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Critique of Resentment in Reich, Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari¹

ABSTRACT: Although Wilhelm Reich does not use the notion of resentment in his psychological analysis of fascism, the Nietzschean critique of resentment may help us to grasp the core of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Nietzsche's insight into the nature of resentment can elucidate craving for authority, mysticism and ascetic moral that turn masses against their vital interests. According to Reich, masses fall prey to their irrational and reactionary desires that are in contrast with rational and revolutionary interests. However much Deleuze and Guattari appreciate Reich's analysis of fascism, they accept neither his opposition of revolutionary interests and reactionary desires, nor his romantic view on *homo natura*. Instead, they introduce a much subtler differentiation of desires and interests as well as a Dionysian image of *homo natura*. This is why we can find, in their *Anti-Oedipus*, a new version of Nietzschean critique of resentment – a version that surpasses the limits of Reich's conception and shows not only the dangers of resentment, but also the dangers hidden in the nature of *homo natura*.

KEY WORDS: resentment • desire • sex-economy • libidinal economy • minority

Why do we long for fascism?

Is there something that fascism and Stalinism have in common? When posing this question, we do not intend to repeat well-known reflections on the nature of totalitarianism. We are interested in a much more subtle phenomenon which may help us comprehend not only the strange affinity of fascism and Stalinism, but also, for example, an obscure attractiveness that the Islamic Djihad has nowadays in certain parts of the world. This phenomenon is resentment and our ambition is to demonstrate that resentment is not only a psychological quality, but that it may also serve as a useful conceptual tool in political analysis. In fact, we want to present resentment as a general phenomenon that in its basic forms connects the field of psychology (or psychopathology) with the field of politics. This is why it can elucidate the immanent logic of various political ideologies as well as the reasons why

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people fall prey to these ideologies, even though they clearly contradict their real interests. All the more important is then the question how we can avoid the dead end of resentment.

To begin our paper on the nature of resentment, we should return the question formulated already in 1933 when Wilhelm Reich – in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* – tried to understand why the German masses voted for the NSDAP, although this political party promised something that clearly contradicted their interests – an authoritative system, suppression of civil rights, racial discrimination and finally – war. Reich dismissed the simple explanation that the masses were mystified and fooled by Hitler’s political strategy. Instead, he suggested that they desired what was promised to them. They craved for a strong leader, for an authoritative system that would eliminate their freedom and desired a new war. But how could that be? How is it possible to desire one’s own oppression and – very probably – annihilation? Why do actually people long for fascism?

Reich’s question is even more disturbing, if we realize that fascism does not concern only the Germany of the 1930s, but all political regimes, all countries and their citizens. As Reich puts it, “fascism is an international phenomenon, which pervades all bodies of human society of all nations”². Not only Germans, but all people – we all have a tendency to admire strong leaders, to relinquish our personal freedom and to sacrifice our lives for a higher cause (Nation, Race, State, etc.). This is reflected in the definition of fascism presented in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*: fascism is neither a political program, nor a political system, but a specific concept of life, a specific attitude towards life. Fascism is a general problem because it represents a basic emotional attitude that influences our feelings, forms our thinking, and determines our behavior. According to Reich, “there is not a single individual who does not bear the elements of fascist feeling and thinking in his structure”³. Every one of us has a certain inclination toward fascism. It is therefore necessary to discover the fascist in ourselves and to learn how to watch over him. The biggest mistake is to look for the fascist in others and to forget that we must start with ourselves.

But if we are to detect the fascist in ourselves, we must first know how to recognize him. In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, fascism is closely related to mass mentality because it is understood as “the expression of the irrational structure of mass man”⁴. Masses themselves are simultane-

² W. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, transl. by V.R. Carfagno, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York 1970, p. XIII.

³ *Ibidem*, p. XIII, XIV.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. XX.

ously determined as politically passive, irrationally influenced segments of population⁵. Insofar as we belong to masses, we are highly susceptible to the emotional plague of fascism, as masses – under the given circumstances – are incapable of freedom. This incapacity for freedom, however, does not correspond to the natural order of things, inasmuch as it has developed in the conditions of the patriarchal, religious and mechanized society. When Reich claims that masses are grievously irrational, he refers to their desire for social authority as well as to their ignorance of their vital interests. It is this distinction between desire and interest that makes possible his analysis of fascism: while desire is essentially irrational, interest is supposed to be rational because it reflects the vital needs of human beings – food, work, sexual gratification, communication and knowledge. It is obvious that the rationality of interest should not be understood in a purely logical sense of the term, for interest is rational and meaningful only from the immanent perspective of life. In the conceptual scheme given by the distinction between irrational desire and rational interest, only the fascist orientation of desire can explain why and how masses ignore their natural interests and fall prey to the ideological traps that preserve their submission to authorities. Only irrational subjection to a higher authority can explain the self-negation of people that voluntarily relinquish their own rationality. If we use Reich's terminology, we could say that desire is irrational and reactionary, while interest is rational and revolutionary. If people dared to listen to their vital interests, they would become revolutionary because they would necessarily try to change their situation, but if they follow their desires, they will be driven by their reactionary tendencies and they will rebel without really changing anything. Rebellion thus infected by reactionary tendencies would, then, bring nothing but a new enslavement.

