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## ABSTRACT

In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* unleashed an extended polemical attack on the foundations of Marxist and psychoanalytic orthodoxy. While the primary target of the book was Sigmund Freud, the innovative theories of Jacques Lacan did not emerge unscathed. Because of the brevity of their critique, many have interpreted Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to Lacan as one of antagonism and rejection. This, however, obscures many important connections that they maintained with Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari insisted that they were actually extending Lacan's theories to their necessary conclusions. Through an analysis of *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to core Lacanian theories, I investigate how Deleuze and Guattari transform Lacan, both faithfully and unfaithfully, to give support to their utopian project.

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Luke\\_Caldwell\\_Schizophrenizing\\_Lacan.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Luke_Caldwell_Schizophrenizing_Lacan.pdf)

# Schizophrenizing Lacan

Deleuze, [Guattari], and *Anti-Oedipus*

By Luke Caldwell

University of Washington, Seattle

In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*<sup>1</sup> exploded like a bombshell on the French intellectual scene. Unleashing an extended polemical attack upon the foundational elements of orthodox psychoanalysis and Marxism, it quickly became a bestseller. While the primary target of the book was Freud, the innovative theories of Jacques Lacan did not emerge unscathed. Because of the brevity of their critique, many have interpreted Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to Lacan as one of antagonism and rejection. This, however, obscures many important connections that they maintained with Lacan and their insistence that they were actually extending Lacan's theories to their necessary conclusions. Through an analysis of *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to core Lacanian theories, this paper will investigate how Deleuze and Guattari transform Lacan, both faithfully and unfaithfully, to give support to their utopian project.

In a style that Deleuze and Guattari would affirm, we will not start in the 70's—in history—but rather with more contemporary events to elucidate the stakes motivating this inquiry. In the Fall 2004 edition of the journal *Criticism*, a debate unfolded about the relationship between Deleuze and Lacan.<sup>2</sup> Centering around two reviews of neoLacanian Slavoj Žižek's subversive study of Deleuze, *Organs without bodies*,<sup>3</sup> and a response by the author, the short debate ironically revolved around a largely absent signifier—one might even say a phallus-like “organ without a body”—that established or dissolved the connections between the Deleuzian and Lacanian projects. That bracketed term was [Guattari], the man who tore Deleuze from a “good” Lacanian trajectory, or the man who helped him realize it. In *Organs without bodies*, Žižek polemically took up the former position, saying that Deleuze was infected by his collaborations with Guattari—“guattarized” in Žižek's terms—and that Deleuze only turned to him for help because he had reached a philosophical impasse and was looking for an “easy

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel W. Smith, "The Inverse Side of the Structure: Žižek on Deleuze on Lacan," *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 635-650; Eleanor Kaufman, "Betraying Well," *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 651-659; Slavoj Žižek, "Notes on a Debate 'From Within the People'," *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 661-666.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without bodies: Deleuze and consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

escape”.<sup>4</sup> Žižek reads in Deleuze’s corpus two different ontologies, one engaged with in his solo work and the other in his collaborations with Guattari. The first—the proper Lacanian position—presents the event as an *effect* of primordial causes, or rather, as the “irruption of the [Lacanian] Real within the domain of causality”.<sup>5</sup> The second—the philosophically contaminated position—affirms the event as a continuous, virtual process of *production* that creates the discontinuous structures of the actual.<sup>6</sup> Žižek sees Deleuze struggling between these two positions in his last book prior to meeting Guattari, *The logic of sense*,<sup>7</sup> but the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* marks a decisive turn away from the former position in favor of the latter—a turn that Žižek sees as largely precipitated by Guattari’s radical politics. *Anti-Oedipus*, in Žižek’s eyes, therefore marks a critical turn away from Lacan and is worthy of being dismissed as “arguably Deleuze’s worse book”.<sup>8</sup>

Smith, in his review of Žižek, challenges this perspective, calling into question whether Deleuze’s move toward Guattari and *Anti-Oedipus* was really a rejection of Lacan. Citing an interview Deleuze gave shortly before his death, Smith argues that Lacan actually saw the transgressions of *Anti-Oedipus* as a continuation of his work. In the interview, Deleuze recounts being summoned by Lacan a few months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*. In their meeting, Lacan denounced all of his disciples (with the exception of one), calling them “all worthless” and then told Deleuze, “What I need is someone like you”.<sup>9</sup> Lacan biographer Elisabeth Roudinesco recounts the same story, but complexifies the issue, claiming that at the same time Lacan was praising Deleuze, he was also “grumbling about him to Maria Antonietta Macciocchi: [Lacan] was convinced *Anti-Oedipus* was based on his seminars, which already, according to him, contained the idea of a ‘desiring machine’”.<sup>10</sup> From these stories, we can see that Lacan himself saw a clear connection between his project and that of Deleuze and Guattari.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 638.

