

The fascist state of mind desires low Shannon entropy

*Was kein Unglück ist, sondern die erste Reinigung des Seins von seiner tiefsten Verunstaltung durch die Vormacht des Seienden.*¹

*un type ou pôle [du délire] paranoïaque fascisant, qui investit la formation de souveraineté centrale, la surinvestit en en faisant la cause finale éternelle de toutes les autres formes sociales de l'histoire, contreinvestit les enclaves ou la périphérie, désinvestit toute libre figure du désir—oui, je suis des vôtres, et de la classe et de la race supérieures*²

Christopher Bollas writes that “something banal in its ordinariness – namely, our cohering of life into ideologies or theories – is the seed of the Fascist state of mind when such ideology must (for whatever reason) become total.” One form of ‘committive genocide,’ as he calls it, is ‘categorization or aggregation’—the assignment of a person to a mass by which the person’s idiosyncrasy is obscured. Bollas illustrates: “It may be ordinary: ‘Oh, but of course she is Freudian.’ It may be permissible, if dicey: ‘Well, of course she is ill’ or ‘Well, he is a psychopath.’ Or it may be an extreme act of lumping together: ‘He’s a Jew.’”³ (And, ‘She’s a fascist.’)

Adam Phillips comments that

“What we see in these examples is the diminution of difference, of singularity; the dehumanization of individuals if what we take the human to be is something beyond a certain point ungeneralizable, uncategorizable; what Bollas calls aptly the act of lumping together both devitalizes people and apparently familiarizes them. What is lost in this categorization is the individual and idiosyncratic details of aliveness; details that virtually by definition cannot be generalized or categorized. . . . aliveness and idiosyncrasy go together.”⁴

Phillips characterizes the fascist state of mind as “the militant, paranoid imposition of sameness (on the self and on others), the terror of difference requiring its abolition.”⁵ Thus Deleuze and Guattari show—in the work Foucault nicknamed *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*—that

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XIV*; *Gesamtausgabe Band 96*: 238:

<https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=96.00&pg=238> . “As *Black Notebooks* editor Peter Trawny has noted, Heidegger’s glorification of the ‘purification of being’ paralleled National Socialism’s obsession with racial purity, thereby revealing the extent to which his *Denken* had become entangled in the ‘cleansing fantasies’ of Nazi race doctrine.” Richard Wolin, *Heidegger in Ruins: Between Philosophy and Ideology* (2022) 67-68; citing Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos einer jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (2014) 133.

² Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *L’Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* (1973) 329:

https://monoskop.org/images/5/5f/Deleuze_Gilles_Guattari_Felix_LAnti-Oedipe.pdf .

³ “The Fascist state of mind” in *The Christopher Bollas Reader* (2011) 83, 88-89.

⁴ “Dead or Alive” in Adam Phillips, *On Giving Up* (2024) 47.

⁵ *Id.* 33.

“Oedipus presupposes [*suppose*] a fantastic repression of desiring-machines.”⁶ So also, to anticipate a bit, Kant’s categorical imperative supposes a fantastic repression of ethico-variants, Heidegger’s Nazi U. supposes a fantastic repression of disparateness of *Wissenschaften*, and Jesus’s Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδός supposes a fantastic repression of heterodoxy: **the** way or no way.

In Darwinian terms, aliveness and **variation** go together. Gabriele Carcassi and his co-authors take a concept of entropy⁷ they rename ‘Shannon variability’ as indexing “variability of the elements within a distribution, how diverse the objects are from each other within the collection.” They identify ‘how much variability’ with ‘degree of diversity,’ variability and diversity are interchangeable terms for them.⁸ Within their framework ‘diminution of difference’ between elements of a distribution, ‘the act of lumping together,’ lowers the Shannon variability of the set. The variability indexed by Shannon’s method is always with respect to some specified property. For instance, if Tolstoy is correct the set of all happy families has no Shannon variability with respect to happiness, whereas the set of all unhappy families has maximum Shannon variability with respect to **unhappiness**.

