

"A Problem of Pure Matter': Deleuze and Guattari's Treatment of Fascist Nihilism in *A Thousand Plateaus*," in *Nihilism Now!: "Monsters of Energy"*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Diane Morgan. Macmillan, 2000: 167-188.

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## Introduction: Constructing the Concept of Fascist Nihilism

Were the Nazis nihilists? Did they devalue this world in favor of a higher world? Had they lost their belief in a higher world? Did they prefer to fade away in passivity rather than live?

As the presumed negative answers to these questions show, nihilism--at least the kind of nihilism which Nietzsche diagnosed and which Deleuze explicates in Nietzsche and Philosophy--does not seem to characterize National Socialism. Thus it is somewhat surprising that the only occurrence of the term "nihilism" in Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is in a discussion of Nazism, at the conclusion of the 1933 plateau ("Micropolitics and Segmentarity") of *A Thousand Plateaus*: "There is in fascism a realized nihilism" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 230).

What justifies this strange usage of "nihilism" by D/G to characterize fascism? Is it just a rhetorical flourish, a moralizing deprecation? Does calling it a nihilism add to the understanding of historical fascism, and to the struggle against new fascism(s)? To answer these questions--to evaluate its usefulness in this last, most important area--this paper follows the rhizome in ATP of fascism and nihilism. In keeping with D/G's characterization of their work, let us put it in practical terms: how should one construct the concept of fascist nihilism in ATP? I propose four steps; only the last two will be dealt with in the body of the paper.

First, distinguish it from the treatment of fascism in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). □ Perhaps we owe the impression that AO is about fascism to Foucault's preface to the English translation, in which he calls AO "An Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life" (xiii). But in fact historical fascism--as Foucault acknowledges--is explicitly addressed in AO relatively infrequently: a few comments on Hitler getting the masses sexually aroused, a note that the fascist state is the most fantastic re-territorialization of capitalism is about it. In other words, in AO fascism is largely addressed only architectonically, as a pole of desire, an answer to the puzzling question, how does desire come to desire its own repression? Architectonically, fascism is on the side of paranoia and reterritorialization, the counter pole to schizophrenia and deterritorialization. In AO, then, fascism is paranoia, freezing, the body without organs as catatonia. In ATP, however, fascism is distinguished from totalitarianism, which is "quintessentially conservative" (230). In ATP, fascism is too fast rather than too slow: it is cancer, a runaway war machine. Recognizing these dangers brings out the "caution" of ATP. In AO the task of schizoanalysis is: "destroy, destroy" (311). In ATP we read: "Staying stratified--organized, signified, subjected-- is not the worst that can happen" (161). □

Second, distinguish nihilism in ATP and NP. Nihilism is discussed extensively in the final section of the Nietzsche book, "Against the Dialectic," but there the context is will, values, life. The key is man and the question of man, while nihilism is the motor of European history. None of these concerns (with the possible exception of "life"□) carry over to ATP, whose slogan is "geography, not history": drawing a map of lines, not tracing a decline or conversion. This is not to say, however, that the "same" nihilism diagnosed by Nietzsche--let's call it "lunar" nihilism, the giving over of life to a resigned, reflective freezing--is not also diagnosed in a different framework by ATP, as the "empty body without organs."

Third, follow the rhizome nihilism-fascism in ATP through its two main nodes: 1) as cancerous BwO of the strata (plateau 6: "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs"); 2) as danger of the line of flight (plateau 9: "Micropolitics and Segmentarity"); and the appropriate sub-nodes: 3) the theory of sedimentation (plateau 3: "The Geology of Morals: Who Does the Earth Think It Is?"); and 4) the relations of war-machine and State (plateaus 12: "Treatise on Nomadology--The War Machine" and 13: "Apparatus of Capture").

Fourth, make sure fascist nihilism is discussed as a problem of "pure matter" (165) rather than cultural history or psychology. As we have insisted, the term "nihilism" cannot have its Nietzschean context of man, will, and values, nor can fascism be discussed as an ideology ("a most execrable concept" [68]). The key in giving a positive account of fascist nihilism rather than resting content with such negative distinctions lies in the articulation of the work of D/G with so-called complexity theory, as in the work of Manuel DeLanda (1991; 1992; 1997) and Brian Massumi (1992). On their readings, ATP provides materialist diagrams for the construction and evaluation of bodies via matter-energy flow (the body without organs) and self-organizing processes (abstract machines). Fascism thus cannot be a "psychological category," (Holland 1987, 26) nor does ATP contain a "metaphysics of difference" (May 1997, 175) or of "forces" (May 1994, 68)--if anything, it is a physics.

With these prescriptions in mind, the paper will follow the following course: first, a discussion of the fascist body without organs; second, the danger of the fascist line of flight; third, a discussion of the complexity theory background to the materialism of ATP; fourth, a concluding section considering ATP's contribution to an understanding of fascist "nihilism now."

### The Fascist BwO

A difficult question: "How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?" First, you must recognize the practical nature of the question: the BwO is an object of practice; it is produced, starting from the organism. Second, you must notice that the question is badly phrased, a holdover of AO terminology that will be corrected in ATP: it should read, "How Do You Make Yourself a Body That Is Not an Organism?"

Let us begin by distinguishing body, organs, organism, a BwO and the BwO.

1) A body is any economic system considered as a mechanism of appropriation and regulation, a region of matter-energy flow that has a relative consistency even as it is plugged into a network of other flows, slowing some down, speeding others up. A body is a flow regulator. In NP, Deleuze used the Nietzschean language of "dominant and

dominated forces," to explain that "[e]very relationship of forces constitutes a body-- whether it is chemical, biological, social, or political" (Deleuze 1983, 40). In ATP, D/G maintain the wide range of application of the term "body," but add the word "stratum" to designate an economic exchange between similarly constituted bodies with regard to adjacent levels of dominated or dominating bodies. ATP also introduces the language of "content" (formed matters) and "expression" (functional structures) to explain body constitution and/or stratification (43).