Saying this, however, we are still far from understanding the reactionary character of desire that entraps masses into fascism; for the reactionary attitude towards life would not be possible without a mysticism that allows them to ignore their vital interests, to forget their daily misery, or at least to find some sense in this misery. Such mysticism is, as Reich puts it, "the primary source of all political reaction"⁶. The inseparable part of organized mysticism is the subordination to something "higher", to something that stands above the individual; and this "higher" instance demands self-denial, sacrifice, purity and imbues human life with endless feeling of guilt. Hence, the reactionary attitude towards life is connected with a strange asceticism.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 129.

To give an example of such asceticism, Reich mentions Rosenberg's *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*: as a leading fascist ideologist, Rosenberg based his repulsion to the "inferior races" on the argument that the ancient Greeks were not only the representatives of the Aryan racial purity, but also representatives of the Apollonian mentality⁷. According to this interpretation, Dionysus as a god of ecstasy and sensual pleasure was of foreign origin and the greatness of ancient Greeks consisted in the fact that they were able to avoid all the Dionysian elements. The decline of Greek culture, then, started in the moment when the Greeks were not able to prevent the intrusion of the Dionysian elements into the domain of Apollonian purity and modesty. Thus, the "superiority" of the Aryan race, which the Germans are to incarnate, lies in its ability to do justice to the Apollonian purity and chastity, while the voluptuous and untamed sexuality is attributed to the "inferior" races that supposedly have the Dionysian character. All the Dionysian elements are thus extracted from the social and individual life, and projected to the outside from which they return in the phantasmagoric figure of the Jew or Negro. What remains inside the sphere ruled by the Apollonian principles of measured behavior and formal rationality is nothing but a disciplined man who fulfills all his duties to the authorities and a woman who serves as a breeding machine.

Surprising as it may be, Reich does not mention Nietzsche in this respect, but it is obvious that Rosenberg's interpretation directly contradicts the way the Apollonian and Dionysian elements are understood in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche neither simply rejects nor praises one or the other. Rather, he claims that the greatness of the ancient Greeks consisted in their ability to combine both these elements, while their decline started at the point when they separated the two elements and concentrated only on the Apollonian formalism and rationality. What is wrong is thus neither the Apollonian nor the Dionysian principle, but their isolation that absolutizes either of them. In any case, the Nietzschean interpretation of the relation between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles leaves no doubt that the asceticism which obsessively attempts to evade every single vestige of the Dionysian element is the true opposite of the great art of life.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 83–97.

Nietzsche's critique of resentment

Yet, if we want to get to the core of the asceticism and mysticism that determine the reactionary mentality, we should pay attention not only to *The Birth of Tragedy*, but also to other Nietzsche's works. For instance, in his treatise *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he gives an explanation of ascetic morals and the ascetic ideal that perfectly matches Reich's elucidation of the reactive mentality and even surpasses it. Ascetic morality and ascetic ideal, as depicted in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, oppose life in such a way that they relate life, world and nature – simply the whole sphere of suffering, impermanency and transitoriness – to a totally different mode of being that is free from suffering, impermanency and transitoriness. Life is then understood as a bridge leading to this different way of being; it is supposed to be unconditionally devoted to this “other world” or “other place”. The ascetic ideal incarnates the wish to be otherwise and elsewhere. But let us not be mystified by this dark wish. Its aim is not simply a negation of life; it is not a desire for non-existence. On the contrary, the ascetic ideal represents an attempt to preserve life, to save it from suffering and death. By means of the ascetic ideal, life struggles with death, as the ascetic ideal follows from the necessity to protect the weakened, exhausted and degenerated life. The essence of the ascetic ideal is to give a sense to suffering, to justify it and make it acceptable. This is why Nietzsche claims that the ascetic ideal is still an expression of the will to life – in his terminology – of the will to power. This will to power, however, is full of resentment. In the fight with suffering and death, the ascetic ideal is filled with resentment that attempts to dominate all life.

How shall we, then, understand the nature of resentment? As we said, the ascetic man is one who suffers; he suffers by himself and he desires to be somebody else. For this reason, he relates to an absolute “elsewhere” and “otherwise”, where he will escape himself and his suffering. Yet, a part of the effort to avoid suffering and disgust with oneself is the hidden hatred of all those who do not suffer. The ascetic man is full of hatred, full of pique, and vengefulness with which he looks at all “happy and lucky” people. His dream is to make somebody pay for his own suffering. It is precisely this concealed malice and vindictiveness that is the essence of resentment, as it is described in *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

Resentment is filled with hate, envy and hostility with which the suffering man observes those who do not suffer as he does. The man of resentment can stand looking at those who do not suffer only if he considers himself morally superior, elected, if he believes that he will be remunerated for his

suffering one day. He calls this future compensation “a justice”. However, to him, justice means nothing but the promise of vengeance. For the ascetic man, justice is just another name for revenge at those who do not suffer the way he does.

Morality based on resentment is thus reactive in principle; its action is always only a reaction, as it needs somebody who is considered as bad and who is supposed to be punished when the time has come. For its formation and functioning, the morality of resentment needs something external, some outer impulse against which it could act. Resentment turns its regard primarily not to itself, but to some external entity – in this sense it is essentially reactive. The reaction that essentially determines the character of resentment, however, is not performed as a voluntary act; it is only felt and experienced, as Deleuze remarks in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*⁸.

