

BOOK REVIEW

Anti-Oedipus, Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, The Viking Press, New York, 1977. Second printing October, 1982. Translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Pp. xxiv, 400.

Oedipus is a concept by which we measure our pain.¹ The pain that is Oedipus is a familiar throbbing. It is at once the heartbeat and the death knell, the casual gesture and the fearful cringe. An understanding of oneself, a definition of one's feelings, and even an introspective gaze into the inner sanctum of the subconscious mind—when arrived at through the thoughts and tools of others—are perfectly Oedipalized experiences. They are the marks of comfortable neuroses, secure feelings which are all the more reassuring when found to exist in others as well as within the self.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari² have proposed the death of Oedipus. In their book, *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari draw on the works of scores of other writers, philosophers, and theorists to offer their insights into the world of psychoanalysis, the economy of capitalism,³ and the schizophrenic reactions to these institutions. The work begins with an examination of man, both historically and individually. It traces the human being, as object and subject, through the evolution of socialization. It ends at a beginning, a revolutionary introduction to new life, whereupon it offers the reader a challenge and the best tidings for the future. In his preface to the book, Michel Foucault is careful to warn that despite "the extraordinary profusion of new notions and surprise concepts," *Anti-Oedipus* is not the long awaited philosophical "real solution" treatise. Far more accurate is Foucault's suggestion that the book be read as "an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*." The emphasis is on *Introduction*.

In the world of Oedipus, we are all neurotics, yet we possess the potential to step out of bounds, to consciously confront the questions

¹ With apologies to John Lennon who said, "God is a concept by which we measure our pain."

² Gilles Deleuze is a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris. Félix Guattari is a writer and is active in the anti-psychiatric movement in France. The authors have written jointly and individually on a number of topics. Cover notes to G. DELEUZE & G. GUATTARI, *ANTI-OEDIPUS*.

³ Although Deleuze and Guattari insist on a single economy, the economy of desire, their use of the term capitalism often transcends the political connotation and applies to the various facets of a structure within the economy of desire.

of self and society, to face desire. The extent to which each of us is able to do this is more or less dependent on the quantitative effect of the repressive forces in our lives.⁴ In the kingdom of Oedipus, it is ultimately the self which allows or disallows the ruler's will to become the individual's command. The theory of anti-Oedipus rests on the concept of a machinic universe and the recognition of a machinic self: a desiring-machine. It is a machine whose function is to not function, and whose longevity is determined not by the flawless movement of its durable parts, but rather by the constant disruption of its operation. Its existence is a never ending process of redesigning the machine, through new encounters in the social field. The result is a production of desire, very real and very true, with which the self can never become satiated. It is this machine of desiring-production which is the focus of repression, and it is the very same machine which is the vehicle of escape.⁵

In Freudian theory, Oedipalization,⁶ or internalizing the Oedipal complex, is a process whereby a four-year-old child represses his libidinal desire (id impulses) to sexually possess his mother, through a conflict resolution process initiated by his fear of paternal punishment (castration). For some reason, psychoanalysis has clung persistently to the Oedipus complex, interpreting it, defining behavior with reference to it, and using it as a scapegoat to shield the profession from criticism and indignation. Yet it is obvious that psychoanalysts cannot adequately explain the phenomenon of schizophrenia solely within the walls of Oedipal analysis. This is because the schizophrenic has long since left the confines of the familial "school." The concept of ego, which psychoanalysis vainly endeavors to preserve, is simply not there. The fact that it once existed—even if it began its disintegration from its inception—clearly is a more accurate focus of attention.⁷

To understand that psychoanalysis seeks to spin the schizophrenic around and drag him back to that place where Oedipus looms is to understand why in fact Oedipalization persists as the ultimate psy-

⁴ One must constantly be reminded that the authors speak in terms of social *and* psychic repression. Their discussion is buttressed by liberal reference to notions espoused by Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, D.H. Lawrence, and Wilhelm Reich.

⁵ Escape is used here to connote liberation from both psychic and social repression, rather than an avoidance reaction.

⁶ The term is, I believe, a Deleuze and Guattari original.

⁷ See R.D. LAING, *THE DIVIDED SELF* (1959). For Laing, the development of schizoidity, and ultimately psychosis, is a reactive process. The self perceives danger, external threatening forces, impinging its inner world. It fears for its autonomous existence and reacts by protecting itself with a false-self shell. The process devolves, however, into a falsified existence. There is no longer a connection to the world of the others. Rather, these outside forces have been cut off, rejected.

choanalytic objective. The failures encountered in the process of analysis fuel the fire of the analysis itself and reinforce the psychoanalyst's commitment to his tragic actor.

If the family is viewed generally as the ultimate entity responsible for the development of the self, the instillation of values, and the "coding of desires," why has psychoanalysis stopped there? Is there a professional reluctance to go beyond time-honored theories, to explore a hierarchical-societal structure which presupposes a subordinated familial structure? Is psychology a less scientific discipline than it would like to think? In the order of Oedipalization described above, psychoanalysis itself has been comfortably Oedipalized.

