

*Deleuze and Guattari's*  
A Thousand Plateaus





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*Deleuze and Guattari's*  
A Thousand Plateaus  
A Critical Introduction  
and Guide



BRENT ADKINS

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Brent Adkins  
September 2014

## *Introduction: A Perceptual Semiotics*

Neither Félix Guattari nor Gilles Deleuze ever shied away from the label “metaphysician.” This is a bold claim, particularly in a time when the “death of metaphysics” has been proclaimed so loudly and for so long, not only by philosophers such as Martin Heidegger but also by Deleuze and Guattari’s contemporary, Jacques Derrida.<sup>1</sup> Since Deleuze and Guattari are unabashedly doing metaphysics, the place to begin understanding their work, as well as Deleuze’s single-author works, is with metaphysics. I want to begin by briefly describing the metaphysics that I see at work across Deleuze’s entire corpus, so that I can place *A Thousand Plateaus* in context.

If I were to describe Deleuze’s metaphysics in a single word it would be “continuity.” This, of course, raises numerous questions, chiefly, Continuity of what? We will get to these questions, but first in an effort to clarify what I have in mind by continuity, I would like to contrast it with discontinuity. I think the dominant trend in Western metaphysics has followed from discontinuity. This discontinuity is most clearly and importantly seen in the work of Plato, who is at great pains to show the incommensurable distance between virtue and virtuous acts, between beauty and beautiful things, between the good and particular goods. These pairs cannot be merely different in degree, as if one could define beauty empirically if one looked at enough beautiful things. No, these pairs must be different in kind. There can be no common measure between them. Beauty and beautiful things belong to different orders of being.

This distinction between different orders of being becomes codified in philosophy as the distinction between the sensible and

intelligible. This is the fundamental metaphysical discontinuity that organizes much of Western thought. Discontinuity, however, raises the issue of relation. If these two realms are ontologically distinct, what is the nature of their relation to one another? The typical answer given, although the details vary widely, is some kind of hylomorphism. That is, the sensible and the intelligible are related to one another as content and form. Thus, in Plato the ability to recognize any sensible object as beautiful depends on its participation to some degree in the form of beauty. In this case the integrity and universality of beauty itself is maintained, while we can still admit that sensible objects can be more or less beautiful.

The problem with the discontinuity of the sensible and the intelligible and its concomitant hylomorphism is that it requires a doctrine of analogy or resemblance between the sensible and the intelligible. For Deleuze and Guattari, the difficulty with any doctrine of analogy is that it fundamentally fails at the task of metaphysics. If, for example, I claim that this statue is beautiful, several related corollaries necessarily arise. First, the statue is not beautiful in the same way that beauty is beautiful. (We'll leave aside for the moment Aristotle's objection that different beautiful objects are not beautiful in the same way.) Second, as a sensible object it cannot in principle be identical to the intelligible form of beauty, so it must be in some respects not beautiful. Analogy thus entails both affirmation and negation, and it is here that we can see the beginning of what will become negative theology in the Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup> The reason, then, that discontinuity (and its attendant hylomorphism and analogy) fails at metaphysics is that it ultimately cannot say what "is" is.

The solution to this difficulty for Deleuze is to reject the discontinuity of the sensible and intelligible and affirm instead their continuity. Not surprisingly this move has entailments that inversely mirror the entailments of discontinuity. Since continuity does not treat the sensible and the intelligible as different in kind it need not resort to a doctrine of analogy to account for their interrelation. The continuity of the sensible and the intelligible instead entails the univocity of being. Being is said everywhere in the same way. Being speaks with "one voice." Furthermore, continuity rejects hylomorphism and replaces it with hylozoism. "Hylozoism" is a term coined by Ralph Cudworth in his *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) to describe any position that held that matter is alive. Of course, to describe matter as living is to impute to it the power of self-movement or self-organization, a position that can only be seen

as inherently contradictory by those holding to any form of hylo-morphism, which held that matter received its motive force from an external principle. Kant is explicit about the contradictory nature of hylozoism in both the pre-critical *Dreams of a Spirit-seer* (1766) and the critical *Critique of Judgment* (1790). For Deleuze and Guattari the affirmation of hylozoism is crucial, because it avoids anchoring life in a transcendent principle and instead seeks purely immanent principles.

