., *libidinal economy*), one must look elsewhere. Since psychoanalysis is of no help, reducing as it does every social manifestation of desire to the familial complex, where is one to turn? To Nietzsche, and the Nietzschean theory of affects and intensity, *Anti-Oedipus* suggests. For here, and especially in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, is a theory of desire and will, of the conscious and the unconscious forces, that relates desire directly to the social field and to a monetary system based on profit. What Nietzsche teaches, as a complement to Marx's theory of alienation, is how the history of mankind is the history of a *becoming-reactive*. And it is Nietzsche,

Deleuze and Guattari stress, whose thought already pointed a *way out* for humanity, whereas Marx and Freud were too ingrained in the culture that they were working against.

One could not really view *Anti-Oedipus* as a purely Nietzschean undertaking, however, for the book would be nothing without the tension between Nietzsche and Marx, between philosophy and politics between thought and revolution; the tension, in short, between Deleuze the philosopher and Guattari the militant. This tension is quite novel, and leads to a combination of the artistic "machine," the revolutionary "machine," and the analytical "machine"; a combination of three modes of knowledge—the *intuitive*, the *practical*, and the *reflective*, which all become joined as bits and pieces of one and the same strategical machine whose target is the ego and the fascist in each of us. Extending thought to the point of madness and action to the point of revolution, theirs is indeed a politics of experience. The experience, however, is no longer that of man, but of what is nonhuman in man, his desires and his forces: a politics of desire directed against all that is egoic—and heroic—in man.

In addition to Nietzsche they also found it necessary to listen to others: to Miller and Lawrence and Kafka and Beckett, to Proust and Reich and Foucault, to Burroughs and Ginsberg, each of whom had different insights concerning madness and dissension, politics and desire. They needed everything they could get their hands on and they took whatever they could find, in an eclectic fashion closer to Henry Miller than it is to Marx or Freud. More poetic, undoubtedly, but also more fun.

While Deleuze and Guattari use many authors and concepts, this is never done in an academic fashion aimed at persuading the reader. Rather, they use these names and ideas as effects that traverse their analyses, generating ever new effects, as points of reference indeed, but also as points of intensity and signs pointing a way out: *points-signs* that offer a multiplicity of solutions and a variety of directions for a new style of politics. Such an approach carries much along with it, in the course of its flow, but it also leaves much behind. Chunks of Marx and Freud that cannot keep up with the fast current will be left behind, buried or forgotten, while everything in Marx and Freud that has to do with how things and people and desires actually flow will be kept, and added to the infernal machine evoked above. This political analysis of desire, this *schizoanalysis*, becomes a mighty tool where schizophrenia as a process—the *schiz*—serves as a point of departure as well as a point of destination. Like Laing, they encourage mankind to take a journey, the journey through *ego-loss*. They go much further than Laing on this

point, however. They urge mankind to strip itself of *all* anthropomorphic and anthropological armoring, all myth and tragedy, and all existentialism, in order to perceive what is nonhuman in man, his will and his forces, his transformations and mutations. The human and social sciences have accustomed us to see the figure of Man behind every social event, just as Christianity taught us to see **the** Eye of **the** Lord looking down upon us. Such forms of knowledge project an image of reality, at the expense of reality itself. They talk figures and icons and signs, but fail to perceive forces and flows. They blind us to other realities, and especially the reality of power as it subjugates us. Their function is to tame, and the result is the fabrication of docile and obedient subjects.

Schizoanalysis and Collectivity

To be anti-oedipal is to be anti-ego as well as anti-homo, willfully attacking all reductive psychoanalytic and political analyses that remain caught within the sphere of totality and unity, in order to free the multiplicity of desire from the deadly neurotic and Oedipal yoke. For Oedipus is not a mere psychoanalytic construct, Deleuze and Guattari explain. Oedipus is the figurehead of imperialism, "colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony, and we shall see that even here at home ... it is our intimate colonial education." This internalization of man by man, this "oedipalization," creates a new meaning for suffering, *internal suffering*, and a new tone for life: the depressive tone. Now depression does not just come about one fine day, *Anti-Oedipus* goes on, nor does Oedipus appear one day in the Family and feel secure in remaining there. Depression and Oedipus are agencies of the State, agencies of paranoia, agencies of power, long before being delegated to the family. Oedipus is the figure of power as such, just as neurosis is the result of power on individuals. Oedipus is everywhere. For anti-oedipalists the ego, like Oedipus, is "part of those things we must dismantle through the united assault of analytical and political forces."⁴ Oedipus is belief injected into the unconscious, it is what gives us faith as it robs us of power, *it* is what teaches us to desire our own repression. Everybody has been oedipalized and neuroticized at home, at school, at work. Everybody wants to be a fascist. Deleuze and Guattari want to know how these beliefs succeed in taking hold of a body, thereby silencing the productive machines of the libido. They also want to know how the opposite situation is brought about, where a body successfully wards off the effects of power. Reversing the Freudian distinction between neurosis and psychosis that measures everything

against the former, *Anti-Oedipus* concludes: the neurotic is the one on whom the Oedipal imprints take, whereas the psychotic is the one incapable of being oedipalized, even and especially by psychoanalysis. The first task of the revolutionary, they add, is to learn from the psychotic how to shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power, in order to initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs. Such a politics dissolves the mystifications of power through the kindling, on all levels, of anti-oedipal forces—the schizzes-flows—forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions: *orphans* (no daddy-mommy-me), *atheists* (no beliefs), and *nomads* (no habits, no territories).

A schizoanalysis schizophrenizes in order to break the holds of power and institute research into a new collective subjectivity and a revolutionary healing of mankind. For we are sick, so sick, of our *selves!*

It is actually not accurate to say that Deleuze and Guattari develop the schizoanalytic approach, for, as they show, it has always been at work in writers like Miller or Nietzsche or Artaud. Stoned thinking based on intensely lived experiences: Pop Philosophy.

