

# Microracism: Diffuse Violence as Discourse and Desire

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**Abstract.** This essay aimed to analyze the Foucauldian concept of State racism in order to provide a thorough explanation on racist discourse. Although Foucault already provided a good account on the construction of the violence of the sovereign, whose power to decide over life and death is justified, it lacks a profound approach on how discourse can create not only a legitimation of power, but also an intolerant, destructive desire, spread among the population. This was explained by what Deleuze and Guattari called the imbrication between micro and macropolitics, whence specific assemblages are created in order to diffusely support the appropriation of State by a destruction machine. Although not perceived by the authors themselves, such idea arguably can fit well the Althusserian concept of ideology as a creation of subjectivity and, therefore, desire. Fascism, understood then as a desire of destruction, encompasses all the well-known forms of intolerance. Racism appears as its main character, since it is the idea of saving the biological purity of a superior race as a requirement to survive, that justifies the fascist cleansing – which ultimately culminates in the destruction of the self; the war machine becoming a suicidal State. The aforementioned increasingly violent process, in all of its stages, is built within the subjectivities of the people. Thus, its battlefield is a discursive where it is possible to face the cancerous Body without Organs of fascism through the creation of lines of flight.

**Keywords.** Microracism, State racism, Micropolitics, Discourse, Desire, Ideology.

## 1. Introduction

On January 24th, 2022, terrible, but unfortunately not unusual news shocked Rio de Janeiro. A 24 year-old black man that emigrated as a political refugee from Congo to Brazil was brutally spanked to death by two men armed with clubs. The motivation for this atrocious crime? He asked for overdue payment related to two days of his work at a local kiosk.

His name was Moïse Kabagambe.

In this paper, we shall better understand this kind of violence, say, racism, which will be discussed as more than simple ethnic intolerance, but as a *dispositif*, an exclusionary strategy which permeates contemporary Western societies. This shall be called *state racism*, following the designation by Foucault [1, p. 81].

It will be pointed out that racism is indeed a form of politics, not simply a race-oriented personal disaffection. But how exactly can that kind of politics influence individual actions of intolerance? The question is how intolerance can work in a way such that it is not only somehow accepted by the people, but also actively endorsed and, as in cases such as

Kabagambe's, practiced with clumsy motivations, by extreme means and leading to outrageous results. It shall be understood in terms of *micropolitics*, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, more specifically demonstrating the macro and micropolitical aspects of racism and how they articulate with each other, making the capillarization of state racism possible [2].

## 2. Research methods

Although inspired by the Kabagambe Case, this research will not be a thorough case study, but instead a concretely applied bibliographical approach on the connection, scarcely analyzed by current academic literature, between both concepts of state racism and micropolitics, more specifically demonstrating the macro and micropolitical aspects of racism and how they articulate with each other, making possible the capillarization of state racism, as happened in the aforementioned murder and several other recent cases in Brazil and around the world, especially, but not exclusively, in countries marked by historical racial tensions.

The philosophical method of reading and comprehension of the selected bibliography, opting

principally for primary sources, is the symptomatic reading, which – after a prior structural method of reading, in which the internal logic of the texts predominates over other aspects – recreates the context of production of the works in order to reconstruct not only their explicit, textual content, but also the connections between them and their contemporaries, understanding differences, similarities and debates, explicit or silent. This method will prove to be the most efficient one for the concrete purpose of this research due to the *mélange* intended between francophone, (post-)structuralist, 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers, mainly Foucault and Deleuze (here, the prefix “post” to “structuralist” shall not be in parentheses), which sustained an enriching dialogical interface over decades, both composing, according to Deleuze himself, a *double*, being the difference essential to the double itself, as were the differences between both of their projects [3, pp. 117-8]. Emblematically, the inscription of difference, concept of enormous importance for Deleuze, in the foucauldian idea of double, is itself a difference from the original, *repeating* the essential difference-repetition deleuzian paradox [4].

### 3. Defining state racism

The concept of state racism is presented by Foucault [1] during the lectures held at the Collège de France in 1976, under the title of *Il faut défendre la société* (Society must be defended), which ironically incorporates the kind of discourse analyzed in that year’s lectures. As part of Foucauldian Genealogy of Power, this concept applies in a specific context of insertion of discourse in different regimes of power, building a regime of *savoir-pouvoir*, that is, knowledge-power [3, p. 212]. This means a power technology is normally associated with knowledge and discourse.