<sup>6</sup> Žižek, *Organs without bodies*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The logic of sense*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Žižek, *Organs without bodies*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Smith, 635-636.

<sup>10</sup> Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 348.

In several interviews after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari reiterated their belief that they saw themselves as remaining faithful to the Lacanian project and that they both “owed so much to Lacan”.<sup>11</sup> This however, did not stop them from transforming certain problematic notions that they saw as barriers to the development of a truly materialist psychiatry. As Deleuze put it,

I felt it would all work even better if one found the right concepts, instead of using notions that didn't even come from Lacan's creative side but from an orthodoxy built up round him. Lacan himself says “I'm not getting much help.” We thought we'd give him some schizophrenic help. And there's no question that we're all the more indebted to Lacan, once we've dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided, and which Lacan himself has always managed to turn on their head to bring out their limitations.<sup>12</sup>

While Deleuze is being a bit facetious—such a transformation of Lacan would seem to leave him rather amputated—this interview illustrates the complicated relationship that Deleuze and Guattari maintained with psychoanalysis generally. Even though *Anti-Oedipus* was a polemic attack on key psychoanalytic theories, it was more of an internal reversal than a rejection and it was their intention to move beyond psychoanalysis to what they call “schizoanalysis”. Deleuze and Guattari therefore maintain many key analytic concepts like the unconscious and repression, transforming them to give support to their revolutionary and utopian paradigm.<sup>13</sup>

To gain a sense of appreciation for the transformative potential of *Anti-Oedipus*, one must set aside Žižek's call for a rejection of Guattari in the name of saving Deleuze's Lacanianism and instead engage with the multiple becomings that were produced through the introduction of Guattari into the equation. Guattari was, after all, a trained and practicing psychoanalyst, one who had studied with Lacan for many years. And while Deleuze and Guattari's position toward Lacan ended up navigating a thin line between fidelity and betrayal, Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan all emerged from the project transformed.

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<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: a reader's guide*, Continuum reader's guides (London: Continuum, 2008), 65.

## Making Machines Desire: The Cure is Just a Little Schizophrenia

A bizarre book, *Anti-Oedipus*'s mode of argumentation is elliptical and, in many places, seems caught in a schizoid performance. The main positions that it advocates, however, are easy to pick out and there are several thematic elements that persist throughout. The central concepts it addresses and transforms are the psychoanalytic construction of unconscious desire, the role of the symbolic/culture in shaping subjectivity, and the Oedipus complex.

Deleuze and Guattari most directly address Lacan in their reformulation of desire as a form of productivity rather than a manifestation of lack—the core element of Žižek's critique. For Lacan, subjectivity is permeated by lack, and desire is directed toward regaining a completeness that is impossible to attain.<sup>14</sup> As the subject gradually emerges through the “mirror stage” (the Imaginary), the Oedipus complex (the Symbolic) and into culture, it is increasingly fragmented and divorced from the Real—the unformed abyss of primordial non-being. This is not to say that this subject is juxtaposed against a deeper, more authentic self, but rather the whole concept of an internal, personalized subjectivity is, for Lacan, wholly misleading. Everything that the self is or becomes is structured through the internalization of incomplete symbols and fragmented desires made present by the speech and actions of people surrounding the child, particularly the mother.<sup>15</sup> As Lacanian disciple Jacques-Alain Miller puts it, Lacan “took the unconscious not as a container, but rather as something ex-sistent—outside itself—that is connected to a subject who is a lack of being”.<sup>16</sup> Unconscious desire is caused by this “lack of being” in the Other/self and is directed toward attaining the absolute recognition of its impossible completion in the eyes of the (m)Other. Every articulation of this *need*, however, is fragmented by the *demand* to have it recognized, and the surplus desire that escapes the symbolic is endlessly deferred through chains of signifiers that constantly elude any determinate meaning.<sup>17</sup> Lacan's formulation for this was that “desire is the desire of the Other”<sup>18</sup> and he came to symbolize it as the “*objet petit a*”—“the object

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<sup>14</sup> Kaja Silverman, *The subject of semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 151-153.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-166.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, “An Introduction to Seminars I and II,” in *Reading seminars I and II: Lacan's return to Freud: seminar I, Freud's papers on technique, seminar II, The ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis*, SUNY series in psychoanalysis and culture, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Dylan Evans, *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 37-39.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The seminar book XI: four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis*, The International psychoanalytical library, no. 106 (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 235. Seminar taught in 1964.

which can never be attained, which is really the CAUSE of desire rather than that towards which desire tends".<sup>19</sup> As a force beyond both the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the "*objet petit a*" is the residual of the Real that resists completion.<sup>20</sup>