As for the problem of morals, Nietzsche does not ask about the essence of good and evil. Rather, he wants to know where those who consider themselves to be good stand. This is the principal question of his genealogy of morals. With respect to this question, he realizes that there are two possible relations to good and evil.

The first one has been already adumbrated – it is the reactive disposition that is based on resentment. As such, the reactive disposition issues from refusal, from the negative opposition to something or someone else. In the framework of the reactionary disposition, one can consider himself to be good only if he first determines the other as evil. Without this denigration of the other, the reactionary character cannot call itself good. Such a disposition, according to Nietzsche, characterizes the slave or the gregarious morality which – in concordance with Reich – can be also called “the mass morality”. It is the morality of the weak and humiliated that can consider themselves good only if they had marked others as bad.

The other possible relation to good and evil is in contradiction with the first one. It is the aristocratic, noble disposition that is characterized by self-affirmation and self-actualization. The noble mentality can be recognized by the fact that it affirms its own existence, in which it finds the supreme good, while the bad is given simply as that what differs from the good. Rather than evil, the bad means here the base, the mean, the poor and the regretful. The noble character does not need its counterpart, its enemy, in order to call itself good. What characterizes it is the surplus of forces that urge it to be active, to exceed the given limits and in this transgression find its self-actualization. The affirmation that characterizes the noble mentality

⁸ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris 1962, p. 127, 130, 131.

is thus not only the affirmation of one's own self; rather it is the affirmation of life in general. The noble mentality affirms not only joy and happiness, but also suffering that belongs to life; it says "yes" to life in all its pain and suffering; it says "yes" to all the Dionysian elements of life. As Deleuze suggests in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, the affirmation of life can be even seen as a basic Dionysian quality⁹. Its opposite is, then, not simply the Apollonian orientation of life, but rather the inability to accept the Dionysian side of life, i.e. the inability to accept life as such. In such a case, the affirmation of life is replaced by the refined negation of life, which is, however, still concerned with life. Instead of the affirmative and active attitude to life, here comes the negative and reactive relation to life which is masked as the negative and reactive relation to that which is different. This reactive disposition becomes evident in Nietzsche's observation that "slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside', what is 'different', what is 'not itself'"¹⁰. In relation to the "other", to which it opposes itself, the slave morality cultivates its own revengefulness, which perfectly corresponds to its reactive nature.

As regards the slave, reactive mentality, it is worth mentioning what Nietzsche has on mind when speaking about resentment: to the psychologists, presuming that they would like to study resentment close up for once, he whispers that "this plant blooms best today among anarchists and anti-Semites – where it has always bloomed, in hidden places, like the violet, though with a different odor"¹¹. "Anarchists", or to use a more appropriate term – Stalinists need their class enemies as much as anti-Semites need the Jews. Both anti-Semites and Stalinists tend to confuse justice with revenge. In both cases, revengefulness and hatred play the crucial role as two basic components of resentment. And Nietzsche teaches us that resentment characterizes not the noble, aristocratic mentality, but the slave, gregarious mentality.

This finding is in a way confirmed in Reich's analysis of fascism, which applies not only to Nazi Germany, but also to Stalinist Soviet Union. According to Reich, the authoritarian dictators take advantage of the gregarious instinct of masses claiming that people are in principle slaves who need a strong master. Hitler used to say that the masses can be moved not by arguments, proofs and facts, but by feelings, opinions and impressions, and we can add that all these feelings, opinions and impressions are filled with resentment. As Reich claims:

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 14, 19.

¹⁰ F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals, Ecce homo*, transl. by W. Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, New York 1969, p. 36.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

[t]he fascist dictator declares that the masses of people are biologically inferior and crave authority, that, basically, they are slaves *by nature*. Hence, a totalitarian authoritarian regime is the only possible form of government for such people. It is significant that all dictators who today plunge the world into misery stem from the suppressed masses of people. They are intimately familiar with this sickness on the part of masses of people¹².

Thus authoritarian dictators are not representatives of some higher race; they incorporate not the noble, aristocratic mentality, but the slave mentality that allows them to speak to the masses pointing at those who are supposed to be responsible for all life's misery and who must be punished for this.

However, looking for a scapegoat, i.e. for somebody at whose expense the masses could – at least in an imaginary manner – satiate their hatred and vengefulness, is not the only way how to deal with the resentment. Another way of manipulating resentment is described in the figure of the ascetic priest. According to Nietzsche, the ascetic priest is the administrator and organizer of mass resentment. But unlike the totalitarian leader, as depicted by Reich, the ascetic priest changes the direction of resentment – instead of the outside, he turns it back toward the suffering man. When the suffering man realizes that he suffers, while looking for someone who could be responsible for his suffering, the ascetic priest tells him that nobody else but he himself is responsible for this suffering. “Only you are responsible for your own suffering”, so speaks the ascetic priest to the suffering individual. This is an especially refined way of giving a meaning and reasons to the suffering. The suffering man who has undergone such a treatment, is not so dangerous to others any longer, for he understands that it is he himself who has caused his own suffering, but this does not mean that he has been cured. The cause of his suffering has not disappeared and he is still confined to resentment.