This applies to racism in the sense that, concomitantly as it has been developed as a self-entitled science, epitomized by Social-Darwinism; it has been, most importantly, a technique of exclusion and domination, within the context of race struggle – a common notion along the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, being replaced during the latter by the concept of class struggle. That discourse in fact offered the perception of, for revolutionary purposes, the existence of a race conflict that permeates society in its different instances. It has been nevertheless distorted by racism (understood as discourse), that deforms the concept of race struggle from the description of a conflict to the normative apology for segregation, in terms of biological purity. [1, p. 81]. Racism “takes over and reconverts the form and function of the discourse on race struggle, but it distorts them”. [1, pp. 79-80] This means, it is based on the perception of racial latent or actual conflict that racism is developed, inverting its practical purposes.

The biologization of the discourse on racial struggle makes it no more about conflict between races that, in some extension, are equal; it is now about

cleansing for the preservation of the better, fitter race, which should be purified. This means, as a consequence, the emptying of the emancipatory character of racial discourse, henceforth transformed into a project of the self-defense of one race against the “impure” ones, for which the platform is state sovereignty – and here resides the political (in *stricto sensu* – or, as indicated, the *macropolitical*) disposition of that discourse. This is the sense whence the term State racism can be applied: plainly, as the utilization of the State as a support mechanism for the power of the dominant race, and most important and profoundly, as the insertion of the mechanism of biopower in its apparatus, making it possible, via the fragmentation of the biological continuum, to separate and select the bodies over which to decide whether live or die. This decision assumes the form, as mentioned before, of self-defense. Under the light of racial war, by eliminating the undesirables, it is by killing that life is viable, not only to survive, but to live purely. The right to kill is legitimated by virtue of the penetration of this discourse [1, pp. 81-2, 25 notion of “ideological penetration” of the agents of production, as Althusser [4, p. 3] would put, although the differences between the concepts of ideology and *savoir-pouvoir*, from him and Foucault, shall be discussed in the terms of the continual, progressive distancing between the latter and the marxist tradition.

It is clear, then, that a power to decide over life or death is discursively constructed on the basis of the idea of survival created by racism. Its effectuation in society, which means the actual exercise of sovereignty, is presented by different mechanisms and technologies of biopower, such as prison and vigilance. Nevertheless, its spread and replication in the concrete actions of the individuals – in this case the atrocious murder of Kabagambe – can be understood with the notion of articulation between micro and macropolitics.

### 4. Discrimination, macro and micro

Acknowledging the fact that the State is imbricated with social life, not representing a different, centralized stance from social segmentations, it is possible to understand that there is a mutual interference between State and private life. It can be understood by studying the two lines of segmentarity that compose them, which will make it possible to analyze the conjunctions and articulations between the two kinds of politics that must be put into question when the problem of different forms of discrimination is debated. Namely, *la micropolitique et la macropolitique*.

#### 4.1 Overcoding: Black holes and normalization

The opposition between State and civil society is understood by Deleuze and Guattari, instead of a

quantitative distinction or the simple existence of different fields of application of the fluxes, as a difference in their nature, constituting both of them unique, but interrelated systems of coding [2, p. 265].

The social systems of coding can be understood as the several different regimes of distribution of power and social status, of fluxes of desire, of constitution of language, creation of custom, division and demarcations of property, and so on. They exist in every kind of society. The difference between one without State and the State society consists in the resonance of all centers of power around the State apparatus [2, p. 257], operating an overcoding of desire, libidinally centralizing society around the figure of the sovereign ruler [7, p. 236].

These centers of overcoding produce what Deleuze and Guattari call "black holes", again in a political sense. They are the center of different social coding systems that apply, through machines of *visag  t  *, binary segmentations that proceed by exclusion or acceptance of the individuals or groups – that is, different assemblages can or cannot be tolerated – according to their belonging or not to determinate groups. These processes of selection build a white wall of deviance patterns, which by the successive operation of acceptance or denial of each characteristic, chooses which one is the enemy to be destroyed. That is how racism operates: by the inscription of (un)selected groups in patterns of deviance from the white, European model. It is not, then, by direct, plain exclusion, but by their colocation in certain discriminatory places, that the negro, the Arab, the Jew, are differently inserted in society as, somehow, barely-tolerable, killable people. They are not an entirely Other, but a similar that, nevertheless, is not similar enough to be accepted by that process of successive, binary normalization [2, pp. 217-8]. This is how, in accordance with Foucault, Deleuze e Guattari put racism in terms of a normative pattern that creates a discursively legitimated power to decide over life and death. Racism is, then, against a created state of abnormality that would characterize some individuals [8, p. 277].