We may conjure another intuition of the notion using the *fasces*, “an assemblage of wooden rods, typically about a meter and a half long, bound [in parallel to form a cylinder] by leather straps together with a single-headed axe—the equipment needed to inflict either corporal or capital punishment.”⁹ It’s likely the *lictors* did not make these things, *servi* did. Imagine a slave ordered to carry onto the assembly floor thirteen¹⁰ milled rods and put them down. The passive-aggressive slave (e.g. Riff Raff in *Rocky Horror*) complies by heaving his armful of rods into the air and letting them drop ass-over-elbow, like pick-up sticks.¹¹ The rods of the resulting heap vary in their orientation in 3-space—they’re jumbled. (The plane of the floor does limit their variety of orientation in that none pierces the floor.) With respect to the property of mutual orientation a jumble of rods has high Shannon variability compared to the low variability of the assembled *fasces*. A rod’s skewness to another in any degree contributes to jumblehood, and must be eliminated ‘by force’ to cohere into the symmetry of the *fasces*.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane [1977] 2009) 3. ‘Schizophrenia’ in the merism ‘C. and S.’ is not the illness of that name.

⁷ Too bad Nietzsche didn’t say ‘there are many kinds of entropy.’ “The point is not to find the one true definition of entropy; it’s to come up with concepts that serve useful functions in the appropriate contexts. Just don’t let anyone bamboozle you by pretending that one definition or the other is the uniquely correct meaning of entropy.” Sean Carroll, *From Eternity to Here: The Quest for the Ultimate Theory of Time* (2010) 171.

⁸ Gabriele Carcassi, Christine A. Aidala, and Julian Barbour, “Variability as a better characterization of Shannon entropy” (2021): <https://arxiv.org/abs/1912.02012> . See also Carcassi’s videosplainers: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmNMSMaNjnDcKnXpvJy26z83OloND1ZXr> .

⁹ T. Corey Brennan, *The Fasces: A History of Ancient Rome’s Most Dangerous Political Symbol* (2023) 1.

¹⁰ The canonical American number. See: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/secret-symbol-of-the-lincoln-memorial.htm> and *The Fasces* ch. 10.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pick-up_sticks .

Low-variability systems are often conceptualized as ‘ordered.’ ‘Peace,’ ‘calm,’ ‘tranquility,’ ‘concord,’ ‘harmony,’ and the like are terms denoting the order of an ordered human system. This sense accrued to the classical *fascies* through assimilation of its symbolism to the ‘bundle of sticks’ fable; whose moral, Brennan informs us, came to be expressed by the Sallustian tag *concordia parvas res crescere, discordia magnas dilabi*.¹² *L'Italia*, Mussolini told the Chamber of Deputies, *vuole la pace, vuole la tranquillità, vuole la calma laboriosa; gliela daremo con l'amore, se è possibile, o con la forza se sarà necessario*.¹³

The problem that the fascist state of **mind** seeks to solve, in the view of Bollas and Phillips, is internal conflict, the disorder of discord that is the self.¹⁴ Whatever the need or the anxiety that “sponsors the drive to certainty,” Bollas writes, “which becomes the dynamic in the Fascist construction, the outcome is to empty the mind of all opposition (on the actual stage of world politics, to kill the opposition).” “The greater the annihilation of the opposition, the more delusionally narcissistic the Fascist mind must become . . . a mind that idealizes itself as a cleaning process . . . a state of mind that rids itself of opposition by permanent violence.”¹⁵ Phillips adds that “an anxious and determined refusal of the complexity of one’s own mind and the minds of others” is a self-cure for aliveness. “One’s aliveness, one’s being alive, can depend on the vitalizing effect of conflict; in the wish, in a fascist state of mind, to abolish conflict, the individual kills off his aliveness.”¹⁶ Depletes her variants, lowers her Shannon entropy.