It is then no coincidence that together with the ascetic priest, who turns direction of resentment from the outside to the inside, the phenomena of guilt and guilty conscience appear on the scene. Contrary to, for example, Heidegger's ontological analysis of guilt and conscience, for Nietzsche, the feeling of guilt and bad conscience are not natural phenomena that determine human existence; rather, they result from the taming of the wild, “wandering” man whose instincts have been directed against him. In a way, bad conscience is a sickness, the sickness of an animal that has been caught and started to lacerate itself in the capture. The ascetic priest functions here

¹² W. Reich, *op.cit.*, p. 324, 325.

as the administrator of bad conscience and his task is to deepen the feeling of guilt in man. The ascetic priest does not want to relieve man from his guiltiness. Quite to the contrary, his fundamental interest is to confirm the feeling of guilt and bad conscience. This is precisely what he does when he makes man look for the cause of his suffering in himself, in his most own guiltiness. The ascetic priest persuades the suffering man to understand his miserable state as a punishment for his own sinfulness. His aim is to increase the bondage of man, which is realized by means of narcotizing and hibernation, i.e. numbness, or indirect release of affect in excess of sentiment. In this way, the ascetic priest “cures” the sickness of resentment.

Against the cure that preserves the original sickness, Nietzsche places an ideal of real, so called great health that is free not only from hatred and vengeance, but also from any interiorization of resentment. As great health is free from any form of resentment including guilt or bad conscience, it can be also understood as “a second innocence”¹³. No wonder such a second innocence can hardly be attained, for it requires becoming free not only from the feeling of guilt and bad conscience, but also from the burden of responsibility and memory by means of which the wild, wandering man was tamed. Rather than being truly innocent, we can thus decide to set out on a journey of becoming innocent which is a journey that situates us in between two different spheres: the sphere of guilt, bad conscience, personal responsibility and memory, and the sphere of innocence, irresponsibility and forgetting. Being unable to reach innocence for good, we can only learn how to live in the tragic tension between the two opposites.

Critique of resentment in Deleuze and Guattari

To see better what becoming innocent can mean, we now turn our attention to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, for it is precisely the idea of great health understood as a state of second innocence that determines their intellectual efforts. Like Nietzsche, they want to break the spell of resentment. They do not content themselves with a mere change of its direction; they do not want to turn resentment from the “outside” to the “inside”, uncovering the infinite source of guilt and bad conscience in human soul. Unlike the new ascetic priests – psychoanalysts – Deleuze and Guattari do not believe in *insuffisance d’être* or *manque à être* that fundamentally determine the human existence because they know that the negativity and insufficiency are nothing but the symptoms of resentment. Yet, what does

¹³ F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

escaping from resentment mean if one presumes that we are not able to break free from it?

Exposing the power of resentment and mapping the lines of escape from it, Deleuze and Guattari follow the guidelines given by Reich's analysis of reactionary and revolutionary tendencies in modern society, which is evident especially in *Anti-Oedipus*, where they refer to *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Their libidinal economy resonates with sex-economy in which Reich combines Freud and Marx in order to show the interconnection of sexual suppression and social repression. But this is not to say that they simply adopt some ready-made ideas. Their attitude to Reich is, despite their respect for the work of their precursor, critical, and one could say that they use Nietzsche against Reich, or that they criticize Reich in the name of Nietzsche. As an instrument of their critique, they utilize not only the Nietzschean concept of resentment, but also the Nietzschean insight into the relation between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles, which allows them to overcome the limits of Reich's vitalism by even a more radical vitalism.

Reich's vitalism is determined by his antipathy toward the mechanized functioning of the modern industrial society that alienates the human beings from their true nature. Reich opposes the mechanized functioning of the modern industry that dehumanizes the human beings with the natural state of human existence in which human beings find the meaning of their lives in the realization of their vital needs. The essential needs such as work, love, knowledge and communication, thus determine the Rousseauian vision of *homo natura*, whose sane character is led astray by the pathogenic influence of desire. The reactionary structure of desire makes us forget the vital interests of *homo natura* and alienates us from the true basis of our lives. Modern political regimes, be it totalitarian regimes or formal democracies, take advantage of the reactionary structure of our desires and use them against our natural interests, but as soon as the vital interests of *homo natura* are released, they will lead to the establishment of the so-called working-democracy in which there will be no place for authoritative leaders and political manipulation. The paradox, however, is that working-democracy is not only a future project. According to Reich, working-democracy that corresponds to the nature of *homo natura* already exists, for all political regimes, even the most totalitarian ones, need it as a basis on which they can install themselves. Without working-democracy that reflects the natural human interests of work, love, communication and knowledge, no political regime can exist. Therefore, modern totalitarian regimes and formal democracies appear as perversions of working-democracy, which they deform and

abuse. The only way out of this situation is, then, a progressive abolition of the modern state and the simultaneous release of working-democracy, which can happen, only when the masses free themselves from the pressure of their reactionary desires and learn how to listen to their vital interests.