2) Organs are machines, that is, flow/break couplings in which a matter-energy flow is interrupted and part siphoned off to flow in the economy of the body. Organs are a body's way of negotiating with the outside, appropriating and regulating a bit of matter-energy flow. In psychoanalytic terms, organs are "partial objects" not [yet] connected to a person, mere points of intensity of matter-energy, a place of activity less intense than the surrounding outside but more intense than the body's other organs (with regard to its particular flow, that is). In AO, D/G call organs "desiring machines"; in ATP, they are called "machinic assemblages."

3) An organism is a particular organization of organs, one that is centralized and hierarchical, appropriating the matter-energy of the organs and funnelling a surplus portion of them to the benefit of a transcendence, a superior body or stratum that has appropriated the organism as a substratum, as labor, as content for its expression. The organism is a stratum on the BwO, "a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labor from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences" (159). An organism is a capture and siphon machine, a particular way of regulating flows: "that which life sets against itself in order to limit itself" (503).

4) A BwO is a destratified body. It is an object of construction, a practice; it is "what remains after you take everything away" (151). It is not reached by regression, for a BwO is not the infantile body of our past, but the virtual realm of potentials for different body organization precluded by current organismic organization. Thus it is reached by a systematic practice of disturbing the current organismic organization: "the BwO is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism" (158). By disturbing the organism, the level of purely distributed, rather than centralized, organs can be reached, sitting upon the matter-energy flow itself. In other words, a BwO is purely immanently arranged production; matter-energy flowing without regard to externally-imposed foci that drain off surpluses to a point outside the body. As an object of practice reached starting from the organism, BwO is two-sided: "it swings between two poles, the surfaces of stratification into which it is recoiled, on which it submits to the judgment, and the plane of consistency in which it unfurls and opens to experimentation" (159). This two-sidedness is not peaceful; rather we find "a perpetual and violent combat between the plane of consistency, which frees the BwO, cutting across and dismantling all the strata, and the surfaces of stratification that block it or make it recoil" (159).

5) The BwO is the "plane of consistency," the economy of economies, the matter-energy flow of the terrestrial/cosmic system: it is "the Earth." Thus the BwO is "that glacial reality where the alluvions, sedimentations, coagulations, foldings and recoilings that compose an organism--and also a signification and a subject--occur" (159).

The relation of a BwO and the BwO is explored in ATP in a Spinozist manner: "After all, is not Spinoza's Ethics the great book of the BwO?" (153). The crucial problem

of D/G's corporeal politics is distinguishing or selecting between types of BwO, which, as we will see, are not all positive or progressive achievements. The "plane of consistency" is D/G's term for an immanent social arrangement of BwOs, but not all BwOs qualify for inclusion; the plane of consistency must be constructed as a selection between types of BwOs; in particular, the fascist BwO must be deselected.

Negatively put then, a BwO is "the limit of a given process of destratification" (DeLanda 1997, 261), the point at which a particular organization of organs called an organism no longer holds and matter-energy flows are arranged immanently without reference to a transcendence profiting from the siphoning action of the organism. Positively, a BwO is the matter-energy flow itself subtending a body, and also its "phase space," its virtual field, the pool of potentials for organization of that body: organismic organization, and other types of organizations as well (Massumi 1992, 70). The latter sense of the BwO as virtuality is why the BwO is not regressive, but is there besides the organism, waiting to be reached.

Now we must distinguish three types of BwO: full, empty, cancerous. Only the full body is productive. To avoid the others, caution is necessary, for the construction of a BwO is dangerous. The strata must be partially maintained: the body that is not an organism must still be a body, must still have a relative consistency, a difference in intensity of matter-energy flow from the surroundings. Otherwise, we would have pure death, entropy, no energy differences.

The three types of BwOs:

1) A full BwO is reached by careful experimental destratification, which causes waves of intense matter-energy to flow in immanence. When linked with other selected full BwOs, the plane of consistency is constructed, that is, a collectivity of freely self-organizing bodies, continually producing their own connections. This full BwO is the BwO as "egg" (164) or as field of "desire" (165). In a full BwO one finds "a distribution of intensive principles of organs, with their positive indefinite articles, within a collectivity or multiplicity, inside an assemblage, and according to machinic connections operating on a BwO" (165). As we can see from D/G's insistence on collectivity, multiplicity, and assemblage, the full BwO is never a solitary achievement but always a communal project, a political event. To select only full BwOs for the plane of consistency is "the test of desire" (165).

2) An empty BwO is reached by too sudden destratification, which empties bodies of its organs. Examples include the hypochondriac body, the paranoid body, the schizo-catatonic body, the drugged body, the masochist body: "a dreary parade of sucked-dry, catatonized, vitrified, sewn-up bodies ... Emptied bodies instead of full ones" (150). These bodies do not connect with others, for they have no energy flowing; no plane of consistency is possible between these mortified bodies. As points of zero intensity, they are instances of lunar nihilism.

3) The cancerous BwO is the strangest and most dangerous BwO. It is a BwO that belongs to the organism that resides on a stratum, rather than being the limit of a stratum. It is runaway self-duplication of stratification. Such a cancer can occur even in social formations, not just in the strata named organism, signifiante, subjectification (163). The key to tracking down fascism lies here, in the cancerous BwO, which forms under conditions of runaway stratification, or more precisely, runaway sedimentation, the first "pincer" of a stratum: "all a stratum needs is a high sedimentation rate for it to lose its

configuration and articulations, and to form its own specific kind of tumor, within itself or in a given formation or apparatus. The strata spawn their own BwOs, totalitarian and fascist BwOs, terrifying caricatures of the plane of consistency" (163). The cancerous BwO breaks down the stratum on which it lodges by endlessly repeating the selection of homogenized individuals in a runaway process of "conformity." Social cloning. Assembly-line personalities.

To follow the rhizome here, we need to extract a few simplified concepts from the exceedingly complex "Geology of Morals" plateau, where Professor Challenger tells us about double articulation: sedimentation/folding or content/expression, each of which has both substance and form. A substance is a "formed matter," and refers to territorialities or spatial bindings; a form, on the other hand, implies a "code," or temporal ordering. Content is also "formed matter," matter selected (territorialized) and formed (coded), while expression is a "functional structure" that utilizes this content to produce a new entity by an "overcoding," resulting in "phenomena of centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization" (41).