While Deleuze and Guattari support Lacan's decentering of the Cartesian subject, they find certain elements of this formulation of desire reactive from a Nietzschean perspective.<sup>21</sup> By defining desire in terms of lost objects, Lacan—and psychoanalysis generally—forces desire into "an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception".<sup>22</sup> Rather than remaining stuck within this pessimistic formulation, however, Deleuze and Guattari see Lacan's idea of the "object *a*" as a means through which to bring about a reversal of this situation, making desire an instrument of liberation rather than *ressentiment*.<sup>23</sup> In a note in *Anti-Oedipus*, they claim,

Lacan's admirable theory of desire appears to us to have two poles: one related to "the object small *a*" as a desiring machine, which defines desire in terms of a real production, thus going beyond both any idea of need and any idea of fantasy; and the other related to the "great Other" as a signifier, which reintroduces a certain notion of lack.<sup>24</sup>

In the opening chapters of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari radicalize the former and raise it to an ontological principle and, in so doing, overturn the latter.

Doing away with the Lacan's language of the "subject" and collapsing his ontology of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real, Deleuze and Guattari argue that everything is Real and that everything is a machine.<sup>25</sup> Liberating the "*objet petit a*" from its subordination to lack, they transform Lacan's concept into a primordial source of energy that transforms and is transformed through the ways it is organized. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this energy as a *hylè*—a pure continuous

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<sup>19</sup> Evans, 128.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian subject: between language and jouissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 90-91.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1989.), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> For the preliminary development of this position, see Félix Guattari and Stéphane Nadaud, *The anti-Oedipus papers*, Semiotext(e) foreign agents series (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 128-132, 152-157. A good discussion of this position is also available in Félix Guattari, Sylvère Lotringer, and François Dosse, *Chaosophy: texts and interviews 1972-1977* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 75-84.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

flux or material flow—and define a machine as a “*system of interruptions or breaks*” in this flow.<sup>26</sup> In the opening lines of *Anti-Oedipus*, they claim,

Everywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ machine is plugged into an energy source machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts.<sup>27</sup>

Through the connection of one machine to another, desire produces reality. This should not, however, lead one to believe that they fall into a naïve realism of concrete identities. Rather, because all machines consist of other machines, which consist of other machines...*ad infinitum*, there is never any whole that actually unifies an object in a complete way. Identities are only “produced as a residuum alongside the machine, as an appendix, or as a spare part adjacent to the machine” and subjects are, following Lacan, “not at the center...but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states” that they pass through.<sup>28</sup>

This internal reversal and radicalization of Lacan’s theory of desire forms one of the core critiques that much of the rest of *Anti-Oedipus* follows from. If reality emerges from historically contingent formations of desire, the Imaginary and Symbolic are therefore not dimensions that obscure desire but are rather secondary manifestations of it.<sup>29</sup> This allows Deleuze and Guattari to collapse the difference between the libidinal economy and the political economy—the latter being merely a more complex machine that emerges from the former and feeds back to shape flows of desire in specific ways.<sup>30</sup> While organization is imperative for the productive capacity of desire to function—unbound energy falls back on “the body without organs” and becomes unproductive and “sterile”—codification that is too rigid likewise prevents desire from proliferating: “the body suffers...from not having *some other sort of organization*...Desiring-machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down”.<sup>31</sup> This

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 345: “Libidinal economy is no less objective than political economy, and the political no less subjective than the libidinal, even though the two correspond to two modes of different investments of the same reality as social reality.” See also Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: introduction to schizoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24.

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8, emphasis added.

movement between disorganization and organization—or, as Deleuze and Guattari call it deterritorialization and reterritorialization—is what is referred to as desiring-production.<sup>32</sup>

As a model for this connective/disjunctive process of continual transformation, Deleuze and Guattari turn the schizophrenic against the stability of the psyche and develop a form of schizoanalysis to revolutionize psychoanalysis. While Freudian analysis aims to treat the psychotic by helping them acknowledge and control their unconscious desires in the name of securing stable subjectivity, schizoanalysis aims to free the process of desiring-production from social constraints. To this end, Deleuze and Guattari celebrate the *process* of schizophrenia as a force that breaks through the rigid codifications of the social field and resists being trapped in any singular identity. Rather than helping people, they see psychoanalysis an extension of the repressive society that introduces lack into desire, thereby restraining it in subordination to an abstracted complete object:

Lack is created, planned, and organized in and through social production... 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... There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word *I*, and that we must restore his ability to pronounce this hallowed word. All of which the schizo sums up by saying: they're fucking me over again.<sup>33</sup>