The treatise *Anti-Oedipus* sounds in population thinking.¹⁷ “What a mistake to have ever said *the id*,” say Deleuze and Guattari. “Everywhere *it* is machines,” desiring-machines

¹² Brennan translates, ‘with harmony small matters grow, with discord great ones are ruined.’ “The story is first found in the Greek author Babrius (second century CE), was attached to Aesop’s collection of *Fables*, and is known variously as ‘The Old Man and his Sons’ or ‘The Bundle of Sticks.’” *The Fascies* 110, 3.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Old_Man_and_his_Sons .

¹³ Address of 3 January 1925:

<https://bibliotecafascista.blogspot.com/2012/03/discorso-alla-camera-3-gennaio-1925.html> .

¹⁴ Freud described “the modern human subject as by definition at odds with himself and others, ununifiable and fundamentally incoherent – in unrelenting internal conflict between rivalrous and contending parts of the self, and with others similarly divided; and so by the same token, as it were, always tempted by forms of sovereignty and mastery and unity [and *Eigentlichkeit*?], by the fantasy of the ego as master in what he took to be his own house.” “On Not Believing Anything” in *On Giving Up* 98. Cf. ‘Herrnstein’s Law’: “Beyond the dynamics of this competition itself there is no one in charge.” Herrnstein and Dražen Prelec, “Melioration: A Theory of Distributed Choice,” in Richard J. Herrnstein, *The Matching Law: Papers in Psychology and Economics* (ed. Howard Rachlin and David I. Laibson 1997) 292.

¹⁵ “The Fascist state of mind” 92, 86, 87.

¹⁶ “Dead or Alive” 46.

¹⁷ “And, having abandoned the *eidos* in the context of evolutionary theory, one finds it untenable also in every other way. The philosophical consequences of this aspect of Darwinism”—its replacement of typological thinking with population thinking—“have not yet been fully exploited.” Ernst Mayr, Introduction to Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition* (1964) xx.

(syntheso-diaereso-vario-machines), “real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.”¹⁸ ‘The’ unconscious is always already a population of desiring-machines: “In the unconscious there are only populations, groups, and machines. . . . machines in the strict sense, because they proceed by breaks and flows, associated waves and particles, associative flows and partial objects, inducing—always at a distance—transverse connections, inclusive disjunctions, and polyvocal conjunctions, thereby producing selections, detachments, and remainders, with a transference of individuality, in a generalized schizogenesis whose elements are the schizzes-flows.”¹⁹

‘Polyvocality’ is characteristic of populations of desiring-machines. As Phillips puts it, “To assume that there is an unconscious is to believe that there really are other people, other voices, inside and outside oneself (that if there is a mind it has minds of its own).”²⁰ Of “strange Anglo-American literature,” write D. & G., “from Thomas Hardy, from D. H. Lawrence to Malcolm Lowry, from Henry Miller to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac . . . through the impasses and the triangles a schizophrenic flow moves, irresistibly; sperm, river, drainage, inflamed genital mucus, or a stream of words that do not let themselves be coded, a libido that is too fluid, too viscous: a violence against syntax, a concerted destruction of the signifier, a non-sense erected as a flow, polyvocality that returns to haunt all relations.”²¹

For Kant ethical polyvocality is just such a repulsive mess. Inquiry into demotic moral notions brings forth, he says, a nasty mish-mosh, a spicilege of views and half-grasped principles. One comes across the peculiar kink of human nature but sometimes too the idea of a rational nature after all, sometimes perfection sometimes bliss, here moral sentiment there fear of God, with a dash of this and a slap of that in an awful mush.²² Evidently Kant had a low threshold of tolerance for dirt *qua* disorder, matter out of place, because he had such a powerful desire for system.²³ He cleaned it all up for himself with the categorical imperative, ‘Kant’s mop.’