Content/expression or territorialization/coding/overcoding is the abstract machine of stratification, operant in any register from geological to social as the way to appropriate matter-energy flows from the Earth and build a layer that regulates the flow. The machine has four components in two articulations. The first articulation is sedimentation, which determines a) a substance of content, that is, the selection of homogenous materials from a subordinate flow, and b) a form of content, that is the deposition of these materials into layers. The second articulation is "folding," in which there is c) a form of expression, that is, the creation of new linkages, and d) a substance of expression, the creation of new entities with emergent properties.

The cancerous BwO occurs with too much sedimentation, that is, too much content or coding and territorializing, with insufficient overcoding. The result is a cancer of the stratum, a proliferation of points of capture, a proliferation of micro-black holes. Thousands of individuals, complete unto themselves. Legislators and subjects all in one. Judge, jury, and executioner--and policeman, private eye, home video operator, Neighborhood Watch organizer.... Watching over themselves as much as over others in runaway conscience-formation. D/G call this situation "micro-fascism." To follow this path, move to Plateau 9, "Micropolitics and Segmentarity," where we will also encounter a phenomenon we neglected in our brief extract from the "Geology of Morals," namely, the line of flight, or the deterritorializing and decoding of flows.

### The Fascist Line of Flight

The danger of fascism is that a line of flight, the source of creativity that moves us away from territory and code (from home and habit), and from resonance and overcoding (from bureaucracy and State), can become a "passion for abolition," "suicide ... presented not as a punishment but as the crowning glory of the death of others" (231). D/G explore this danger in Plateau 9, dated 1933: "Micropolitics and Segmentarity."

The basic notion beginning Plateau 9 is "segmentarity," the divisibility and internal borders inherent to all strata. D/G isolate three types: binary, circular, and linear. Segmentarity tends to be supple--heterogeneous, local, flexible--in "primitive" societies, and rigid in State societies. Now these types of segmentarity, which are also roughly

interchangeable with molecular (supple) and molar (rigid), are, while de jure separable, de facto interwoven.

The implications of these distinctions are developed later in the plateau. At 217, D/G use a new term for molecular composition, "quantum flow," which they distinguish from the molar segmented line. Between two they locate a "power center," which effects translations between the quantum flow and the segmented line. As always the conceptual distinction finds a real interweaving, as flow and quanta "can be grasped only by virtue of indexes on segmented line, but conversely, that line and those indexes exist only by virtue of the flow suffusing them" (218). A further twist comes when D/G discuss flow and line in terms of coding, decoding, overcoding. The mutant flow is the process of escaping a coding process, while quanta are "signs or degrees of deterritorialization in decoded flow" (219). If we recall the abstract machine of stratification at this point, a mutant flow is a flow that escapes the sorting (territorializing or substance of content) and layering (coding or form of content) processes of the first articulation (sedimentation or the production of a formed matter.) The rigid line corresponds to the other pincer of stratification (expression, the construction of a functional structure); the rigid line is an "overcoding that substitutes itself for the faltering codes," while its segments "are like reterritorializations on the overcoding or overcoded line" (219).

This reworking of line and flow in terms of coding, decoding, and overcoding leads to a distinction between connection and conjugation of flows. A "connection" of flows indicates the self-catalyzing of a set of decoded and deterritorialized flows, which "boost one another, accelerate their shared escape, and augment or stoke their quanta" (220). A connection is a mutiny, a prison break, a bank panic: the more that join the flight, the faster it goes. "Conjugation," on the other hand, relates to the same mutant flows, but from the point of view of their recapture and overcoding; it "indicates their relative stoppage, like a point of accumulation that plugs or seals the lines of flight, performs a general reterritorialization, and brings the flows under the dominance of single flow capable of overcoding them" (220). A conjugation is the rounding up and returning to prison of the escapees, or better, the formation of a new State among them: the King Rat effect. Indeed, it is always, D/G assert, the most deterritorialized flow that brings about conjunction and reterritorialization, as was the case, they claim, with the European bourgeoisie during the capitalist takeoff (220-21).

D/G soon proclaim the possibility of drawing a map of three lines (222). The first line is the supple line of interlaced codes and territories characteristic of primitive segmentarity. This line corresponds to the first articulation of social stratification, which is coupled to the second line, the rigid line of the State apparatus which overcodes and reterritorializes. The third line is the line of flight of decoding and deterritorialization effectuated by a "war machine" (222). To insist on the map nature of this discussion ("geography, not history"), D/G recall that "primitive" societies are not temporally first. Rather, coding, overcoding and decoding are coexistent functions of any existing society; they insist "there is a space in which the three kinds of closely intermingled lines coexist: tribes, empires, and war machines" (222). The "task of the historian" (or schizoanalyst, or rhizomatic analyst, or pragmatics analyst ...) is the consideration of the relative speeds and strengths of these functions; it is to "designate the 'period' of coexistence or simultaneity" of the three functions (221). To drive home the point, D/G provide a simplified description of a historical example of the coexistence of tribes, empires, war

machines in the interchanges between migrants, Rome, Huns. But coexistence is not all: the lines transform themselves, as in the case of the Vandals, the only tribe to cross the Mediterranean, only there to produce "the most startling reterritorialization: an empire in Africa" (223).

Given such coexistence and transformation of the lines, D/G finally say that "it would be better to talk about simultaneous states of the Abstract Machine" (223), which they designate as 1) abstract machine of overcoding that produces a rigid segmentarity and is effectuated by State apparatus, which is a reterritorializing assemblage; 2) an abstract machine of mutation, which operates by decoding and deterritorialization, creating lines of flight and erects war machines on its lines (to inhibit State formation); 3) the realm of molecular negotiation between molar lines and lines of flight (223-4).