### *DELEUZE'S EARLY WORK*

Deleuze's affirmation of the continuity of the sensible and intelligible manifests itself in different ways across all of his works. The first way it manifests itself is through the choice of subject matter. Deleuze's earliest books (1953–68) are monographs on individual philosophical and literary figures. Some of the choices seem obvious, especially Proust, Kant, and Nietzsche. Some of the choices, though, seem very strange, especially Sacher-Masoch, Spinoza, and Bergson. There are also what appear to be glaring omissions for a scholar in France after World War 2. There is no Hegel, no Marx, no Freud, and no Heidegger or phenomenology of any kind. My contention is that Deleuze chose those figures that he thought had something to contribute to the continuity thesis and avoided those that did not. Even in the case of Kant—who explicitly affirms the discontinuity of the sensible and intelligible as the starting point of the critical project in his “Inaugural Dissertation” (1770), and who Deleuze calls an “enemy”—Deleuze argues that the fundamental discontinuity that generates Kant's theory of the faculties presupposes a more foundational continuity in the “free indeterminate accord” of the faculties found in reflective judgment.<sup>3</sup>

Affirming the continuity of the sensible and the intelligible also manifests itself in the type of questions that Deleuze asks. The fundamental question-type that arises out of discontinuity is, “What is . . .?” “What is . . .?” questions are questions about essence, about what does not change. In short, they are questions about the intelligible as distinct from the sensible. Since Deleuze's affirmation of continuity does not see the intelligible as different in kind from the sensible, he gravitates toward different kinds of questions and toward philosophers who ask these questions. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), for example, Deleuze shows that Nietzsche's primary question is not “What is . . .?” but “Which one?” Notice, though, what Deleuze says about “Which one?” in response to Socrates misunderstanding of

the sophist's question in his dialogues: "For it ["Which one?"] does not refer, as Socrates believed, to discrete examples, but to the continuity of concrete objects taken in their becoming, to the becoming-beautiful of all objects citable or cited as examples."<sup>4</sup> "Which one?" does not seek the universal, intelligible essences of things. Rather, the question in Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche means: "what are the forces which take hold of a given thing, what is the will that possesses it?"<sup>5</sup> "Which one?" allows Deleuze to ask the experimental questions, following Spinoza, What can a body do? What is a thing capable of? What are the forces that compose it and decompose it? These are questions of becoming in which essence is not seen as the ground but the temporary result of a continuous process.

For Deleuze, then, the history of philosophy, and the history of thought in general, expresses itself in these two tendencies, one toward discontinuity the other toward continuity. While the tendency toward discontinuity has always been the most dominant, one of the primary tasks of Deleuze's early work on philosophical and literary figures is to foreground the tendency toward continuity. We can see a clear example of this in *Proust and Signs* (1966). Here Deleuze takes up Proust's contention that philosophy is misguided by the assumption that the thinker "naturally seeks the truth."<sup>6</sup> For Proust truth is not naturally sought, rather one is involuntarily driven to the truth. Truth does not readily reveal itself; it is always a matter of signs, and it is always forced on us. The jealous man is forced to look for the truth of betrayal by the sign of lying in the lover's face. This is where thought happens for Proust; this is the moment of creation that far outstrips the work of philosophy. For Deleuze, *In Search of Lost Time* is a "search for truth" but it is also the recognition that the truth cannot be found by asking the question, What is the truth? Proust shows with great force that the more germane questions are: Who wants to know the truth? Under what conditions was this person driven to search for truth? These questions remove us from the realm of universal a priori truth that is discontinuous with sensible experience and place us squarely in a realm in which "truth has an essential relation to time."<sup>7</sup> Thus, on the presupposition of continuity even the age-old search for truth becomes transformed.

## DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION

The notion of continuity has roots not only in the history of philosophy but also in the history of mathematics. One might view

Greek mathematics, in particular geometry, as having two poles. One pole, represented by Euclid, deals with the properties of static geometrical figures. The other pole, represented by Archimedes, concerns the construction of actual geometric figures. To apply the terms from the discussion of the history of philosophy, Euclid pursues a geometry predicated on discontinuity, while Archimedes pursues a geometry predicated on continuity. That is, Euclid is concerned about the universal, intelligible components of geometric figures, while Archimedes is concerned about the processes by which actual, different geometric figures might be generated. More important, however, is the way in which the Euclidean geometry of stable objects came not only to dominate geometry but also to be seen as the model for mathematics. Ultimately, this privileging of discontinuity expresses itself in mathematics as the preference for the discrete over the continuous. From the perspective of mathematics, the discrete has the tremendous advantage of making things countable and thereby subject to algebraic analysis. The continuous, in contrast to the discrete, is messy, slippery, and unstable. One doesn't extract timeless truths from the continuous; one intervenes strategically. The discrete is axiomatic; the continuous is problematic. The difficulty that Deleuze sees with the triumph of the discrete in mathematics is that life is not discrete. Life presents constant and continuous variability. It is for precisely this reason that Deleuze deploys the resources provided by calculus. Calculus thinks the continuous and variable without making it discrete. Calculus allows one to think without recourse to discontinuity. There is no immutable, intelligible component that the object of analysis more or less conforms to. There is only constant variability that tends toward infinity.<sup>8</sup>

This mathematical view of continuity drives much of the analysis in *Difference and Repetition* (1968). Deleuze is explicit that he is interested in a "metaphysics of differential calculus."<sup>9</sup> What he means by this is threefold. First, Deleuze is not arguing that calculus is a metaphor, or that other disciplines including philosophy should become more "mathematical." What he is arguing is that thought itself is composed of differential relations (which Deleuze here calls both "dialectic" and "Idea"), and as a result all images of thought that attempt to ground difference in the unity of a representation (e.g., Spirit, Reason, Subject, etc.) thereby institute a discontinuity between the representation and what it governs.