#### 4.2 The two lines of segmentarity

It is demonstrated, then, how the discourse of racism, as well as all discriminatory discourses, produce an inscription in deviance patterns that are not, in any sense, a lacanian *forclusion*, but a constructed abnormality that put individuals under constant vigilance and potential lethal violence.

It is obvious how this violence can be operated by the State, as we know the immanent violence to police and other repressive State *appareils*. But how could it be transformed into a diffuse violence, executed by anyone, even, in some cases, the discriminated individuals themselves?

There would be, then, a case of studying the articulation between the two lines of segmentarity.

First, the hard, large-numbered one, composing the so-called macropolitics, is essentially marked by massive binarization machines which produce the social stratification, including the class and ethnical divisions. The molar line of segmentarity composes its assemblages according to great categorizations: to be an Arab man, a cisgender woman, a white gay man. Every great stratification is subscribed to that large-composed social insertion which publicly characterizes individuals and groups, establishing a judgment according to their filiation to different assemblages, and their pertinence to varied layers [2, pp. 239-40, 245].

The basic structure of the molar line of segmentarity is, then, the one of what we call the politics, in a strict sense. When the individuals are put into the binary categories, they are processed by the machines of *visag  t  * that select or reject each of their insertions in hard, molar assemblages. In other, more concrete words, it is by the basic, evident, often identity characteristics of each person that they are labelled into determinate social positions. That is, therefore, the macropolitical dimension of every kind of acceptance or discrimination: the insertion itself into a specific role.

Second, there is the malleable line of segmentarity, even though it puts the very same questions at stake. The difference between this line and the other is not, then, a difference of subject, nor in the number of their assemblages. It resides in the nature and structure of the machines operated by them. The molar line is arborescent, i. e., has an organized structure based on the great social assemblages. In this sense, when we talk, for instance, about structural racism, it is about the structures in society and the official or unofficial State politics. On the other hand, the molecular, malleable line, is one composed by a rhizomatic, a-centered (non-)structure, which differs from the arborescent exactly because due to the absence of center, of organization, of genealogical memory of the oppressive significant [2, pp. 32, 243]. This opposes the molar line and makes it possible for the malleable line to allow the presence of *microperepts* for which the hard line is not permeable. That makes different forms of life insurgence possible through the formation of lines of flight, which define society from the micropolitical point of view [2, pp. 255, 259-60, 263].

There is, in this micropolitical field, an entire non-codifiable multiplicity of migrations, dislocations, invaginations, elements of any kind that are not subject to the great segmentarizations of the molar kind. [2, p. 246] And within this multiplicity – a phrase that is contradictory in a revealing sense, since the multiplicity itself does not have a proper external and external face, but coefficients of variation – it is possible to create lines of flight. They are, as opposed to power relations, the exact possibility of resistance, of making the world run through new possibilities. The lines of flight have the power to create new weapons to fight the oppressive

power relations, molecular or, most frequently, molar. They are always present, even in the most powerful regimes, because modes of being are themselves possible lines of flight. Being or becoming – in the specific sense of becoming as the emission of particles towards a lifeform – can itself mean a menace to the large structures. Being a black, being a transgender, becoming woman, foreigner, animal. All of them are weapons countering the oppressive machine of *visageité*. All of them are chances to create the new through variation, through deviation [2, pp. 249-50, 334, 338-40].

Individuals, groups, are all composed by these lines. They are mutually imbricated, never stopping to produce interference, to transform each other [2, pp. 240, 247]. The assemblages can even create rupture lines, traveling through new kinds of layers of desire, abruptly deterritorializing themselves into the new [2, pp. 243-5]. There is a risk, however, immanent to this process of rupture and also to the creation of lines of flight: the cancerous Body without Organs, the destruction desire. Fascism, micro and macro, as analyzed below.