The fourth element on the map, in addition to the three lines, is the power center, the analysis of which illustrates the entanglement of lines. A power center is a point of negotiation between the quantum flow and the rigid segmented line, a place of conversion and translation of flow into segmented line. First, power centers involve rigid segments, whose resonance in the State does not destroy segmentarity; on the contrary, "centralization is always hierarchical, but hierarchy is always segmentary" (224) This is the power center's "zone of power." Next, power centers are not just molar, but also function in the molecular field, the micrological fabric of society where Foucault's disciplines operate. This field is a "zone of indiscernability," at once molar and molecular (225). Third, the limit of power centers, their zone of impotence, is their act of conversion itself. Since power centers only translate and do not govern the flow, they are defined by their impotence, by what escapes them. But their relative impotence is also their relative effectiveness: power centers govern the assemblages that effectuates the abstract machine of overcoding, of chasing down the mutant flows.

The example of the flow of money helps concretize the discussion. The zone of power, the setting up of segments, is the concern of the central banks, the conversion of credit flow into payment money by the setting of interest rates, etc. This is the realm of the State apparatus, the "abstract machine of molar overcoding" (227). The zone of indiscernability is the micrological texture of money, the series of private relations between banks and borrowers. This is the realm of "the molecular fabric immersing the State assemblage" (227). The zone of impotence is the "desiring flow of money, whose quanta are defined by the mass of economic transactions" (226-27). This flow of panic, fad, fashion, is the function of the "abstract machine of mutation, flows and quanta" (227).

The simultaneity and interweaving of the elements of the map, the states of the abstract machine, lead D/G to state that "everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics" (213). As one of their typically loose diagrams illustrates, "the segmented line (macropolitics) is immersed in and prolonged by quantum flows (micropolitics) that continually reshuffle and stir up its segments" (218). But this de facto interweaving means that one cannot simply privilege suppleness or molecularity as ready-made universal principles of the good; everything for D/G is a matter of practice, of experimentation and ex post facto evaluation. The first, "axiological" error of the "four errors" to be avoided concerning molecularity and suppleness make this "pragmatism" of D/G clear: don't believe that "a little suppleness is enough to make things 'better'" (215). Indeed, concerning the molar line and the molecular flow, we must remember not only their coexistence ("the flow continues beneath the line, forever mutant,

while the line totalizes" [221]) and their interdependence ("politics and its judgments are always molar, but it is the molecular and its assessment that makes it or breaks it" [222]), but most importantly, the amorality of the distinction ("there are just as much relations of force, and just as much violence, on one side as the other" [221]).

With these warnings against an a priori privilege of the molecular and supple, D/G come to distinguish molecular fascism from molar totalitarianism. They name points for historical investigation of molecular or microfascism as "molecular focuses in interaction ... rural fascism and city or neighborhood fascism, youth fascism and war veteran's fascism, fascism of the Left and of the Right, fascism of the couple, family, school, and office" (214). Such microfascisms spread throughout a social fabric prior to the centralizing resonance that create the molar State apparatus. D/G describe micro-fascism as a proliferation of tiny centers of command; each body is a "micro-black hole that stands on its own and communicates with the others" (228). Such communication between "a thousand little monomanias, self-evident truths, and clarities" creates a sort of static, which inhibits State resonance by a kind of "rumble and buzz, blinding lights giving any and everybody the mission of self-appointed judge, dispenser of justice, policeman, neighborhood SS man" (228). This static of microfascism keeps it below the level of the State: a thousand independent and self-appointed policemen do not make a Gestapo, though they may be a necessary condition for one. Although D/G do not do so, we can call micro-fascism "molecular molarity": each unit is self-contained, oriented to unity, an individual (molar), but they interact in solely local manner, independently (molecular).

In a move that will shock those who read D/G as privileging certain terms, microfascism is defined as the state of a social fabric "when a war machine is installed in each hole, in every niche" (214; italics in original). A brief trip to Plateau 12, the "Treatise on Nomadology" is needed here. A particular war machine is a form of social organization, a concrete social assemblage that preserves immanent self-organizing and wards off the transcendent ordering effectuated by the State. Thus "State" and "war-machine" are names of functions--overcoding and line of flight respectively--that are aspects of the abstract machine and are instantiated by concrete war machines and States. As aspects of the abstract machine they are co-existent; there have always been packs and States in interaction: the State tries to appropriate the war machine and turn it into an Army, while war machines form in the interstices between States.

Now we must remember that war machines are not unorganized; it is just that they are not organismically organized for the benefit of a despot: their leaders are ad hoc and challengeable, rather than reified and deified. War machines occupy and extend "smooth space," a form of spatial organization that is locally dense and flexible rather than homogenous and pre-demarcated, as in the gridded or striated space established by States. In smooth space, a law of distance disperses figures across a zone; in striated space, the space is demarcated prior to occupation, and figures are assigned to marked spots.

War machines are thus the key to creation, to mutation in an open future. They constantly throw off lines of flight that move systems off territorial bindings and away from coded behavior. Now all physical processes are self-organizing, but social formations can be transcendent (top-down), and give the illusion that physical production is transcendent too. In the terms of AO, this illusory totality arrogating credit for production to itself is the "socius": the earth, despot, or capital in the primitive, imperial or modern systems. A war-



machine is a way of organizing social production that prevents the formation of a socius. In concrete terms, this means the war machine wards off capture by State by occupying the smooth space of immanent relations.

As we have seen, the war machine is D/G's term for immanent social relations that instigate mutation and creativity and ward off State resonance. But here, to rejoin Plateau 9, the microfascist spread installs war machines everywhere, in each cell, so that there is only a "a molecular and supple segmentarity, flows capable of suffusing every cell," a "molecular or micropolitical power [puissance]" (214-5). Microfascism is the social fabric punctuated by thousands of war-machines, each dedicated to its own movement; paradoxically, the movement of the microfascist war-machines is not that of creating connections, but that of sealing off, of molarizing self and others. Understanding, recognizing, microfascism is of the greatest importance, for "only microfascism provides an answer to the global question: why does desire desire its own repression?" (215). Desire, the movement of connection and immanence, is repressed by microfascism; in its place arises the strange cancer of a thousand "cells" or self-contained units. Of course, for D/G, desire is never a given, a natural resource, a Romantic surge; desire is never an "undifferentiated instinctual energy," but is engineered from "complex assemblages." In this way, desire is a "supple segmentarity that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination" (215). Thus we must be on guard against "the fascist inside you" (215).