Contrary to the Rousseauian vision, Deleuze and Guattari do not put nature against technology. Instead, their vitalist conception that takes into consideration the very process of production goes beyond the distinction between nature and technology. Both nature and technology are based on the process of production. Indeed, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari also talk about *homo natura*, but their image of *homo natura* is not Rousseauian. Rather, their *homo natura* has the Dionysian nature in the Nietzschean sense. When Deleuze and Guattari declare that the true *homo natura* is of a schizophrenic nature, we should not forget that the schizophrenic pole of experience has all the features attributed to the Dionysian element in the *Birth of the Tragedy*¹⁴. The Dionysian element is characterized as a sphere of ecstasy, a sphere of enormous joy and enormous suffering in which individuality disintegrates, clear forms fall apart and nothing can be recognized any more. It is the element in which the very difference between man and nature disappears. As opposed to this orgiastic principle in which all individuality collapses and man becomes indiscernible from the animal, the Apollonian element functions as *principium individuationis*. It is an element of distinct proportions, clear forms and contours, an element in which not only individual existence, but also political and state organizations become possible. Since individual existence as well as political organization require certain framing, i.e. the creation of a horizon that would differentiate the inside from the outside, we can connect the Apollonian element with the process of reterritorialization as described by Deleuze and Guattari, while the process of deterritorialization seems to correspond to the Dionysian element. Considering the affinity of the Dionysian element and the process of deterritorialization on the one hand, as well as the proximity of the Apollonian element and process of reterritorialization on the other, we can thus see that the two sides must not be separated, for the process of production can exist only in a permanent tension of their competing tendencies. In the process of production, the two tendencies must always oppose each other, but as soon as one totally eliminates the other, it leads to a dead end, which could take either the form of a permanent stagnation in the fixed situation, or the form of a devastating collapse. Both the Apollonian reterritorialization,

¹⁴ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane, Minneapolis 1983, p. 5.

and the Dionysian deterritorialization needs its counterpart that vitalizes and renews it. And both of them have a destructive potential that shows itself once the one or the other becomes isolated and absolutized.

Even though the Apollonian reterritorialization and the Dionysian deterritorialization must not be separated, one of them always prevails over the other: once it is the formative influence of the Apollonian element, then it is the Dionysian formlessness. Either reterritorialization subjugates the deterritorialization, or deterritorialization dominates over reterritorialization. It is in the unstable oscillation between these elementary possibilities that the process of production comes about.

Production, however, also determines the basic character of desire. Desire, as Deleuze and Guattari conceive of it, has primarily a productive nature; it is the desiring-production which is characteristic by excess and abundance, and not by a constitutive lack or deficiency. But even if desire does not have a negative character, it can become negative, which happens, when it is bound and directed to some transcendental goal or ideal. Then, desire loses its immanent character of production and becomes essentially reactive. This is possible when the Apollonian reterritorialization dominates over the Dionysian deterritorialization and shifts it to the background. In such a case, desire is primarily related to the experiencing individual who finds himself/herself among other individuals and together with them constitutes the political body known as the state; it suppresses all the states in which the individual, the whole net of intersubjective relations as well as the formal structure of the state fall apart. Simply, desire is then invested in the Apollonian way, rather than in the Dionysian way. While the Apollonian reterritorialization is a synonym for the reactionary investment of desire, for it binds us to the given state of affairs, the Dionysian deterritorialization corresponds to the revolutionary investment of desire, for it liberates us not only from the given situation, but also from our own personal identity, allowing us to become something else than what we used to be. Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari cannot agree with Reich who believes that desire can be only reactionary; rather, they show that desire can be invested either in a reactionary, or in a revolutionary way. In fact, following the topology of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the Dionysian element seems to be more primordial than the Apollonian, they even suggest that the revolutionary investment of desire coincides with the true nature of desire and in this sense is more primordial than the reactionary investment of desire, but this does not mean that they overlook the dangers of reactionary mentality, the first one of which is the danger of resentment. Quite to the contrary, they focus on the various ways in which desire, which is originally revolutionary, becomes

reactive so that they can expose all the traps that alienate desire from its immanent nature and turn it into the infinite longing for a transcendental ideal.

Yet, things become even more complicated when we realize, as Deleuze and Guattari do, that Reich's distinction between irrational desire and rational interest is not tenable any more: it is a mistake to believe that desire represents the irrational side of human mind that is abused by the authoritarian social regimes, whereas the interest expresses the rational character of social relations, for such a differentiation makes an impression that desire can be and must be rooted out of the social field. Accordingly, desire would be in principle separable from the social sphere, which is something Deleuze and Guattari who demonstrate the coexistence of the desiring-production and social production cannot accept¹⁵. In *Anti-Oedipus*, desiring-production is coextensive with the sphere of social production where various interests clash. Desire may be unconscious and interest may be conscious, but this does not mean that they can be separated from each other. Rather, it is desire what opens a field in which interests can be articulated. Interests can appear only in a field predetermined by desire. Therefore, one can neither presume, as Reich does, that desire in itself is reactionary, while the interest in itself is revolutionary. Rather than putting the reactionary and irrational desire against the revolutionary and rational interest, one should allow that desire can be either revolutionary or reactionary, and the same applies to interest. One must therefore learn how to distinguish the revolutionary investment of desire from the reactionary investment of desire, and the revolutionary interest from the reactionary interest, which is, however, complicated by the fact that the revolutionary interest can go with the reactionary investment of desire and the reactionary interest can be driven by the revolutionary investment of desire. The true revolutionary movement, then, requires not only revolutionary intentions, but also such an investment of desire that has the Dionysian character, i.e. that smashes all the firm structures and formal hierarchies that determine the role of the individuals and segregate some individuals from others. It is, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, schizophrenic, nomadic, pluralist and polyvocal¹⁶. Reactionary movement, on the other hand, can be recognized not only by reactionary declarations, but especially by the Apollonian investment of desire, i.e. such an investment that formally determines the role of the individual in the hierarchical social structure, which necessarily