Second, this metaphysics of differential calculus does not correspond to any historical incarnation of calculus, which Deleuze

sees as caught in the antinomy of the infinite and the finite. As he writes:

*The entire alternative between finite and infinite applies very badly to difference because it constitutes only an antinomy of representation. We saw this, moreover, in the case of calculus: modern finitist interpretations betray the nature of the differentials no less than the former infinitist interpretations, because both fail to capture . . . the "problem" from which the calculus draws its power . . . The reason is that this alternative [between finite and infinite] expresses only the oscillations of representation with regard to an always dominant identity, or rather the oscillations of the Identical with regard to an always rebellious matter.<sup>10</sup>*

Thus Deleuze takes mathematical calculus and creates the concept of metaphysical calculus out of it as a way of thinking difference in itself. "Differential calculus is not the unimaginative calculus of the utilitarian, the crude arithmetic calculus which subordinates thought to other things or to other ends, but the algebra of pure thought . . . the only calculus 'beyond good and evil.'<sup>11</sup>

Third, once the temptation to subordinate difference to identity is removed, a metaphysical calculus can think continuity as continuity. That is, the continuously variable nature of an Idea can be thought as such.

At this point one might object that difference and continuity are mutually exclusive. Deleuze can either affirm continuity or he can affirm difference, but he cannot do both at the same time. If everything is thought on a continuum, isn't everything in some sense the same? As we saw above, the problem with an analogical account of being is that nothing "is" in the same way. On a univocal account of being everything "is" in the same way, but this seems to erase the very notion of difference that Deleuze is championing in *Difference and Repetition*. As numerous commentators have pointed out in response to Alain Badiou's criticism that Deleuze's doctrine of univocity elides difference, the oneness of being does not entail the sameness of beings. Univocity is not unity. In fact, it is only on the supposition of univocity that difference can be real at all. Univocity ensures that things differ in exactly the same respect, while a doctrine of analogy can never get to the point of real difference. Analogy can never describe real difference because analogical difference seeks to compare objects that are thought to differ in ontological kind. If things differ in ontological kind, though, their true difference (if it exists) can never be known. One is left comparing objects that seem to be similar in some respects but dissimilar in



others. Only if continuous variation is continuous variation of one and the same being can the real difference between any two points on the continuum arise.

## THE LOGIC OF SENSE

In *The Logic of Sense* (1969), Deleuze draws on both the Stoics and Lewis Carroll in order to think the relation between sense and nonsense. Not surprisingly, articulating this relation centers on a “series of paradoxes.” The purpose of exploring these paradoxes is to show that the separation of sense and nonsense into differing ontological kinds only results in reproducing Platonism. In opposition to Platonism Deleuze takes up the Stoics “due to their having been the initiators of a new image of the philosopher.”<sup>12</sup> Deleuze takes up the continuity thesis from the very first series, “paradoxes of pure becoming,” in the distinction between “good sense,” which “affirms that in all things there is a determinable sense or direction,” and paradox, which is “the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time.” Here Deleuze equates “pure events” with “becoming” and notes that it “pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once.”<sup>13</sup> The very thought of becoming eludes “good sense” and suggests not a transcendence that would anchor becoming and always reduce it to a *telos* toward which all becomings must tend, but an immanent becoming that tends in opposite directions at the same time.

In addition to good sense, paradox also eludes “common sense.” The distinction between good sense and common sense is already present in *Difference and Repetition*, and here Deleuze uses it in the same way.<sup>14</sup> Common sense articulates the world in terms of stable identities. Becoming, or the pure event, “destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities.”<sup>15</sup> For Deleuze this continual destruction and repositing of both good sense and common sense manifests itself in the paradoxes of language, and it is precisely at this point that Deleuze posits language itself as a continuum with two opposed and abstract poles. Commenting on Plato’s *Cratylus*, Deleuze writes, “Or further still, is it not possible that there are two distinct dimensions internal to language in general—one always concealed by the other, yet continuously coming to the aid of, or subsisting under that other?”<sup>16</sup> Language is always subject to the pull of both poles simultaneously. Philosophy has seen this pull but has tried to master it through the metaphysics of discontinuity by subordinating language to both good sense and common sense.