The important point of articulation between Plateaus 6 and 9 appears when microfascism is described as a "cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism" (215). But to be precise, the cancerous body of proliferating microfascism and the centralized body of the totalitarian organism are not the end of the story. The empty, suicidal BwO also has a fascist correlate, the perverted line of flight, the "fourth danger." D/G lay out the principles of a pragmatics or schizoanalytic analysis of the dangers of each of the four elements of the map: rigid molarity, supple molecularity, the power center, and the line of flight, at the end of the 1933 plateau (227-31). The four dangers draw their names, in a typical D/G monstrous marriage, from "Nietzsche's Zarathustra and Castenada's Indian Don Juan": Fear, Clarity, Power, Disgust (227).

In fear we cling to molar segmentation, to the rigid outlines of our binary, circular, and linear social position. We cling to our binary identities: man/woman, white/black, straight/gay; to our circular locations: to home, neighborhood, city, region, country; to our linear stations, acting our age. The recording of these molarities is the concern of the power centers, the State apparatuses whose zone of power overlooks those processes that issue us our birth, marriage and death certificates, that collect our taxes and study our demographics in the census. In fear, we cling, rigidly, to our individuality, to our selves.

But being supple rather than rigid is no guarantee of salvation, for the second danger, clarity, comes precisely from supple molecularity, in which we "invent all kinds of marginal reterritorializations even worse than the others" (228). This is the micrological fabric, the zone of indiscernability in which microfascisms breed. Here we find the static of molecular communication of individual black holes prior to resonance in the State, microfascism as the realm of the cancerous BwO, the breeding of tiny command posts.

The third danger is easily foreseen: Power (*pouvoir*), the stopping of the lines of flight by the totalitarian State. This is the closing off of the society, the search for "autarky," or national self-sufficiency, the withdrawal from global capitalism to ensure a national

destiny; this operation "is never an ideological operation, but rather an economic and political one" (223). This danger is the danger of the power centers themselves, rather than the segmented lines they produce and to which we cling in fear; power is the danger of macropolitics, of the great resonating black hole of the State which has appropriated a war-machine and tamed it into an Army.

The fourth danger is the greatest, however; it happens when, conversely, a war machine takes over a State and posits war and war alone as its object. This is the "great Disgust, the longing to kill and die, the Passion for abolition" (227). The fourth and greatest danger is the danger of the lines of flight themselves, which "emanate a strange despair, like an odor of death and immolation, a state of war from which one returns broken" (229). Here we find the war machine, the concrete machinic assemblage of mutation, social immanence, failing at mutation: "war is like the fall or failure of mutation" (230). Here we find the analogue of the suicidal, empty BwO in a fascist war machine that has mobilized an incipient microfascist social fabric to take over the State and has thereby found, suicidally, nothing but war as its object. Both suicides--the empty BwO and the fascist State--are nihilistic, both tend to zero, but on different trajectories: one direct and depressive, the other indirectly, after a manic ascension into a war frenzy.

Thus the D/G map of fascism shows how the fascist leader is faced with a "paradox" (230). The leader must mobilize the interaction of the micro-black holes, the multiple, self-encased war machines of microfascism, before they resonate in a State, but also before they settle into the "rumble and buzz" of mere grumbling. These dispersed war machines must be mobilized as a social war machine, but this tends to take off on a suicidal line of flight that captures a State of its own and posits war as its only object. Better still to put it in terms of the strengths and tendencies of concrete assemblages: Hitler had to construct and maintain the momentum of the Nazi war machine (let's say the SS) to overcome the reterritorializations of holdover aristocrats (the Wehrmacht officer corps) and the totalitarian resonance chamber of the State (the bureaucratic elements). Or more precisely still, the momentum of the line of flight had to overcome the other elements within the SS war machine itself so that it could overpower the other factors, themselves sites of struggle of the three aspects of the abstract Machine, and create a war machine stronger than the State. Only then, on the suicidal line of flight leading through war to State suicide--the indirect route to an empty BwO--is there a "realized nihilism" (230). Such fascist suicidal nihilism is qualitatively different from the freezing, reflective, depressive, "lunar" nihilism diagnosed by Nietzsche, which sinks relentlessly and entropically to zero; rather, fascist nihilism is a frantic, "solar" nihilism, which burns out to zero on a trajectory through an super-intensity of heat produced by its own manic motion, its fascinated pursuit of war.

## A Materialist Theory of Fascist Nihilism

The uniqueness and importance of Capitalism and Schizophrenia as a whole lies in its materialism. Anti-Oedipus opened the field of historical-libidinal materialism, a spectacular shattering of the easy Marx-Freud synthesis of the French left by the interjection of Nietzschean energetics; A Thousand Plateaus maintained this thrust, but changed much of the terminology of AO in the bold attempt to harness the materialist "new science" of the 1960s and 70s expressed by thinkers such as Simondon (1964) and Prigogine (1984).

In this third section I will show the materialist basis of ATP's two main treatments of fascism: the proliferation of microfascisms as the cancerous BwO, and the suicidal line of flight resulting from a war machine taking over State. D/G insist that politics, and of course, their "political science," is "a problem not of ideology but of pure matter" (165). What is then the materialism behind their accusation that in fascism there lies a "realized nihilism"?

The materialism invoked here is not the determinist bogey of 19th Century thought, but the materialism of "complexity theory," a materialism that is neither mechanistic nor determinist, but that recognizes both the emergent properties (contra the mechanist reduction of a system to its parts--e.g., the claim that "nouns are neurons") and unpredictability of complex systems. According to DeLanda's historical reconstruction (1991, 234n9), in the late 60s Deleuze began to formulate some of the philosophical significances of this "new science," the study of "open" matter/energy systems which move from simple to complex patterning and from complex to simple patterning. Although post-modern appropriations of science--to say nothing of critiques--have been the focus of much negative attention lately, due to the notorious Sokal hoax, there does seem to be good cause to take seriously the work of Deleuze and D/G.