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 28–30.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

excludes those who are classified as “different”. The reactionary investment of desire is thus paranoiac, segregative, unified and univocal¹⁷. We could also say that the reactionary investment of desire requires unity, unanimity, discipline, obedience and segregation of those who do not comply with such requirements, whereas the revolutionary investment of desire opens a space for plurality of voices and opinions, for their shifts and changes and has quite a big tolerance for those who are not same as we are.

This juxtaposition corresponds to the difference between two sorts of groups: subjugated groups (*les groupes assujettis*) and group-subjects (*les groupes-sujets*) that are differentiated on the basis of their ability or inability to accept the finitude and temporariness of the group as such. While in the subjugated groups the individuals can give some meaning to their lives only if they believe in the immortality of the social group that will survive them (the State, the Army, the Party, the Church), and the group itself is very rigid, the group-subjects are capable of institutional improvisation, for they see the social group as something provisional and temporary¹⁸. The difference between subjugated groups and group-subjects may remind us of Reich’s distinction between authoritarian and non-authoritarian society: the first kind of society is based on the powerlessness of masses, on their desire for a higher authority that would redeem and release them from all the responsibility for their lives, whereas the other kind of society refuses any higher authority or rigid social structure and puts all responsibility in the hands of people¹⁹. While the authoritarian social order tends to eternalize its own structure, the non-authoritarian social order is changeable and self-regulatory, as it makes its members responsible for the direction and drift of social processes. In the non-authoritarian society, people are thus not relieved of their social responsibility; they are burdened with it. This is, nevertheless, the point on which Deleuze and Guattari would differ, for the concept of responsibility is for them still tied to the reactive structure of resentment. The truly revolutionary process is, according to them, driven by the Dionysian deterritorialization, which dissolves not only all the rigid social structures, but also the individuals shaped by the power of social schemes, i.e. those individuals that are supposed to be responsible and feel guilty. Revolutionary processes shake precisely this tendency to be responsible and feel guilty, whereas the reactionary processes strengthen the feeling of responsibility and guilt.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 62–64.

¹⁹ W. Reich, *op.cit*, p. 234–236.

We should not, however, forget that neither revolutionary, nor reactionary processes as such separate the Dionysian element from the Apollonian element. In the revolutionary processes, as well as in the reactionary processes, the Dionysian deterritorialization and the Apollonian reterritorialization go hand in hand, and all depends only on which one of them prevails. When the Apollonian reterritorialization dominates, we see the raising power of the State apparatus (*l'appareil d'État*) with its molar structures of bureaucratic hierarchies, social classes and individual roles. When it is, to the contrary, the Dionysian deterritorialization that prevails, the subversive war machines (*les machines de guerre*) performing molecular transformations dissolve the molar structures of the State and open lines of escape from the captivity of the State apparatus appear on the scene. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe the antagonistic relations between the State apparatus that operates on the molar level by means of reterritorialization and the war machines that operate on the molecular level by means deterritorialization. The State apparatus and the war machines coexist in an agonistical way, when the State apparatus attempts to capture and take control of the war machines using them for the purpose of reterritorialization, while the war machines shake the power of the State apparatus making its molar structures transform along the line of deterritorialization.

All this is not without its dangers, and it would be a great mistake to presume that the dangers are only on the part of the State apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari are fully aware that the dangers are both on the part of the State apparatus, and on the part of war machines. These threats become imminent when the reactionary processes come to the point where the Apollonian reterritorialization gets isolated and absolutized, or when the revolutionary processes go so far that the Dionysian deterritorialization becomes the only and absolute goal. While in the first case we have to face the *totalitarianism* in which the State apparatus eliminates all the lines of escape and possibilities of deterritorialization by the violent reterritorialization, in the second case we are confronted with fascism in which the State apparatus collapses under the influence of a war machine that drives it to the absolute deterritorialization²⁰. Therefore, totalitarianism is characteristic by an endless stagnation in which, despite all the slogans about progress, nothing new happens, whereas fascism can be characterized as an effort to destroy the State and everything that belongs to it in the cataclysm of the absolute war. Fascism does not just produce a hegemonic situation in which the State apparatus reterritorializes

²⁰ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by B. Massumi, Minneapolis 1987, p. 214–215, 229–231.

all social and individual process in its centralized structure. The real aim of fascism is not to keep the social and individual reality unchanged, but to destroy everything. What determines the nature of fascism is not hypertrophied reterritorialization, but deterritorialization that ends in the void of ecstatic annihilation. As we read in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

[...] in fascism, the State is far less totalitarian than it is *suicidal*. There is in fascism a realized nihilism. Unlike the totalitarian State, which does its utmost to seal all possible lines of flight, fascism is constructed on an intense line of flight, which it transforms into a line of pure destruction and abolition²¹.