There is a reluctance. It is not mere naïveté. It is a neurotic acceptance of values assigned—societal commandments for the production of a repressive psychic régime. It is a fear of the higher social repression, a belief that it exists solely as a means toward social reproduction, and in this sense, psychology, psychiatry, psychoscience in general is pleased to serve as an object of manipulation. It sees society in the shape of a forest, yet it treats the members of society as individual trees. The fact that psychoanalysis focuses on the individual as a subject of the familial order and emphasizes the individual's participation or lack of participation in that order is evidence of the analyst's failure to take the desiring-machinery into account. It is mute testimony to the fact that what is really going on in psychoanalysis is a greater repression of the desiring-machine of social change.⁸ No wonder the psychoanalytic construct of the Oedipus complex has survived! It attached to a force that existed long before Freud was born, and has been carried to new heights since his death. But by assigning the task of psychic repression to the spectre of parental images, and instilling a code of generalized morality in generational cascades, the object of socio-stasis is achieved more efficiently than it could be through an organized system of external repression. The individual is *taught* to be Oedipalized, to respond morally, to repress in himself the surging desires that threaten the structure of which he is a part.

The idea that moral codes enforced from within the self can ensure social production more effectively than rules dictated by tyrannical regimes says nothing about the force behind the morality.⁹ It is

Whether the being treats contact with others as a fantasy or an opportunity for indifferent observation, one thing is certain—the path leads only forward.

⁸ For Deleuze and Guattari, this change represents, in a broad sense, the freedom to make new connections and realize new relationships by bringing novel thoughts and ideas into active service.

⁹ This idea will appear to some readers to be strikingly positivistic. For a modern critique of this concept, see R.M. UNGER, *KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICS* 69-72 (1975).

the more devious tyrant who is able to cloak his greed in the garb of benevolence, or better yet, powerlessness. Who is better suited to understand himself—the slave who can see and feel his chains, or the free man who extols the virtues of a freedom he cannot define? In the system of monetary economy, capitalism, the capitalist machine drives the forces of production to overproduce. Production itself, however, is enhanced when the machine breaks down because upon each breakdown, a concomitant restarting of the machine with better parts allows new production, greater production to result. To allow, or rather to require the machine to break down, the design of the whole had to be revised. The new machine functioned by giving autonomy to its parts. The autonomous/dependent parts produce production which in turn adds more producing parts to the machine. The economy of capitalism is an economy of surplus. As the stockpiles increase, so increases the effort to create need.¹⁰

Unlike the flow of libidinal desire, no parallel repression of the flow of capital exists. On the contrary, the process which exists performs a nearly opposite function. The capitalist-machine thrives on limitlessness. The process allows capitalism free reign within existing historical borders. Once the wall is reached, however, the territorial limit is extended. The process realigns the borders. Capitalism grows on. It is the fuel of social production which is being heaped into the infernal machine to allow endless growth. It works at the expense of an alienated labor force, mollified constantly by the lure of private property and deluded into believing it has an independent power base. On the other hand, it works at the expense of an alienated desire force, shunted, coded, minimized, repressed, Oedipalized into instinctual reference to familial images.

Does capitalism have a final territory—a stage wherein it will no longer be able to redefine its limits but will succumb to the void it helped create, at the hands of the voided selves it has alienated? One need only look at the process of capitalism to realize that the creation of schisms and the effort to decode what has already been coded are the essential functions of the system. Small flows of desire are permitted, precisely in order to be available for recoding, yet some of these flows escape the coding machine. They find no relation to the rest of the system. They exist as themselves and need no external propulsion. They are schizophrenized artifacts, denying the very process which

¹⁰ It should be noted that the direct and indirect references to Marx found throughout *Anti-Oedipus* are specific points of reference. As is the case with Freudian theory, only certain elements of Marxist theory are retained as the foundation for a new type of political analysis. Others are expressly discredited.

gave them form, and threatening the system through this denial. If capitalism is a process of decoding for recoding, schizophrenia is the ultimate product of the capitalist-machine. It is the point at which the idea of territory no longer plays a part in the process but vanishes completely—with nothing to replace it. Schizophrenia then becomes a process. It is desiring-production without limits, created under the determinate conditions of capitalism. *Anti-Oedipus* does not say capitalism is actively pursuing a clinical schizophrenic end. The process initiated is aware of the consequences of the process unrestrained. Capitalism is aware too, of the magnitude of the coercive effort it must undertake to allow just enough schisms to ensure the maximum social production.