To explain the new materialism of complexity theory, some elementary terminology is necessary. First, assume that there are three forms of physical systems: closed (determined), open (random or self-organizing). Closed systems have constant matter and energy. They were models for classical modern physics, nature posited as a determinate system, as figured in the story of Laplace's demon, whereby knowledge of the initial conditions and basic laws of a system would yield knowledge of all possible ("past" or "future"--but here the terms lose their meaning) states of the system. Open systems, on the other hand, have a flow of matter and energy through them, and are of two types. Open random systems are exemplified by the laminar flow of fluids or diffusion of gases. There are no models for predicting the precise behavior of open random systems, but there are methods for arriving at statistical probabilities of the behavior of the system. In such randomness we find the classic image of "chaos." Open self-organizing systems, on the other hand, are those in which a matter/energy flow arrives at qualitatively discernable patterns without outside interference. These systems are those studied by "chaos/complexity theory." Here we find short-term predictability and long-term unpredictability, the new image of "chaos."

A second important term in understanding complexity theory is "phase space," an idea developed by Henri Poincare in the late 19th century. Improved computer technology, the material support of mathematics, has allowed new uses of this idea. There are five steps in constructing a phase space portrait of a system. 1) Identify important aspects of a system's behavior, which are called its "degrees of freedom." 2) Imagine or model a space with as many dimensions as the degrees of freedom of the system to be studied. 3) Each state of the system can then be represented as a single point, with as many values as there are dimensions. 4) The changing states of the system then trace a line, a trajectory, through phase space. 5) We can then try to solve the equations governing the line and pin down the system's behavior as in closed deterministic systems. Sometimes we can't solve the equations, and no patterns emerge, as in open random systems. Sometimes though, in studying the system we can't solve the equations, but we can identify the evolution of

some patterns, as is the case with open self-organizing systems. These patterns have various features, some of which are named "attractor," and "bifurcator."

Briefly put, as De Landa explains, the actual/virtual distinction Deleuze appropriates from Bergson (Deleuze 1988) is put to use in *Logic of Sense and Difference and Repetition* to distinguish between the (actual) traits of a physical system (its long-term tendencies) and the (virtual) thresholds at which it either adopts or changes those traits. Thus an actual system might, say, oscillate at one frequency within a certain range of parameters, and at another within another range. The actual behavior of the system, its oscillation at frequency #1 or #2, would be a trait, while oscillation frequencies #1 and #2 would be virtual "attractors," and the transition between #1 and #2 would be a virtual "bifurcator." "Attractors" receive their name by capturing the behavior of systems within a range of values of parameters -- their "basin of attraction" -- while "bifurcators" are named because they are the events by which a system moves from one attractor to another. DeLanda isolates three types of attractors: point, loop, and chaotic, corresponding to three states: steady state, oscillation, and turbulence. □

The virtual / actual distinction enables D/G to account for unpredictability in physical systems while still maintaining a consistent materialism; the virtual is "real but abstract." Attractors are forms of self-organization of matter; physical systems of matter/energy flow can become organized, even if currently random or laminar. □

Even turbulent fluids, for instance, which were classic symbols of "chaotic" matter, are embodiments or actualizations of virtual attractors, albeit "fractal" or "strange" ones. There's no real chaos in turbulence, rather fiendishly complex interactions of matter. However, laminar flows (paradoxically, "calm" fluids) or gases come close to the original sense of chaos. In the phenomena of self-organizing systems, we find creativity, novelty, etc., but this creativity is inherent in matter itself; bifurcators, Events, lines of flight, are changes triggered unpredictably when sensitive systems pick up slight cues that move them onto another basin of attraction, or keep them moving about within a zone of unpredictability.

With this notion of self-organizing matter, D/G critique "hylomorphism," the notion that matter needs the imposition of a transcendent form to organize its putative chaos. Hylomorphism lives by the forced choice or exclusive disjunction between chaos or transcendent form. *Après nous, le déluge*. By overthrowing long-term determinism in locating innovation, novelty, creativity in matter (albeit in its virtual thresholds), complexity theory disrupts the materialism = determinism equation and its concomitant forced choice of monistic materialist determinism or spiritualist dualist freedom. Common sense dictates (literally): since monistic materialism is determinism, and since we must preserve the phenomena of freedom, then we must pay the price of a spiritualist dualism. The new materialism of D/G escapes this forced choice by critique of its hylomorphic presuppositions.

DeLanda's work on complexity theory thus offers us the following way of glossing Deleuze's terminology in *Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1990). Trait, singularity and Event ("emission of singularities), line up roughly with that of behavior pattern, attractor and bifurcator. The terms adopted by D/G in ATP are slightly different, with "black hole" naming "attractor" and "line of flight" naming "bifurcator." Further, we can see the BwO as matter/energy flow, and the "Abstract Machine" as the set of self-organizing processes inherent in that flow and effectuated by various concrete social assemblages, as for

example the war machine drawing a line of flight by decoding and deterritorializing a flow and occupying a smooth space, that is, warding off transcendent ordering to allow immanent self-organization.

After the scanty nature of this preliminary, the following materialist treatment of fascist nihilism can only be provisional. Nonetheless, we can say that both the proliferation of micro-black holes and attendant multitude of war-machines (the cancerous BwO of microfascism) and the suicidal line of flight (the war machine that has taken over the State and posited war as its only object) are amenable to materialist explanations.

The cancerous BwO of microfascism occurs with a sedimentation rate that overwhelms the articulatory power of the stratum. In political terms, microfascism occurs when the selecting of homogenized individuals surpasses the overcoding power of the State so that these law-abiding individuals come to enforce their own laws in a proliferation of command centers that inhibits State formation. In complexity theory terms, in microfascism the social system reaches a point whereby a proliferation of attractors fragments the system into mutually communicating but independent sectors. Here there is no resonance in a giant attractor, but only the static of many small attractors. Microfascism is the body politic that moves frenetically without going anywhere.

The suicidal line of flight of fascism occurs when a war machine captures a State apparatus and turns to war. In political terms, this is the end game in which a fascist regime, which has succeeded in mobilizing the microfascist proliferation, sacrifices itself even after its defeat in a war is certain. In complexity theory terms, we can say that here the social system has--after escaping the futility of the static zone of too many microattractors (microfascism), and after avoiding the self-conserving basin of attraction of the totalitarian state in which sub-command posts resonate and amplify a central attractor or "giant black hole"--fallen instead into a zone of complete disorder. In other--mythological--words, the suicidal line of flight has avoided the Scylla of microfascism and the Charybdis of totalitarianism, only to fall into the void of Chaos.