For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between Stalinism, which is for them an example of the totalitarian regime, and Hitlerism which demonstrates all the suicidal tendencies of fascism²². They do not subsume Stalinism and Hitlerism under the same category of totalitarian-authoritarian rule, as Reich does, for they understand that the essential difference between totalitarianism and fascism issues from two basic ways in which the Apollonian reterritorialization and Dionysian deterritorialization can be isolated. When the Apollonian reterritorialization becomes hypertrophied, or when the Dionysian deterritorialization becomes absolutized, we enter into the domain of political and social pathology²³. To become aware of the political and social dangers represented by totalitarianism and fascism is important especially for those who are engaged in some kind of resistance against the existing social order. The problem is not only the one of political motivation. Of course, those who are involved in a movement of resistance should make sure that their activity is directed by affirmation of something, and not by reaction and resentment which would hide the desire for vengeance behind the declared call for justice and liberation. But this is only a small part of a complex scheme in which the reactionary and revolutionary tendencies oscillate between the Apollonian and Dionysian pole, and

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 214–215.

²³ This is nothing but an elementary exposition of the problem. Things become more complex, if we look at the description of the body without organs in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where both the totalitarian and fascist formations are considered as cancerous structures that parasitize on the social field (see *ibidem*, p. 163, 165). They are thus dependent on the social strata that they prevent from free development or annihilate. From totalitarian and fascist bodies are then differentiated so called empty bodies without organs that leave social strata in a suicidal deterritorialization without destroying society as such (drug addicts, insane, etc.). We would like to express our gratitude to Ronald Bogue for drawing our attention to this observation.

the biggest dangers appear when the unstable oscillation is replaced by the absolute domination of the Apollonian or Dionysian pole. Unfortunately, big ideological slogans do not seem to be very useful tools in this respect. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, “it is too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective”²⁴.

In any case, the situation Deleuze and Guattari describe is much more complex than the one pictured by Reich. This is evident, among other things, from the way the process of revolutionary activity is understood in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (though the term “revolution” is not always used explicitly). Contrary to the *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, where being revolutionary means “the rational rebellion against intolerable conditions in human society, the rational will ‘to get to the root of all things’ [...] and to improve them”²⁵, becoming-revolutionary is there delineated as an active escape from the given situation, which does not mean its abandonment, but its creative transformation. Rather than a rational activity that brings people from irrational illusions to their real interests and needs, becoming-revolutionary is a process of deterritorialization that employs the mechanisms of the war machine against the State in order to change the social situation. But if the movement of deterritorialization is not to end up in the trap of fascism, it must not only destroy old codes and structures, but also make possible new connections; it must not simply dissolve all molar structures that are related to the State apparatus, but rather transform them in the molecular flows that reshape the role of the individual as well as its place in the net of social relations. The relation between molecular and molar level, between the war machine and the State apparatus must be always preserved, even though the transformed structures undergo radical disintegration and following or concurrent reintegration. The deterritorialization and reterritorialization must always operate together.

As to the process of deterritorialization, it primarily involves masses, but masses in *A Thousand Plateaus* are not grasped as “the nonpolitical, irrationally influenced working segment of the population”²⁶. As opposed to *The Mass Psychology of Facism*, masses are viewed not as a politically passive, irrational part of the population that tends to the reactionary attitudes, but as the deterritorialized population. The masses correspond to the population in the Dionysian state, while the social classes represent the

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

²⁵ W. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. XIV.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

Apollonian state of the reterritorialized population²⁷. Masses are molecular, while the classes are molar²⁸. Masses and classes belong together as two perspectives of sight, but Deleuze and Guattari leave no doubt that the masses play a primary role in the revolutionary deterritorialization. It is thus not enough to analyze the revolutionary transformations in terms of classes that struggle for their interests, for becoming-revolutionary shows its true character only when it is analyzed primarily in terms of deterritorialized masses that follow their desires.

We know already that the masses can be driven not only by the desire for liberation, but also by the desire for total annihilation. Yet, we should also understand what liberation means for Deleuze and Guattari: liberation as such has nothing to do with the achievement of autonomy, be it collective or individual autonomy, for autonomy always requires some molar structures of social or individual integrity. Political or individual autonomy necessarily implies a domination – the domination of one social group over the others, or the domination of adults over the children. The achievement of autonomy is thus, from the revolutionary point of view, a mere compromise with the power of the State apparatus and a stoppage in the becoming-revolutionary. Even though such a compromise with power is necessary, it does not belong to revolutionary deterritorialization as such; it belongs rather to the reterritorialization organized by the State apparatus. Although the process of deterritorialization must not be separated from the process of reterritorialization, revolutionary becoming as such sustains molecular heteronomy and contingency, rather than molar autonomy. This is why Deleuze and Guattari suggest that becoming-revolutionary is in principle becoming-minoritarian²⁹. Rather than turning a specific social minority into a majority, becoming-revolutionary makes possible escaping from the very logic of majority that determines the dominating model of life and pushes all those who do not fit to this model at the social periphery. Becoming-revolutionary is becoming-minoritarian because it opens a line of escape from the given model of majority, without creating a new molar model of majority. Therefore, becoming-revolutionary knows no final victory, but only permanent continuation moderated by the fact that the molecular flows of change cannot do without molar points of stability.

²⁷ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit., p. 221.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 356–358.