What is most pernicious about the procedure employed is the fact that the regime enlists the family as the agent of the great psychoarchitect. Oedipus is introduced. He gets down to work, threatening, obscuring, falsifying, on the base familial level. The tightest knot is soaked and tightened further. The goal is to achieve a neuroticized deference toward authority—as illegitimate as one can imagine—which will pervade the social being in its every contact with others. It is the marshalling of all interested entities in a concerted act of self-preservation. The system that rules, on every level of the hierarchical structure, must itself be firmly Oedipalized in order to present itself as both a model for the subordinate recipient of the code, and a docile subject for manipulation by a superior authority. The father is the teacher is the employer is the leader is the dictator: Nowhere in the spectrum of society is the system more successful than in the world of the developing self.

Somewhere along the Oedipal chain a link fell loose. The technicians hurried to bind the swinging ends but the damage was done. Psychoanalysts proliferate to keep up with the schisms and exact a heavy price for their services in more ways than one. When the schizophrenic takes his stroll, he is oblivious to the structural machinations of psychoanalysis. In fact, he is oblivious to all of life's representations. He sees something clearly but he can't or won't tell anyone what it is. He has tested the limit dictated by Oedipus and he is disgusted with it. He is sick, true, but his sickness is a familial malady, brought on by an attempt at forced repression which has failed. It will do no good to try again. He is on the road.

Thus, the schizophrenic can neither adjust to, nor fall back on, the familial pillows which soften the repression of desire. Threats cannot assuage his pain. That act is for the neurotic father-mother-preacher-leader-psychoanalyst. Instead, the schizophrenic's experience with Oedipus has been a bad experience, one not to be repeated

or remembered. He has taken his desire and fled. In this sense, the schizophrenic has shrugged off not only the ruling level of family, but also the entire social order that it was forced to represent. The capitalist-machine, with its planned deterritorialization, is confounded by the schizo. When it tries to reconstruct a territory for him, he slips away, leaving an ineffectual Oedipus standing in his stead.

If Oedipus is the principal character in psychoanalysis, the schizophrenic plays the lead in schizoanalysis. In psychoanalysis, Oedipus is used by the social order, through the family, to effect a change in the individual. The change sought is the repression of desire, already alive and growing, into a mold, defined and delineated. By contrast, schizoanalysis uses the schizophrenic and his refusal to allow the coding of his free flows of desire to show the family, through the social order, the danger inherent in Oedipal neurosis. The danger here, the attempt to control schizophrenization, lies less in the process of regression and repression than in the recoil that results when the process ceases to work. This latter phenomenon far outshadows the wildest paranoia felt by the repressive-machines. It cannot be gauged with reference to the machines. Its potential energy is of a type which neutralizes repressive-machines, yet does not enslave them.¹¹ Indeed, the idea of conquering and controlling is anathema to the schizophrenic investment of desire.

Schizoanalysis is an indictment of manipulation. Its purpose is to break down the aggregates formed by the paranoid social-machines, to let loose all the flows, to analyze the analyst. It aims at the psychoanalyst in order to cleanse the house from floor to ceiling. It seeks to purge society of the walls and codes, to rid desire of the economic dependence which has thwarted its development, and to free libidinal investments of desire from the symbolic world of castration which has held them captive. The process entails the creation of manifold new schisms and countless connections of desiring-machines. It is revolutionary in the sense that the new will bear no relation to the old. There will be no exploitation, simply because there will be nothing left to exploit.

The schizorevolutionary does not fear repression. To him it is an ineffectual trick, an historical oddity. The chaos created by the capitalist-machine gives birth to the schizorevolution and allows it to attain freedom from repressive norms. At home, in school, on the street, and among the global power-brokers, the repressive-machine

¹¹ This idea may be the most frightening to the paranoid social-machine whose very existence is called into question when its manipulating engineer is not replaced by another.

grows less and less effective. There may be an escalation in units of group and individual repression, but this is not to be feared. Rather, it is a reaction to be expected, and for which one must be prepared. The schizorevolution it seeks to prevent will not be pleasant. It will require an extraordinary effort of will, exercised in a most brutal fashion, to kill Oedipus and its progeny, and to topple the structures we have been seduced into believing are indispensable to our continued existence. The function will be a continuous process of decoding and deterritorializing, the result an unprecedented overthrow of the regime of terror that has imbued our selves with sickness. The process will continue, as a cooperative sharing of non-Oedipalized values, to build the new desiring-structures.

Anti-Oedipus has a serious message for lawyers and laymen alike. It is Macro-Corrections of the first order, in the form of bold new principles of social behavior and political action, designed to be tested, experimented with, and pushed to the limit. It comes at a time when old solutions are being resurrected feebly to settle even older problems: Crime, family disorder, and juvenile listlessness are again the popular topics of public comment.

Deleuze and Guattari's refreshing criticism of some of the most "established" social, psychological, and economic theories has already surfaced as an underlying theme in much of the recent art, literature, and social commentary as well as in the anti-psychiatric movement of continental Europe. With the second printing of the Viking English translation, we are fortunate to have this prescient guide to help us participate in our changing social world.

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