## 5. Fascism (and racism) as desire

### 5.1 Cancerous Body without Organs

The Body without Organs (BwO) is a non-concept created by Deleuze and Guattari in order to describe a (dis)order of practices related to desire [2, p. 186]. Not a concept because it is a multiplicity of practices, more than an idea. Not an order because it is built exactly as opposed to an organized system. The Body without Organs is primarily a body without organization, without definite, rigid functions. The organs are physiologically, instead of anatomically, destroyed. The organized body, which is subordinated to instances of power, to taming, to the judgment of God, this one must be indeed destroyed in order to create freedom through lines of flight [2, pp. 186, 196-8].

The BwO is not any sort of acquisition, but a construction, a creation, something found by an experiencing subject [2, p. 187]. Its matter and the energy is desire. “The BwO is the immanence field of desire, the desire’s own consistency plan” [2, p. 191]. Therefore, a multiple, full of different zones of intensity, a field where desire and the pleasure associated with it can be lived [2, pp. 190, 195].

There is a risk, however, in the creation of the BwO. In fact, there are a myriad of dangers inherent to this process, because the deconstruction of the organization is not possible to be made in absolute terms. The absolute limit of (conceptual, not clinic) schizophrenia, the pure deterritorialization beyond the *socius* [7, p. 292] creates an empty, dead BwO instead of an active, creative human being, free from the cleavages of the machine of *visageité*.

In order to guarantee the required minimum of

structure in order to maintain the BwO apart from the limit of pure schizophrenia, organized in layers and which reterritorializes the cancerous cells, which may try to take over and assume the control of desire itself. But the layers themselves can become totalitarians, subordinating desire into machines of subjectivation which interpellate the individual in different, unfree ways. Desire of money, of State, of police, of repression, of destruction of the other, which is not an other, as seen, in a proper sense, but an unequal, a different self [2, pp. 201-4].

### 5.2 Destruction and suicide

Fascism is exactly the desire of destruction. It is the BwO which desires its own suppression, its own repression, similarly to a death drive [7, pp. 124-5].

The essential character of fascism is not, then, a totalitarian State: this is only the instance whence fascism regimes rule and put into practice their demolition drive. Fascism is a matter of desire, of molecular desire, the creation of micro black holes inside different linearities, in different contexts. The organization of the National-socialist State is only possible if sustained [2, p. 261]. Totalitarianism is a matter of State, while fascism consists in a war machine which can take over the State [2, p. 281].

Therefore, and functioning as a general theory of the political machines, described in detail in *L’anti-Œdipe*, is that *political form is only derivative to the infrastructure composed by desire* [7, pp. 75, 124]. Then, it perfectly can vary in ideology (said in a broad sense of the word): leftist fascism is as possible as the more traditional, right-wing fascism assemblage. And we always talk about *microfascism* when the question is that of desire, since they are the result of an assemblage situated in the molecular line of segmentarity, affecting individuals and groups way before grasping the macropolitical State apparatus [2, p. 262].

Indeed, the risk is much bigger when the whole picture is seen. All is lost, already, when the people develop a fascist desire. This becomes real when the lines of flight, instead of reconnecting to other lines and creating something new, becomes pure abolition, losing its potential creative force [2, p. 280]. It centralizes itself around the fascist-paranoid pole of libidinal investment, instead of making the most of its deterritorialization potential and fully becoming schizo-revolutionary [7, p. 439]. All forms of discrimination, such as racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and so on, fall under the form of fascist desire, since their essence is this same destructive desire assemblage.

The result, when the fascist, abolition-desiring war machine takes over the State, is a suicidal State. A nihilism made real. The glorification of death as the ultimate end, the final, glorious moment of the life of every fascist. Total war as the epitome of the State, and losing the war means (or it shall mean) losing the nation. That is what the world saw with Hitler, with the final solution and the complete destruction of

Germany [2, pp. 282-3].

And as it has been watched during the final years of Hitlerist Germany, the self-destruction is aimed as the ultimate purification in order to provide salvation. Assembling Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari, we may state that *a form of State racism is always present when the fascist war machine takes over and rules the State*. Because factually promoting destruction first comes with the destruction of the other. But the other, as we saw, is not really an Other, but a different self. Being the furthest separated by the white wall, differences abolished, the next step is coming closer into purification, until the moment when the movement becomes fully autophagical, resulting in the ultimate destruction aforementioned.

Having analyzed fascism as desire, it must be put into question how it grows.