Deleuze's metaphysics of continuity rehabilitates the subordinated pole "expressing the movements or rebel becomings."<sup>17</sup>

Deleuze's discussion of the event in *The Logic of Sense* is also structured as a continuum. In this case the poles of the continuum are Chronos and Aion, two opposed conceptions of time. Chronos is the eternal now that excludes both past and present, while Aion is the unlimited past and future that never lets the present appear. In articulating the logic of sense, Deleuze discovers that it is paradoxical and involves one in differing "series." These series are both corporeal, concerning the mixtures of bodies, and incorporeal, concerning meaning. These series are incompatible with one another, which is why language continually generates paradoxes. Chronos is the temporal series of corporeal mixtures, while Aion is the temporal series of incorporeal meanings. Philosophy by and large has been unable to think the event because it has subordinated Aion to Chronos. Chronos is privileged precisely because it restores both good sense (a single direction) and common sense (stable identities) to time. Aion destroys both good sense and common sense by continually reintroducing becoming, events, into Chronos.<sup>18</sup>

## ANTI-OEDIPUS

Deleuze and Guattari were first introduced to each other in 1969 by their mutual friend Jean-Pierre Muyard. Over the next twenty-five years they collaborated on four books together: *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *Kafka* (1975), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), and *What is Philosophy?* (1991). Deleuze was already well known for his work in the history of philosophy, as well as his more recent works, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. Guattari was also well known, but for very different reasons. He was a practicing psychoanalyst at La Borde clinic and was also being groomed as Jacques Lacan's heir apparent.<sup>19</sup> At the time Deleuze was becoming increasingly interested in psychoanalysis, and Guattari was already beginning to rethink psychoanalytic concepts through the lens of Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition*. Of particular importance was a paper that Guattari wrote in 1969 entitled "Machine and Structure," which introduced the idea of the "machinic unconscious" that would be taken up in Deleuze and Guattari's first collaboration, *Anti-Oedipus*.

From their first meeting in 1969 to the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari worked intensely together on the project. The result detonated on the French intellectual scene with

the force of a bomb. It rearranged the landscape and forced one to choose sides. Psychoanalysts, particularly Lacanians, were incensed by the attacks on psychoanalysis. The book itself is certainly an attack on psychoanalysis. What Deleuze and Guattari object to in psychoanalysis is its attempt to apply both good sense and common sense to the unconscious. The common sense that they see being applied to the unconscious is the Oedipal drama whereby by every component of both psychic and social life is refracted through the Oedipal triangle of "mommy-daddy-me." Everything in one's life must coalesce around one of these three stable identities. Anything that does not conform to these identities is aberrant and in need of analysis. The good sense that Deleuze and Guattari see psychoanalysis applying to the unconscious is the practice of analysis itself. The single meaning applied monotonously to all patients by psychoanalysis is Oedipus. When Melanie Klein is faced with a young patient, for example, she insists that the toys he's playing with are really him, or his father, or his mother. As far as Deleuze and Guattari are concerned, the answer to every analyst's question is already set, "Answer daddy-and-mommy when I speak to you!"<sup>20</sup>

In response to the good sense and common sense of psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari propose schizoanalysis. Unlike psychoanalysis, which functions on the discontinuity between the universal, a priori Oedipus and individual unconsciousnesses, which are fleeting and imperfect representations of Oedipus, schizoanalysis sees the unconscious as a series of machinic connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions, which do not represent anything. More importantly, though, not only is the unconscious a series of machinic connections but society as a whole is constituted by a series of machinic connections. Thus, not only is the Freudian thesis that society is the unconscious writ large undercut, so is the Marxist thesis that the unconscious is simply a reflection of material, economic conditions. Here we return to the continuity thesis that undergirds Deleuze's metaphysics. In this instance the social and the unconscious are thought as the result of the same "process of production." There is only one kind of production, what they call here "desiring-production," and desire produces the real whether it is social, political, economic, familial, sexual, or unconscious. The questions of schizoanalysis, the questions that can be asked of any entity (regardless of its scale or scope) are: What are the connections that constitute this entity? What further connections are made possible and impossible by this particular set of connections? These questions are only possible on the supposition of metaphysical continuity.