Finally, to complete this section, what is a materialist account of the "realized nihilism" of fascism? It is relatively easy to see the suicidal line of flight as a realized nihilism: it is the pushing of the social body into nothingness. Instead of a careful destratification to set matter/energy flowing in immanent self-organization (the full BwO), destratification itself--the decoding and deterritorializing line of flight--becomes the goal; the war machine aims at war, the empty BwO becomes realized through war rather than depression. A solar, flaming, nihilism rather than lunar depressive freezing.

The adjective "realized" is important in understanding fascist nihilism: as the discussion in Bergsonism makes clear, the possible is realized, while the virtual is actualized (Deleuze 1988, 97). Instead of keeping the BwO in reserve ("have a small plot of new land at all times" [Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 161]) as a field of virtual potentials some of which could be actualized on occasion as a cautiously experimental shake up, suicidal fascism realizes the pure flow, brings it forth frozen in reality. But this realization is impossible: as D/G "cautiously" note, a system cannot survive without a BwO, but it also cannot live AS a BwO either. There must be some organization of the body politic, for the BwO is nothing, no-thing. It is prior to all determinate organization, for it is the matter/energy flow and self-organizing capacity of organized bodies. For it to be realized would be to realize no-thing. Suicidal, solar, State fascism is a realizing of no-thing, a realized nihilism.

## Conclusion: Fascist Nihilism Now?

How does this recapitulation of ATP (written in the mid to late 70s) help us understand the contemporary (late 90s) situation with regard to fascist nihilism? First, two conceptual difficulties need to be cleared up, concerning the type of "political science" D/G pursue and the status of history in ATP; then we can consider the positive accomplishments of ATP in addressing fascist nihilism.

To evaluate ATP's usefulness in understanding contemporary fascist nihilism, we must first be clear what they are doing. ATP brings into sharp relief the difference between types of "political science" (the study of politics, and the politics of science). D/G name them State or royal science and nomad science. The former is an axiomatic/theorematic approach which isolates constants from variables to develop laws governing phenomena; the latter is a problematics exemplified by metallurgists, who treat variables by putting them into continuous variation (establishing all their ranges without privileging one as the standard or constant) and then "track" the singularities (virtual thresholds) and traits (actual behaviors) of a material system. Nomad science treats the "machinic phylum," the convergence of singularities and traits in various "assemblages" that effectuate sets of operations that actualize the potentials of matter in particular traits.

Now D/G's treatment of fascism is nomadic: they don't pretend to lay out eternal conditions for fascism, as if it were a platonic idea, a possibility to be realized if only the proper "laws" of politics are obeyed. Rather, the nomad political science of D/G consists in tracking the "machinic phylum" of fascism: the ways in which the potentials inherent in human "matter" (the potentials of human behavior tapped into by social training), can be arranged so that a certain human behavior becomes the content for the expression of a fascist war machine. They ask, in other words, about the construction of a fascist assemblage, the way in which a social machine taps into human potentials by constructing a pedagogy that produces fascist individuals and then mobilizes them, rousing them from their micro-fascist buzz into a war machine capable of appropriating a State.

Second, we must be clear about the historicity of the historical-libidinal materialism of D/G and how it entails their relatively greater concern with micro-fascism than with the fascist State. The "current situation" addressed in ATP is of course that of the late 70s, of Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.), that is, the peace of nuclear terror. Now everything about D/G's work dissuades us from teleologizing that stalemate: they knew as well as anyone that the situation they diagnosed was not the end of history, in large part because for D/G history is only the transformation of coexistence into succession (430). The important thing is always the map, the balance of forces that effectuates the Abstract Machine of coding, decoding, overcoding in assemblages that are at once tribes, war machines and States. However, in privileging "geography" (drawing maps) over history, D/G do not neglect the latter. Recognizing the coexistence of aspects of the Abstract Machine eliminates the dangers of evolutionism in ethnographic political science, against which they polemicize relentlessly (359), but this does not entail a neglect of history. To draw a map of the current situation is not just to locate aspects of the Abstract Machine, but to estimate their relative strengths and potentials for actualizing a shift in forces. And this can only be done in tracing the development of the current situation--in other words, by doing history.

So, in producing a universal history of forms of the State (459; 466-7), D/G isolate the fascist moment as something over and done with. Various analyses in Plateau 13: The Apparatus of Capture allow us to see why there is no more room for a fascist war-machine-State. In so far as fascism constructs a totalitarian state, it is motivated by the desire for autarky, for subtraction from global flows (223). It seems now that capital flows are too fast and too big for that project even to be broached, even if a war machine were to be formed from micro-fascisms. Although they refrain from putting it so, D/G allow us to posit that capital is itself now a war-machine, occupying the world as smooth space, able to pop up at any place at infinite speed (453-4). Any attempt at a "closed vessel," at a domestic market of Ersatz (463), would be laughable given the ability of capital to disentangle itself from any too-self-assertive reterritorializing attempts of States. It is not that capital has completely surpassed the State, but that States are limited to being the "models of realization" of the axiomatic of capitalism (454), that is, that States now are only the places where the abstract moments of capital, the deterritorialized and decoded flows of labor and capital, can meet (455). The historical moment of the fascist State is finished: not forever, perhaps, but for the foreseeable future, given the current situation of capitalism. The real problem is micro-fascism.

With these two conceptual difficulties clarified, let us consider the accomplishments of ATP regarding our understanding of fascist nihilism. First, it forcefully reminds us that nihilism--in materialist terms, an orientation to zero intensity--has two vectors: lunar, "Christian" nihilism: descending, freezing, depressive, paranoid--the type diagnosed by Nietzsche; and solar, fascist-Nazi nihilism: ascending, burning, manic, "schizo"--the type diagnosed by D/G. Hence our initial quandry over the gap between the Nietzschean context and the D/G context of nihilism as an appropriate label for National Socialism has been resolved.