Exemplification


Is it difficult to imagine something like this in praxis? Is it hard to find an example of becoming-revolutionary that transforms a given social situation, even though it neither establishes a new model of majority, nor leads to some sort of autonomy? Let us therefore take a look at one concrete example of such a revolutionary becoming. The example we have on mind concerns the mass exodus of Czech and Slovak Gypsies to Canada, Great Britain and other European countries that took place at the end of the last century. As a social group, whose substantial part was exterminated during the Holocaust and the remaining part was deprived of the nomadic way of life by the communist government that forcibly reterritorialized them after the Second World War, Gypsies nowadays represent the most discriminated minority in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Chronically unemployed, uneducated (their children used to be sent to “special schools” for retarded children), they live on the margins of the society with a small chance to break through the invisible wall of prejudice and disdain that separates them from the white majority. The violent attacks of skinheads and white radicals have become daily matters for them. All this is crowned by the fact that on the site of the concentration camp in Lety that served as the last station before their departure to Auschwitz and was managed by the Czech collaborating authorities, there stands now a huge pig farm. In such a situation, Gypsies have indeed no reason to be loyal to the Czech or Slovak Republic. Yet, instead of a direct fight against the white majority or a claim for some form of political autonomy, Gypsies have found a way out of their situation in the process of deterritorialization, when they started to leave for Canada or Great Britain, where they were asking for a political asylum, and even though this was refused, for they were coming from formally democratic states, they returned again or emigrated to another country. During the period in which their requests for political asylum were considered, they profited from Canadian or British hospitality, while taking advantage of the social security systems in their home countries (which was possible even in their absence). Some of them have even got a political asylum, but most of them just joined the process of *devenir-tzigane* that, in the conditions of open frontiers, functioned as an effective war machine against the State apparatus. This war machine, however, operated not only at the molecular level, but also on the molar level, as it caused a great international scandal that made Czech and Slovak governments take the situation seriously and stop ignoring the problems of the Gypsy minority. Still, the whole Gypsy exodus was beyond the comprehension of the Czech and Slovak authorities, able to think only in

terms of conspiracy, even though there was no centre from which the whole process was organized. Rather, the process of mass emigration occurred as a Dionysian deterritorialization that was vivified only by rumors and family ties among Gypsies. The emigrating Gypsies were also accused of social parasitism and reproached for total irresponsibility when they profited from the social systems in the host countries as well as in their home countries. Those who left their apartments were then considered stupid and irrational by the rational majority that never understood that Gypsies just tried to find some way out of the reterritorialization in the social ghetto. In the process of deterritorialization, Gypsies opened a new time-space in which their situation radically changed. If nothing else, there was a movement that was better than their endless stagnation in the double impasse of social discrimination and disintegration of the original, nomadic lifestyle. No doubt that Gypsies were led also by common interests, i.e. by the prospect of work, safety and respect, but the way these interests were followed was Dionysian, rather than Apollonian. And the most interesting is that this way of revolutionary deterritorialization led neither to an outbreak of the fascist epidemic, nor to the reterritorialization in the form of some Gypsy state, which is, by the way, a solution Czech and Slovak racists seem to promote. The astute form of resistance that Czech and Slovak Gypsies discovered was also free from resentment and vengefulness which might be made to appear as justice. Instead of fighting against the enemy, Czech and Slovak Gypsies invented a war machine that did not need an enemy, for it opened a way out of the realm of resentment. And even though this way out of the domain of resentment could not end in the second innocence of the Nietzschean provenance, the Gypsy war machine can serve as an example for those who, under different conditions, prepare their own war machines, and renew the belief in the world that Deleuze in *Negotiations* defines as the ability to elicit events that escape the control of power.

Conclusion

From the description of resentment we came to the question of how we can find a way out from the trap of resentment, which is a fundamental question for all those who are involved in some kind of resistance against the given social order and against the majority way of life (minorities, feminists, ecologists, etc). In agreement with Nietzsche's conviction that resentment is a sort of illness that is hard to be cured Deleuze and Guattari suggest that one is never done with resentment: all we can do is to keep escaping from the structures of the State apparatus and from the majority model of life that

need resentment (either in its internalized, or externalized form) for their functioning.

The example of the Gypsy exodus from Central Europe, however, does not simply attest to the validity of the Deleuzoguattarian theory, but also highlights its limits – the limits that shape the whole theory, and thus cannot refrain from being limiting. With respect to the deterritorialization of Czech and Slovak Gypsies, it may seem puzzling to use warlike rhetoric of war machines. Why should we grasp the peaceful deterritorialization that somehow returned Gypsies to their nomadic way of life in terms of war machines? In fact, Deleuze and Guattari use all their effort to demonstrate that a war machine is not necessarily related to war and violence, for it is primarily a means of social, political and cultural metamorphosis that subverts the control of the State apparatus, but they never leave the logic of conflict, when referring to war machines³⁰. Even if there is no other conflict, the war machine is always in conflict with the State apparatus. This logic of conflict basically conforms to Nietzsche's conviction that escaping from the realm of resentment is possible only through some form of fight (even the so called second innocence is dedicated to fight). For, life as such is here viewed as a clash of different forces. In this Nietzschean view of life there is thus no place for peace, which would Reich admit as a natural condition of working-democracy; there are just various forms of fight. 

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³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 352.