## A THOUSAND PLATEAUS

Between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari collaborated on a book about Kafka. *Kafka* continues many of the themes found in *Anti-Oedipus*, such as Oedipus and desire, and anticipates many of the themes that will be taken up in *A Thousand Plateaus*, such as minority, immanence, and assemblage. *A Thousand Plateaus* is also profoundly concerned with thinking through the implications of a metaphysics of continuity. If one could characterize Deleuze's early works as seeking out exemplars of this metaphysics of continuity, then *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* become a positive working out of this fundamental idea. In a similar vein *Anti-Oedipus* appears as a scathing critique of the deployment of a metaphysics of discontinuity to both the individual and society, while *A Thousand Plateaus* pursues the positive expression of the metaphysics of continuity. I think much of the strangeness and difficulty of *A Thousand Plateaus* arises precisely from this shift in metaphysics. We are so used to thinking in terms of good sense and common sense that when these are replaced by stabilities that are the product of a process rather than the ground of that process, the resulting claims can be difficult to integrate. Just as any good metaphysician might, Deleuze and Guattari destroy the world in order to rebuild it. The difficulty is that what they have rebuilt is so at odds with our traditional way of thinking about the world that we are not entirely sure whether the world is ours or some alien vista.

While I do not want to alleviate fully the strangeness of *A Thousand Plateaus*, I do want to show in this introduction that it shares the same metaphysics as Deleuze's other works. Furthermore, I want to show that the concept of "assemblage" (*agencement*) provides the book with its thematic unity. Deleuze himself is quite explicit about this. When asked in an interview about the unity of *A Thousand Plateaus*, he replies, "I think it is the idea of an assemblage."<sup>21</sup> At this point, though, while "assemblage" appears as an answer to a question about the thematic unity of a book, the more important question is, What philosophical question is "assemblage" an answer to? Bearing in mind that Deleuze and Guattari want to scrutinize the question as much as the answer, we can think of "assemblage" as an answer to the venerable philosophical question, What is a thing?

The trouble with "things," as philosophy soon discovered, is that they seem to combine two contradictory properties: stability and change. Identifying a thing as a table entails both the recognition that the object possesses some kind of permanence but also that it is

also subject to modification. The desk in my office, for example, has numerous scars and stains on the top, and a couple of the drawers are missing their pulls. It's still recognizable as a desk, but it's also easy to imagine this sort of decay happening to the point where the desk is no longer recognizable as a desk. Furthermore, long before that happens, it will be no longer usable as a desk. While Heraclitus and Parmenides sought to minimize either stability or change, Plato responded to the problem by strictly separating these two properties into the discontinuity of the sensible and the intelligible. The establishment of the discontinuity between the sensible and intelligible, as we have seen, is the inaugural gesture of Western philosophy and has been the predominant way of dealing with the paradox of the "thing." The stability of a thing is attributed to its intelligible nature, while the thing's ability to undergo change is attributed to its sensible nature. For the most part, the properties related to the thing's intelligible nature are its essence, while the properties related to its sensible nature are its accidents.

Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblages addresses the paradox of the thing in a radically different way. First, they replace the discontinuity of the sensible and intelligible with a continuity of the sensible and intelligible. It is at this point that one can begin to see what Deleuze means by "the reversal of Platonism" heralded in an essay from 1967.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in his "Inaugural Dissertation" (1770), Kant explicitly invokes Plato and the discontinuity of the sensible and intelligible as the origin of his critical project. Kant argues this against the backdrop of modern philosophy, which saw a brief reassertion of the continuity of the sensible and the intelligible. Rationalists such as Spinoza and Leibniz argue that the sensible is continuous with the intelligible but the sensible does not reach the same clarity and distinctness of the intelligible. Empiricists such as Berkeley and Hume hold to the same continuity of the sensible and intelligible as the rationalists, but reverse the priority. For the empiricists what certainty one can have arises from the sensible, and the further one moves from the sensible into the ungrounded speculation of the intelligible, the further one moves from certainty. I think Deleuze's interest in early modern philosophers such as Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hume stems from this commonality, that all affirmed the continuity of the sensible and the intelligible. Even in his book on Kant, which purports to give Kant a "monstrous child," Deleuze argues that the fundamental discontinuity that generates Kant's theory of the faculties presupposes a more foundational continuity in the free play of the faculties.<sup>23</sup>

As we have seen, the same battle between continuity and discontinuity is also played out in the history of mathematics, first in the distinction between axiomatic and problematic geometry and more recently in the attempt to ground calculus in set theory. If we recast this battle as a response to the question, What is a thing?, we discover that the same tension between stability and change is at work. The preferences for axiomatic geometry and for grounding calculus in set theory both reflect the idea that mathematics properly deals with the discrete, the quantifiable, that for which we can produce an axiom. Thus, the "thing" in mathematics is the countable. Deleuze's use of mathematics, particularly his use of calculus in *Difference and Repetition*, shows that he remains interested in that "lost" object of mathematics, the intensive, continuous, abstract "thing." The reasons behind the choice of calculus in that book are still operative in *A Thousand Plateaus*. These reasons become explicit in Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between royal science and minor or nomad science. "Royal science is inseparable from a 'hylomorphic' model implying both a form that organizes matter and a matter prepared for the form" (TP 369). Royal science is designed to work in concert with the state and deals in discrete and ideal essences, such as circles. In contrast to this, nomad science is inseparable from a "hylozoic" model in which matter is self-organizing and generates its own form. Nomad science is not interested in circles as an ideal type, but it is interested in "roundness," the continuous curve, which sometimes appears as a circle. But, for nomad science the circle is not what roundness necessarily or even ideally tends toward.<sup>24</sup>