Secondly, we know that contemporary micro-fascisms abound. The conceptual apparatus of ATP allows us to ask what conditions have kept them from forming a war-machine capable of taking over a state. We might say that micro-fascisms, as long as they are isolated in the "rumble and buzz" of molecularity, are relatively "harmless" in State-political terms, even when they reach the militia-level as in some parts of the USA. Perhaps it is liberal institutions (in either their disciplinary or "control" aspects [Deleuze 1995, 177ff]) that keep them from organizing themselves into a war-machine with a viable chance at appropriating a State of their own? With no movement organizing the micro-fascisms, there is no arche of a fascist war-machine-State, just as smooth capital has prevented its telos, the "closed vessel."

Third, ATP helps us understand the particular test case of the Balkans. In so far as ethnic purity by violence is a hallmark of fascism, we must of course say that here is a case of a fascism. But rather than a fascist State, let's call this State fascism: the war-machine hasn't taken off on its solar nihilistic course--we still do not see a suicidal State in "the former Yugoslavia." And of course, there are no "great powers" in the region; there is no credible attempt at autarky. If anything, international arms market now want these types of local, confined wars--and the enlarged NATO that could intervene in them when it would be useful. WWII, while great for business (cf. Gravity's Rainbow, the great analysis of war and markets), was a little too close to nihilism, and the current axiomatic of capitalism is not nihilistic, but recognizes the utility of State reterritorialization to provide a good business environment (455).

Fourth, lastly, ATP shows how the resistance to fascism must be micrological, micropolitical. Although microfascisms are "contained" in terms of threatening State power, this is not to say they are not objects of concern. D/G's call to look to the "fascist within you" is far from an "individualist" retreat from politics. Rather, microfascism as "molecular molarity," as runaway sedimentation, is precisely the creation of individuals. ATP, in short, refocuses the struggle from a fascist State at whose pretensions capital would only laugh, to micro-fascism, the production of individuality. Thus D/G also shift the struggle onto the left: micro-fascism prevents a progressive war-machine from forming as well as liberal institutions prevent a fascist war machine from mobilizing. The progressive war-machine, a progressive revolutionary movement, is blocked as long as contemporary "progressives" insist on calling for individual rights and recognition. This is only interest group lobbying for a new axiom, a new dispensation of capital. The struggle must be to prevent the axiomatic struggle (which D/G validate [470-1]) from becoming either a proto-fascist hierarchy (the party will tell you when you're free) or liberal integration (give us our axioms and we'll behave). Axiomatic struggle must be the struggle to release a force of minoritarianization that would not just change the grid to include a few more points of identification of individuals with rights, nor would dream the sweet utopian dream of an elimination of grids altogether (or the not-so-sweet dystopic dream of the smooth space of global security forces--"never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" [500]), but would increase the force of smoothing relative to that of gridding. This is no prescription, but only a hint as to how to draw our own maps.

In other words, the resistance to micro-fascism is not to resist, but to do otherwise. Resistance is reactive, D/G imply in one of their few criticisms of Foucault; lines of flight are among the primary elements of a diagram (530-1n.39). But again, experimentation on lines of flight is not individualistic; the key is forming non-organismic bodies. We in English don't have the immediate sense of corps as social body that helps the Francophone reader of D/G understand the political import of corps sans organes. The body without organs, or better, the non-organismic corps, is a social body of immanent relations, a place for becomings rather than hierarchies: a date, a conversation, a seminar, a corps of (metallurgical) engineers without officers, a movement, a machine to generate minorities, to generate becomings that cannot be counted with molar categories (how do you count "someone" who is black AND white, gay AND straight ...?), a nondenumerable mass. The politics of '68 without shame.□



## NOTES

- The AO vs. ATP treatment of fascism is discussed in Beasley-Murray 1995.
- On the caution of ATP, see Land 1993.
- May 1991 claims "life" as the "core structure" for Deleuze.
- De Landa (1997, 290n82) proposes a correction of D/G at this point, differentiating "folding" from "cementation," which properly belongs with "sedimentation." "Folding" is then said to accompany "accumulation" on another physical scale.
- This term is not in current usage among working scientists--who prefer "nonlinear dynamics"--but has gained enough currency in "popular science" treatments to warrant its use here.
- About DeLanda 1992 no less severe critics than Paul Gross and Norman Levitt say: "[although] there is some muddle ... [it is] pretty clear and straightforward ... a good and honest job, although one might wish for a more careful delineation of how much of this is really speculative" (Gross and Levitt 1994, 267-68n17). As readers of Higher Superstition will attest, this is praise indeed from Gross and Levitt. Since DeLanda explicitly links his account with D/G, and since Gross and Levitt somewhat approve of DeLanda--although admittedly without mentioning D/G by name (they do contemptuously dismiss Deleuze's treatment of Riemann in his Cinema series, although they do not mention the similar treatment in ATP)--I assume the connection of D/G and complexity theory is at least an avenue worth pursuing.
- We have thus broached the question of a reduction of Newtonian physics from ontology to epistemology. All we ever encounter, all that exist, are open systems, but treating some of them as closed--modelling their behavior by closed model and linear equations--can be technologically helpful. (I restrict my discussion in this paper to the epistemological vocabulary of "predictability" rather than the ontological vocabulary of "indeterminacy," for simplicity's sake, and as "the better part of valor.")
- This is of course a tremendously simplified account of a wide-ranging, complicated and changing scientific field. Current work has moved beyond the attractor-bifurcator model to consider the "mutual bootstrap" effect between the "landscape" of a particular phase space and the specific trajectories resident within it. I owe this clarification to Francisco Varela of the CNRS, Paris. See also Kauffman, 1993 and 1995.
- Here a possible reading of Lucretius: the clinamen or "swerve" is the least deviation from the laminar. Thus ancient Greek atomistic physics was a fluid dynamics, not a solid one. See Serres 1977.
- On the various pedagogies producing both the micro- and macro-fascist body, see Theweleit 1987-89.
- My thanks go to the volume editors, and to David Lindenfeld, Alistair Welchman, Charles Stivale, and Andrew Cutrofello for their careful comments on earlier drafts.