To put it simply, as does Miller, "everybody becomes a healer the moment he forgets about himself." And Miller continues: "Reality is here and now, everywhere, gleaming through every reflection that meets the eye. . . . Everybody is a neurotic, down to the last man and woman. The healer, or the analyst, if you like, is only a super-neurotic. . . . To be cured we must rise from our graves and throw off the cerements of the dead. Nobody can do it for another—it is a private affair which is best done collectively."⁵ Once we forget about our egos a non-neurotic form of politics becomes possible, where singularity and collectivity are no longer at odds with each other, and where collective expressions of desire are possible. Such a politics does not seek to regiment individuals according to a totalitarian system of norms, but to de-normalize and de-individualize through a multiplicity of new, collective arrangements against power. Its goal is the transformation of human relationships in a struggle against power. And it urges militant groups, as well as lone individuals, to analyze and fight against the effects of power that subjugate them: "For a revolutionary group at the preconscious level remains a *subjugated group*, even in seizing power, as long as this power itself refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production. . . . A *subject-group*, on the contrary, is a group whose libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary, it causes desire to penetrate into the social field, and subordinates the socius or the forms of power to desiring-production; productive of desire and a desire that produces, the subject-group always invents mortal forma-

tions that exorcize the effusion in it of a death instinct; it opposes real coefficients of transversality to the symbolic determinations of subjugation, coefficients without a hierarchy or a group superego." There can be no revolutionary actions, *Anti-Oedipus* concludes, where the the relations between people and groups are relations of exclusion and segregation. Groups must multiply and connect in ever new ways, freeing up territorialities for the construction of new social arrangements. Theory must therefore be conceived as a toolbox, producing tools that work; or as Ivan Illich says, we must learn to construct *tools for conviviality* through the use of counterfoil research.⁶ When Illich speaks of "convivial reconstruction," he is very close to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a "desiring-revolution." Like Deleuze and Guattari, Illich also calls for a radical reversal of the relationships between individuals and tools or machines: "This reversal would permit the evolution of a life-style and of a political system which give priority to the protection, the maximum use, and the enjoyment of the one resource that is almost equally distributed among all people: personal energy under personal control."⁷ All three authors agree that such a reversal must be governed by a collective political process, and not by professionals and experts. The ultimate answer to neurotic dependencies on professionals is *mutual self-care*.⁸

Freed from a psychoanalytic framework, the political group or collective cannot, however, push aside the problem of desire. Nor can it leave desire in the hands of new experts. It must analyze the function of desire, in itself and in the groups with which it is involved. What is the function of desire, *Anti-Oedipus* asks, if not one of making connections? For to be bogged down in arrangements from which escape is possible is to be neurotic, seeing an irresolvable crisis where alternatives in fact exist. And as Deleuze and Guattari comment, "perhaps it will be discovered that the only incurable is the neurotic."

We defend so cautiously against our egoically limited experiences, states Laing in *The Politics of Experience*, that it is not surprising to see people grow defensive and panic at the idea of experiencing ego-loss through the use of drugs or collective experiences. But there is nothing pathological about ego-loss, Laing adds; quite the contrary. Ego-loss is the experience of all mankind, "of the primal man, of Adam and perhaps even [a journey] further into the beings of animals, vegetables and minerals."⁹ No age, Laing concludes, has so lost touch with this healing process as has ours. Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalytic approach serves to begin such a healing process. Its major task is to destroy the oedipalized and neuroticized individual dependencies through the forg-

ing of a collective subjectivity, a nonfascist subject—anti-Oedipus. Anti-Oedipus is an individual or a group that no longer functions in terms of beliefs and that comes to redeem mankind, as Nietzsche foresaw, not only from the ideals that weighed it down, "but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist. . . *He must come one day.*—"10

Unlike Nietzsche's antinihilist, however, Deleuze and Guattari's anti-Oedipus is not alone. Anti-Oedipus is not the superman, It is not transcendent. Where Nietzsche grew progressively more isolated to the point of madness, Deleuze and Guattari call for actions and passions of a collective nature, *here and now*. Madness is a radical break from power in the form of a disconnection. Militancy, in Deleuze and Guattari's framework, would learn from madness but then move beyond it, beyond disconnections and deterritorializations, to ever new connections. A politics of desire would see loneliness and depression as the first things to go. Such is the anti-oedipal strategy: if man is connected to the machines of the universe, if he is in tune with his desires, if he is "anchored," "he ceases to worry about the fitness of things, about the behavior of his fellow-men, about right or wrong and justice and injustice. If his roots are in the current of life he will float on the surface like a lotus and he will blossom and give forth fruit. . . . The life that's in him will manifest itself in growth, and growth is an endless, eternal process. The process is everything."¹¹ It is this process—of desiring-production—that *Anti-Oedipus* sets out to analyze.

For if desire is repressed in a society, Deleuze and Guattari state, this is hardly because "it is a desire for the mother or for the death of the father; on the contrary, desire becomes that only because it is repressed, it takes that mask on under the reign of the repression that models the mask for it and plasters it on its face. . . . The real danger is elsewhere. If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors."

Deleuze and Guattari conclude that desire, any desiring-machine, is always a combination of various elements and forces of all types. Hence the need to listen not only to revolutionaries but to all those who know how to be truly objective: "Revolutionaries, artists, and seers an

content to be objective, merely objective: they know that desire clasps life in its powerfully productive embrace, and reproduces it in a way all the more intense because it has few needs. And never mind those who believe that this is very easy to say, or that it is the sort of idea to be found in books."