For Deleuze and Guattari, what has counted as properly philosophical and properly scientific has been determined by a fidelity to the fundamental discontinuity of the sensible and the intelligible. One of the great virtues of *A Thousand Plateaus* (and of Deleuze's work in general) is its creation of a philosophy that is predicated on the continuity of the sensible and intelligible. This basic supposition allows Deleuze and Guattari to reread not only the history of philosophy but the history of thought in general through a new lens. New connections are made. New concepts are created. Ideas are rescued from obscurity and given new life. Within the context of fundamental continuity, we can make sense of a whole host of inter-related terms crucial to Deleuze and Guattari's project: univocity, immanence, life, chaos, schizophrenia, event, etc.

Even supposing that we accept the continuity of the sensible and intelligible along with Deleuze and Guattari, the ontological status of these two terms remains unclear. What must be avoided at all

costs—if the continuity of the sensible and intelligible is to be maintained—is subsuming these terms under different orders of being. They must be seen as differing in degree but not differing in kind. Deleuze and Guattari’s system is one of ontological univocity, which means that being is said in the same way of everything. To trade in ontological equivocity, as all forms of thought that begin with the discontinuity of the sensible and the intelligible do, is always a theological move that requires a doctrine of analogy to explain the relation between the sensible and the intelligible.<sup>25</sup> But if they do not belong to different orders of being, then how are we to think them? The sensible and the intelligible, along with all the other binarisms proposed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, should be thought of as abstract and opposing poles of the continuum to which they belong. For example, returning to Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of royal and nomad science, they write, “What we have, rather, are two formally different conceptions of science, and, ontologically, a single field of interaction . . .” (TP 367). The ontologically single field is the univocal continuity on which we might find two very different conceptions of science. I would argue that in this case these two different conceptions of science are two different orientations toward which particular scientific assemblages may tend. Royal science thus names that tendency of scientific practice toward universal axioms and ideal, discrete objects (the circle). Nomad science, in contrast, names that tendency of scientific practice toward continuous events (roundness). What we discover beginning with the first plateau is that these two orientations constitute a “perceptual semiotics.” The task is not to categorize science as either royal or nomad, but to recognize that all scientific practices will involve some combination of both royal and nomadic tendencies. The project of becoming, of creating the new, begins with seeing the nomadic in everything.

This brings us at last back to assemblages as a response to the paradox of the thing as possessing in some respect both stasis and change. For Deleuze and Guattari this paradox is solved not by assigning stasis and change to two ontologically distinct properties that happen to come together in a particular thing, but by claiming that an assemblage always possesses tendencies toward both stasis and change as the abstract poles of a single continuum. Just as for Spinoza a body is a ratio of motion and rest, an assemblage is a ratio of its tendencies toward both stability and change. The more that a particular scientific practice, say Euclid’s geometry, tends toward universal axioms as its proper expression, the more resistant to change it will become. On the other hand, the more that a

particular scientific practice is uninterested in what constitutes its "proper expression" and instead develops and changes its method in response to the problems it is trying to solve, say Archimedes' geometry, the more such a practice will tend toward change. However, any particular practice will display both of these tendencies in a certain ratio. Furthermore, the privileging of one tendency over another may be the result of a whole host of "extra-scientific" pressures placed on scientific practice (e.g., state regulation, economic interest, etc.). Finally, it would be naive to assume that there is a single monolithic "scientific practice." It is more likely that there are multiple competing scientific practices, each with a different ratio of the tendencies toward stability and change. As a result, Deleuze and Guattari continue, "royal science continually appropriates the contents of vague or nomad science while nomad science continually cuts the contents of royal science loose" (TP 367). Royal science is that tendency to take the vague (roundness) and make it discrete (the circle) so that it can articulate the eternal, intelligible core. Nomad science is that tendency to take the discrete (the circle) and see it as an instance of the continuous (roundness) that presents an ever changing problem for thought (the event).