¹⁸ *Anti-Oedipus* 3.

¹⁹ *Id.* 283, 287.

²⁰ Adam Phillips, Introduction to Sigmund Freud, *Wild Analysis* (tr. Alan Bance 2002) xv.

²¹ *Anti-Oedipus* 132-133. Old story: With his mace Indra smashed Vrtra the blocker and released the waters.

²² *so bringt es einen ekelhaften Mischmasch von zusammengestoppelten Beobachtungen und halbvernünftigen Principien zum Vorschein . . . man bald die besondere Bestimmung der menschlichen Natur (mitunter aber auch die Idee von einer vernünftigen Natur überhaupt), bald Vollkommenheit, bald Glückseligkeit, hier moralisches Gefühl, dort Gottesfurcht, von diesem etwas, von jenem auch etwas in wunderbarem Gemische antreffen. Das Bonner Kant-Korpus: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (Akademie-Ausgabe Band 4) 409-410: <https://korpora.org/kant/aa04/409.html>.*

²³ “My other source of inspiration has been my husband. In matters of cleanness his threshold of tolerance is so much lower than my own that he more than anyone else has forced me into taking a stand on the relativity of dirt.” Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (1966) viii. (Cf. Dr. Peter Venkman’s Douglasite stand: “I have more than two grades of laundry, okay? There’s not just clean and dirty. There are many subtle levels.”) “I am going to argue that our ideas of dirt also express symbolic systems and that the

And Kant's rhetoric here *ist ein bisschen nazimäßig*. The **pure** (*reine*) thought of duty (*Pflicht*) and more generally of the moral law, Kant says, "mixed with no foreign [*fremden*] addition of empirical inducements, has by way of reason alone [*der Vernunft allein*] . . . an influence on the human heart so much more powerful [*so viel mächtiger*] than all other incentives, which may be summoned from the empirical field, in the consciousness of its dignity [*Würde* (τιμή)] despises [*verachtet*] the latter and can gradually become their master [*Meister*]." ²⁴

Bollas employs the image of 'binding' to describe the fascist state of mind, yet without explicitly connecting that imagery to the bound rods of the *fasces*. But the *fasces* as concord-for-violence shadows Bollas's discussion of "a special act of *binding* as doubts and counter-views are expelled, and the mind ceases to be complex, achieving a simplicity held together initially by bindings around the signs of the ideology. . . . As the empty binding of the order of signs constitutes an act of de-semiosis, it enables the mind to function in a highly simplified way, . . . as a binding of mental forces to create a sense capable of murder." ²⁵

Heidegger deploys the concept of binding when he teaches the Freiburgers in May, 1933 that "a will to the essence of the university" will be a true one "provided that German students, through the new Student Law, ²⁶ place themselves under [*sich selbst unter stellt*] the law of their essence and thereby first define this essence. *Sich selbst das Gesetz geben, ist höchste Freiheit.*" He instructs that, to bring the *Wissenschaften* back "from their boundless and aimless dispersal in individual fields and corners . . . The much-lauded 'academic freedom' will be expelled [*verstoßen*] from the German university; for this freedom was not genuine [*war unecht*] because it was only negative. It primarily meant lack of concern, arbitrariness of intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint [*Ungebundenheit*] in what was done and left undone. The concept of the freedom of the German student is now [*sc.* with the victory of

difference between pollution behaviour in one part of the world and another is only a matter of detail. . . . If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt, then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system." *Id.* 35. Where system, dirt (entropy).

²⁴ *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (tr. Mary Gregor 1998) 22-23. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* 410-411: <https://korpora.org/kant/aa04/410.html>.

²⁵ "The Fascist state of mind" 83, 84.

²⁶ "What the Nazis were trying to achieve was a cultural revolution, in which alien cultural influences – notably the Jews but also modernist culture more generally – were eliminated and the German spirit reborn. . . . In the universities it was above all the students, helped [incited?] by a small number of Nazi professors such as the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who drove the purges on." Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (2005) 16.