One of the strongest ways that psychoanalysis fulfills this function is by forcing the schizo into the Oedipus complex. In order to escape the trap of Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari historicize psychoanalysis to expose it as an ideology that is anachronistic and repressive. Looking historically at how different modes of social organization (“social machines”) codify desire in specific ways, Deleuze and Guattari examine what they call the “savage territorial machine”, the “barbarian despotic machine” and the “civilized capitalist machine”.<sup>34</sup> The territorial machine, they claim, rigidly codifies desire, but distributes power equally throughout the population. The despotic machine, on the other hand, is a regime of overcoding, where society is hierarchically constructed in subordination to a transcendental signifier. Under the “name-of-the-despot”, patriarchal

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<sup>32</sup> Adrian Parr, *The Deleuze dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 65-69.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 28, 26, 23.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-262.



domination is replicated at every level of social organization, especially in the family. The capitalist machine, in opposition to the others, is built upon a regime of decoding, where material flows of production and consumption are constantly transforming.<sup>35</sup> While Deleuze and Guattari see the decoding power of capital as a force capable of liberating the creativity of the schizophrenic process, it is also coupled with a force of recoding that aims to maintain the stratification of society and consolidation of power. The liberatory power of decoding therefore functions as a mode of repression, allowing people in power to convert labor into surplus value more effectively.<sup>36</sup>

One of the ways that capitalism desperately avoids dissolving the power differential that maintains social hierarchies is by fortifying the patriarchal family. While the deterritorializing power of capitalism is so strong that even the organization of the family is not safe from its grips, psychoanalysis, wielding the Oedipus complex, serves as an important vector through which desire that escapes the family is suppressed.<sup>37</sup> Rather than describing a certain repressed state of affairs, the Oedipus complex really functions as a deterritorializing force that frees desire only to reinscribe it again as lack within the strict limits of the family. As a throwback to the despotic machine, the psychoanalyst pushes the analysand to renounce their schizophrenic desire and internalize the totalitarian signifier of the father and his law.<sup>38</sup> Instead of placing blame on the vested powers that maintain the conditions that repress desire, psychoanalysis secures these repressive conditions by “socializing” those that harbor the capacity to break free from their chains. The ideological misconception of psychoanalysis resides in its failure to recognize that *Oedipus—not the father—is the agent of castration and that the cure is really the disease*; as Deleuze and Guattari write, “castration as an analyzable state...is the *effect* of castration as a psychoanalytic act”.<sup>39</sup>

While this critique directly implicates Freudian analysis as a form of ideology, Deleuze and Guattari believed that Lacan was actually heading in this direction and, in fact, paved the way for the destruction of Oedipus. By making the Oedipal structure symbolic, yet organizing this structure around the absent

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<sup>35</sup> Eugene W. Holland, “Schizoanalysis: the postmodern contextualization of psychoanalysis”, *Deleuze and Guattari critical assessments of leading philosophers. Volume 2, Guattari*, ed. Gary Genosko (London: Routledge, 2001), 761-762.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 762-763.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 765.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 51-55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

signifier of the phallus, Lacan showed that “Oedipus is imaginary, nothing but an image, a myth” and that “these images are produced by an oedipalizing structure” (capitalism) that “reproduces the element of castration”.<sup>40</sup> Lacan’s work therefore illuminated how the whole Oedipal house of cards was founded upon a “despotic Great Signifier acting as an archaism” and led psychoanalysis “to the point of its self-critique”.<sup>41</sup> This allowed *Anti-Oedipus* to tip the scales and reveal the “reverse side” of representation and structure “as a positive principle of nonconsistency that dissolves it”.<sup>42</sup>

With the house blown down and a new world constructed, we find not Oedipus but the schizophrenic at the root of our desire, and see the unconscious not as a theater but as a factory mobilized toward continual transformation and social revolution. Rather than rejecting the insights of Lacan, as Žižek claims, Deleuze and Guattari radicalize him in an effort to overturn the ideological apparatus of capitalism and liberate desire from reactivity. Whether their project is successful remains dependent not upon abstract principles of ontology but rather in the ways that people can use it. As Guattari says, “We’re strict functionalists: what we’re interested in is how something works”.<sup>43</sup> What we find in *Anti-Oedipus* is an example and an inspiration for how revolution could work if we move outside ourselves and embrace the creative and subversive potential of the desire coursing in and through the world of which we are a part. Let’s give it a try, incipit schizophrenia!

Luke Caldwell is senior at the University of Washington, studying the Comparative History of Ideas, History, and Human Rights. Caldwell was named as a 2009 Beinecke Scholar.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 310. In his *Écrits*, Lacan writes, “the Oedipal show cannot run indefinitely in forms of society that are losing the sense of tragedy to an ever greater extent”, Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 668. See also Guattari’s commentary on this and other similar passages in *The anti-Oedipus papers*, 123-127.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 310.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>43</sup> Guattari in Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 21.