Deleuze and Guattari are thus faced with two interrelated problems. First, they must (re)articulate things in terms of assemblages. These assemblages, furthermore, are to be thought as concrete collections of heterogeneous materials that display tendencies toward both stability and change. The second problem is that because Deleuze and Guattari are uncovering the tendency toward change as crucial to understanding assemblages, one might take them as arguing that the task of philosophy is to pursue the tendency toward change to the exclusion of the tendency toward stability. While it is certainly true that what is new in Deleuze and Guattari's work is an account of assemblages as having opposing tendencies, and that this account does in fact change the ratio for assemblages by increasing the degree to which we think about change, it is absolutely critical that both tendencies be thought. The danger of an unrestricted tendency toward change is just as great as that of an unrestricted tendency toward stability. To adapt a line from late in *A Thousand Plateaus*, never believe that change alone will suffice to save us.<sup>26</sup>

## PLATEAUS

Within the context of the continuity thesis and assemblages, we are now finally in a position to answer the question, What is a plateau?



As we've seen, the very question, What is . . . ? is already ill-formed with respect to Deleuze's overall philosophical trajectory. However, for the purposes of this introduction we can say that a plateau is an assemblage. That is, a plateau is a particular way of answering the question, What is a thing? that allows Deleuze and Guattari to pursue the more germane questions: Which one? What can it do? What connections are made possible or impossible by it, or through it?

The term "plateau" comes from Gregory Bateson's work in anthropology, and Deleuze and Guattari describe it as "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (TP 22). There are two important things worth noting at this point about their appropriation of the term. First, a plateau is constructed of intensities. The notion of intensity, of course, brings us right back to the continuity thesis. Intensities exist as continuous gradations rather than discrete points. Thinking of a plateau in Bateson's sense is a way of thinking about assemblages from the standpoint of continuity rather than discontinuity. Second, plateaus are non-teleological. There is no proper end toward which plateaus tend. Plateaus do not naturally seek the complete expression of their form, nor are they judged by whether or not they have achieved that form. The reason that plateaus are non-teleological is that they are hylozoic, self-organizing, they generate their own form, not as an eternal essence but as a stable state.

But, stable states of intensity differ profoundly from traditional accounts of things. As we have seen, traditional accounts of things focus on the stable, the discrete, the universal, and the eternal. Deleuze and Guattari's use of the concept of the plateau seeks to replace this with the continuous. A plateau is a temporary coagulation of intensive processes into a stable state. Different plateaus will, of course, exist on different temporal and spatial scales. The intensities of tectonic movement that stabilize into mountain ranges exist on a vastly different temporal and spatial scale compared to the intensities that stabilize into a person's mood. The important thing for Deleuze and Guattari is to be able to speak about the processes that create the mountain range and the processes that result in a particular mood without resorting to the imposition of a universal form that is ontologically different in kind from the process that it's in-forming.

Another important aspect of plateaus that arises from this account is that they are "dated." One of the interesting features of A

*Thousand Plateaus* is that every chapter (except the first, for reasons we'll discuss) has a specific date attached to it. Deleuze and Guattari date their plateaus in an effort to think assemblages as the result of intensive processes. Intensity is nothing other than continuity itself. It is a way of talking about movement, development, becoming, without subordinating these primary processes to the discrete and quantifiable. Deleuze and Guattari contend that under certain conditions the intensive can produce the extensive. An egg provides a ready illustration this idea. Prior to hatching the chick develops out of the white of the egg, while the yolk provides nutrients. If we examine an egg white prior to this development, though, there is no indication which part of the white is to become the beak, or a wing, or a heart. The egg white contains nothing like discrete parts that knit themselves together in the process of maturation. There is nothing discrete about an egg white at all. It is a continuous gradient of protein intensities that under the right conditions of warmth and additional nutrients shift from the intensive to the extensive. As these shifts occur the chick growing inside the egg becomes increasingly stable, increasingly quantifiable, increasingly discrete.

For Deleuze and Guattari any given thing thus exists on a continuum that lies between the fully intensive and the fully extensive. Take a human body, for example. A fully grown adult has converted most of its intensive processes into stable extensities. An adult won't grow anymore, change eye-color, or develop gills. Some processes, though, remain at the intensive level even in an adult. Chief among these are biological metabolism, which takes flows of nutrients—themselves converted from food, which is extensive—and through the process of digestion absorbs the nutrients to maintain the stability of the adult human body.

In the same way, we might also think about thought itself as an intensive process. Thoughts seem to percolate in and out of conscious awareness for the most part. However, thoughts can also coalesce around a particular idea. Such an idea can graft other ideas to itself and ultimately develop into what we might call a mindset or habit of thought. Deleuze is already thinking in these terms in his early work on Proust, as we saw above. It's only when jealousy becomes fixed as an idea (extensive) that it begins to orient one's other thoughts and behaviors. Furthermore, since mindsets are so difficult to change it is tempting to focus on the ideas, what's stable, rather than the intensive processes that produce them. Plateaus are Deleuze and Guattari's way of accounting for the moments of stability within any intensive process, and more importantly the process

itself. Thus, every plateau will have three components: 1) The moment of stability under consideration. 2) One pole on an intensive continuum that marks the plateau's limit in terms of stability. 3) Another pole that marks the limit of change.

