



Richard Lindner, *Boy with Machine*  
 (1954, o/c 40 x 30, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Harrison, Batavia, Ohio)

## Freudo-Marxism

FÉLIX GUATTARI

*Question:* How, in your opinion, can or should the works of Freud and Marx complement one another?

*F. Guattari:* Can or should . . . The problem is that they have effectively done so. At least in the university, where the concoction of “cocktails” mixing the two in various proportions seems to be the guarantee of an “appropriate” political affiliation. Reread Marx, return to Freud, assure their peaceful coexistence . . . a whole Program! And then isn’t it marvelous to be able to serve the people this way, on the sole front of “theoretical combat” without having to leave our lecture-hall or our office?

No, definitely, this kind of question makes me very suspicious. Freudo-Marxism is the busy work of the Victor Cousin type of academics of our time. The academician always returns to the same devices for shunning reality, by taking refuge behind the exegesis and interpretation of texts. But behind Marx and Freud, behind “Marxology” and “Freudology,” there is the shitty reality of the Communist movement, of the psychoanalytic movement. That’s where we should start and that’s where we should always return. And when I speak of shit, it is hardly a metaphor: Capitalism reduces everything to a fecal state, to the state of undifferentiated and unencoded flux, out of which each person in his private, guilt-ridden way must pull out his part. Capitalism is the regime of generalized interchangeability: anything in the “right” proportions can equal anything else. Take Marx and Freud for example, reduced to a state of dogmatic mush; they can be introduced into the system without presenting any risk to it. Marxism and Freudianism, carefully neutralized by the Institutions of the worker’s movement, the psychoanalytic movement, and the university, not only no longer disturb anyone, but have actually become the guarantors of the established order, a demonstration via reduction to the absurd, that it is no longer possible to seriously unsettle that order. One might object that these theories shouldn’t be blamed for deviations in their application; that the original message has been betrayed; that precisely it is necessary to return to the sources, review the faulty translations, etc. . . . That’s the trap of fetishism. There is no comparable example in any scientific domain of a similar respect for the texts and formulae pronounced by great scientists. Revisionism is the rule here. The process of relativizing, dissolving, and dislocating these established theories is permanent. Those which resist are constantly under attack. The

*Intended for Le Nouvel Observateur, which never published it. The title is ours.*

ideal thing would not be to mummify them, but to leave them open to other constructs, all equally temporary, but better strengthened by such experimentation. *What counts in the long run is the use one makes of a theory.* Therefore, we cannot disregard the pragmatic implementation of Marxism and Freudianism. We must start from existing practices in order to retrace the fundamental flaws of these theories insofar as, in one way or another, they lend themselves to distortions of that kind.

Theoretical activity escapes only with difficulty the propensity of capitalism to ritualize and retrieve any minimally subversive practice by cutting it off from its libidinal investments (cathexes); only by confronting real struggles can theoretical activity hope to leave its ghetto. The primary task of a theory of "desire" must be to discern the possible ways in which it can invade the social field, rather than guarantee the quasi-mystical exercise of psychoanalytical eavesdropping such as it has evolved since Freud. Correlatively, any theoretical development bearing upon class struggle at this time should be concerned primarily with its connection with libidinal production and its impact on the creativity of the masses. Marxism, in all its versions, excludes desire, and loses its guts with bureaucracy and humanism, while Freudianism, from its very beginning, has not only been alien to class struggle, but moreover has continued to distort its first discoveries about desire by trying to lead it back, handcuffed, to the familial and social norms of the establishment. The refusal to confront these fundamental deficiencies, the attempt to mask them, lead one to believe that the internal limits of these theories are actually insurmountable.

There are two ways to absorb these theoretical statements; the academic one, which takes *or* leaves the text in its integrity, and the revolutionary one, which takes *and* leaves it at the same time, doctoring it to its requirements in an attempt to use it in order to elucidate its own co-ordinates and guide its practice. *The only question is to try to make a text work.* And, from this point of view, what has always been alive in Marxism and in Freudianism, in their initial stages, is not the coherence of their statements, but the fact that the very act of enunciating them represents a breaking off, a way of telling Hegelian dialectics, bourgeois political economy, academic psychology, and psychiatry of the time, etc. to go to hell.

Even the idea of the possible coupling of these two separate bodies, Marxism and Freudianism, falsifies the perspective. Some bits of a "dismembered" Marxism can and should converge with a theory and practice of desire; bits of a "dismembered" Freudianism can and should converge with a theory and practice pertaining to class struggle. Even the idea of a separation, between a private exercise of desire and public struggles between opposite interests, leads implicitly to integration into capitalism. Private ownership of the means of production is intrinsically bound up with the appropriation of desire by the individual, the family, and the social order. One begins by neutralizing the worker's access to desire, by familial castration, by the lures of consumption, etc. in order to subsequently seize without difficulty, his capacity for social work. To sever desire from work:

such is the primary imperative of capitalism. To separate political economy from libidinal economy: such is the mission of those theoreticians who serve capitalism. Work and desire are in contradiction only in the framework of relations of production, of well-defined social and familial relations: those of capitalism and bureaucratic socialism.

There is no alienation of desire, no psychosexual complexes that may be radically and permanently separated from repression and psychosocial complexes. For example, to tell the present-day Chinese that their Maoism would continue to depend upon a universal Oedipus would be the same as considering Maoism itself as something eternal, always being reborn from its own ashes. But, of course, history just doesn't work like that! A revolutionary in France after May '68, with regard to desire is of a completely *different race* than his father in June '36. There is no possible Oedipal relationship between them! Neither rivalry, nor identification! No continuity in change! And if it is indeed true that the rupture is as radical as that, theoreticians of society and those of psychoanalysis would do well to prepare themselves for a serious recycling.

*Translated by Janis Forman*