### 5.3 Ideology and desire: how assemblages work

Fascist desire is not, above all, some kind of autonomous hate. Instead, it is a result of a complex engineering, an administration of microdoses of fear and hate macropolitically organized [2, pp. 262-3]. Desire is always fruit of some kind of arrangement made by the assemblages that compose it [2, p. 280].

Bearing that in mind, one may conclude accurately that the will, the desire, the intentions, the feelings, are not in any sense a fruit of an autonomous, perhaps transcendental subject. Instead, they are assembled in a delicate micropolitical scheme, normally macropolitically orchestrated. A schizophrenic cogito: our voices express not a direct, but a free-indirect discourse, to which the power relations are inherent, since communication itself is a domination [2, pp. 95-8, 106-8].

What is different between this notion of mind and language and the althusserian concept of ideology? Deleuze and Guattari argued several times that fascism and libido in general are not a matter of ideology, but of desire investment [7, pp. 124-5, 141-2, 158-9, 170, 284, 412-7, 485-6]. But their notion of ideology constantly refers to the Marxian thesis of an intentional misunderstanding of the world according to the interests of the bourgeoisie, therefore a negative cover to truth itself – a truth-revealing Platonism that indeed does not fit well the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. On the contrary, the concept of ideology by Althusser [9, pp. 192-3] grasps an entire other meaning, which is the unconscious system of representations of the relations between the individual and the social sphere. Historically und topologically specific, ideology constitutes subjectivity itself, molding and investing the field of desire while interpellating the subject to the smallest gestures of his ordinary life since before their birth [10, pp. 281-2]. This notion is absolutely compatible with the idea of assemblage, whence the individual is artificially constructed, being the result of its constitution. In both cases, the

Nietzschean “*es denkt*” [11, pp. 24, §16], his own cogito of the multiplicity underlying to the idea of individual, functions as a theoretical basis, even though it came to Althusser through Freud.

Bearing that in mind, it is possible to state that the interference of macropolitics in micropolitics is mainly the ideological constitution of desire through the diverse ideological State *appareils*, which act in the aforementioned role of interpellation [10, pp. 98-9]. The media, the scholar system, the internet algorithms, and so on, *all forms of internalization of any sort of content by the individual from the world are ideologically embedded, direct or lateral, intentional or unconscious, functioning as a superstructural system of reproduction of Capitalism*.

Being that, fascist desire is nothing but a possible overdetermination to capitalism. When fomented, when ideologically constructed, when applied in its different forms – racism, transphobia, misogyny etc. – to the social field, it does nothing more than, perhaps, reproduce a macroeconomical machine.

If cases such as the atrocious murder of Kabagambe happen, they do because of a fascist (racist) constitution of subjectivities that took place during the long period of slavery in Brazil, which depended on the discourse of racism to perpetrate the forceful and cruel subordination of black people to white, bourgeois plantation owners. As a consequence, subjectivity has been molded into a racist view in order to sustain a *status quo* in which the sovereign power had the power to decide over life and death of the enslaved black people.

## 6. Conclusion

Fascism, in all its forms, is a matter of desire and subjectivity. It has a profound relation with, being derived from, the mode of production, since it is ideologically constructed. Ideology itself represents the influence of macropolitics on micropolitical assemblages, which is made possible by the ideological State *appareils*.

If so, how to face it? There are two levels in which that can be made, since there are both macro and micropolitical assemblages at stake. The macropolitical solution would be to take the ideological *appareils* over through revolutionary action. It would be not guaranteed, though, that subjectivity would be rapidly and thoroughly transformed. In fact, it is not possible to assure in any case.

In addition to the frontal takeover, and provisorily in substitution to it, subjectivity must be transformed in its delicate, microassemblages of desire. This can be possible through different manners of what Guattari called, while staying in Brazil, a “molecular revolution”, which is perpetrated through the existence itself of singular modes of being, which create lines of flight that not only specifically face the oppression, but also creates the new via a positive relation to desire, producing new, tolerating, non-

fascist subjectivities [12, pp. 29-31, 45-6]. This can be the role of philosophy, as Foucault stated as the goal of *The Anti-Oedipus: an ars erotica, theoretica, politico*, which serves as an Ethics of *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life* [13, pp. xli, xlii]. This paper must be understood as a practice of that art.

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