National Socialism] brought back to its truth. In future, the bond and service [*Bindung und Dienst*] of German students will unfold from this truth.”²⁷

Rector Heidegger then enumerates for the students the three bond-servitudes that will constitute their freedom. “The first bond binds to the national community. . . . From now on, this bond will be fixed and rooted in the existence [*Dasein*] of the student by means of labor service.” “The second bond binds to the honor and destiny [*die Ehre und das Geschick*] of the nation in the midst of all the other peoples. . . . In future, this bond will encompass and penetrate the entire existence [*Dasein*] of the student as military service.” “The third bond of the students binds them to the spiritual mission of the German people [*den geistigen Auftrag des deutschen Volkes*]. . . . Young students . . . force themselves, from the very ground of their being [*sich von Grund*], to serve this knowledge.”²⁸

Sich selbst das Gesetz geben, ist höchste Freiheit. (Cf. Goethe’s *Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben*.) The highest freedom is self-delivery into subordination. *Höchste Freiheit*, so to speak, *ist Gebundenheit*. With this hook Heidegger reaches in to seize what Harry Frankfurt calls ‘some quite fundamental structural feature of our lives.’ The suggestion, in Frankfurt’s words, “that a person may be in some sense liberated through acceding to a power which is not subject to his immediate voluntary control is among the most ancient and persistent themes of our moral and religious tradition. It must surely reflect some quite fundamental structural feature of our lives.”²⁹

The liberation which the fascist state of mind seeks, as we’ve heard in the foregoing and also likely felt, is from ‘the terror of difference,’ from ‘the complexity of one’s own mind and the minds of others,’ from the uncanniness of the ungeneralizable uncategorizable, from incoherence, internal conflict, polyvocality, counter-views, doubts, uncertainty, despair. *Freiheit ist Sicherheit*.

The fundamental structural feature and the power not subject to immediate voluntary control are the same:—*Sorge als Hingabe*. “*Cura* is the very origin of ex-sistence and holds us in her grip as long as we live . . . We are not talking about psychological care or concern. We are speaking ontologically about the very structure of ex-sistence as given over to, occupied with,

²⁷ *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* as translated by Lisa Harries in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers* (ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering 1990) 5-13; GA 16: 111, 113: <https://www.beyng.com/gaselis/?vol=16.00&pg=113>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Harry G. Frankfurt, *The importance of what we care about: Philosophical essays* ([1988] 1998) 89.

dedicated to making sense of things.”³⁰ As Bollas puts it, something banal in its ordinariness – namely, our cohering of life into ideologies or theories. The cohering is obligate. Sheehan again: “We are ‘prisoners of meaning,’ inescapably embedded in an understanding of intelligibility, such that we cannot *not* make sense of everything we meet.”³¹

Ἄτη of course is a variety of making sense. So it came to pass that the great teacher of the possibilities, the varieties, of existence³² succumbed to the fascist state of mind³³ and directed the inchoate *Hingabe* of students in his charge to bind itself into *Bestand* for use by the Führer-state. εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω. *Freiheit ist Ge-Stell*.

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³⁰ Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger's Being and Time Paraphrased and Annotated, Volume 1* (2025) 241, 242; *Sein und Zeit* 198, 199: <https://www.beyng.com/pages/de/SeinUndZeit/SeinUndZeit.198.html>.

³¹ *Id.* xxi.

³² Als **angstbereite** Entschlossenheit ist die Treue zugleich mögliche Ehrfurcht vor der einzigen Autorität, die ein freies Existieren haben kann, vor den wiederholbaren Möglichkeiten der Existenz. *Sein und Zeit* 391: <https://www.beyng.com/pages/de/SeinUndZeit/SeinUndZeit.391.html>.

³³ “Groups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (tr. Brian Massumi 1987) 9-10.