Each chapter of this book will seek to make explicit these three aspects in every plateau in *A Thousand Plateaus*. As a brief example of what I have in mind, let's look at language. Language is a concrete assemblage that evinces tendencies toward stability. This tendency toward stability in language Deleuze and Guattari call the being major of a language. In order for a language to be major it must have the support of numerous other assemblages, particularly a government powerful enough to declare a language "official" and pass laws with regard to what language a government's business is to be conducted in. Government-sponsored education bolsters the language's status by ensuring the teaching of the "proper" rules of grammar. At the same time, however, other forces destabilize a language. Everyday usage, borrowings from other languages, literature, and slang continually disturb the stability of a major language. As a concrete assemblage, a language is the dated, singular zone of stability that is the result of intensive processes with tendencies toward both stasis and change. *A Thousand Plateaus* is the exploration of assemblages or plateaus in which Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how to create concepts in a way that does not presuppose a metaphysics of discontinuity.

### DELEUZE'S LATER WORKS

After *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze began working on several projects, including forays into art in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), and film in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985). He also turned his focus to issues in contemporary philosophy in *Foucault* (1986), written not long after Foucault's death, as well as returning to his longstanding interest in Leibniz in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988). Before Guattari's death in 1992, Deleuze collaborated with him on one final work, *What is Philosophy?* (1991). The metaphysics of continuity remains as a point of orientation in all of these works. In the *Cinema* books, for example, Deleuze writes that "cinema is a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as a conceptual practice."<sup>27</sup> Here we see the creation of concepts confirmed as the task of philosophy, and if we pursue the nature of these concepts we discover once again the continuity thesis. The concepts of the

“movement-image” and the “time-image” rely heavily on Bergson’s conceptions of movement and duration. What is crucial about both of these concepts for our purposes here is that Bergson is explicit that neither movement nor duration can be thought as a succession of discrete points. On this point Deleuze quotes Bergson approvingly, ““The real whole might well be, we conceive, an indivisible continuity.””<sup>28</sup> Within this context Deleuze turns to the work of C.S. Peirce to construct a taxonomy of images and their semiotic interrelation. That is, both movement-images and time-images are assemblages, which generate questions related to their capabilities and connections with other images.

*What is Philosophy?* was Deleuze’s final work with Guattari. In his biography of Deleuze and Guattari, Dosse suggests that Guattari’s failing health meant that the work was largely Deleuze’s.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless the book returns to languages and themes present in *A Thousand Plateaus*. What becomes explicit in *What is Philosophy?* is the grounding of the distinctions among philosophy, science, and art in terms of what each produces. Thus each of these is a creative endeavor, each is concerned to create something new, but what is created is different in each case. Philosophy creates concepts. Science creates functions, and art creates sensations. “With its concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions.”<sup>30</sup> This conception has the advantage that it eliminates the need for these creative processes to compete with one another, while at the same time acknowledging that their boundaries are porous. As we saw in the brief discussion of film above, Deleuze doesn’t seek to give a theory for film. He seeks to create concepts out of what film gives him. At the same time, however, insofar as he’s creating concepts, he’s doing philosophy. Philosophy, art, science can all borrow from one another, but the borrowings are necessarily transformed by what each seeks to create.

The continuity thesis arises at multiple levels in *What is Philosophy?* To take very briefly the “concept,” as Deleuze and Guattari describe it: concepts are never simple, they are always complex, composed of many parts. The components of a concept, however, are not to be thought of as discrete but as “intensive ordinates.” Thus the concept for Deleuze is not the name of a set that contains a numerable series of discrete components. The concept is a selection of intensive elements that are continuous with one another. Furthermore, since intensities are constantly in flux, the concept itself is constantly becoming. In philosophy, a concept will always

display two opposed tendencies. One of these tendencies is toward chaos, which would be the inability of a concept to hold its components together. This is the tendency toward change. The other tendency is toward opinion. This is the tendency of a concept to become (re)absorbed in a dominant or traditional way of thinking. The result of this tendency is that the concept is no longer singular but ordinary. It no longer creates something new but reproduces the usual ways of thinking.

I would like to conclude this brief survey of Deleuze's work by discussing his last published essay, "Immanence: A Life" (1995), which for all its brevity remains haunting and compelling in equal measure. The essay turns on the distinction between the singular, indefinite article and the individual, definite article. The distinction between the singular and the individual might seem like unnecessary hair-splitting, but it actually reproduces the same distinction that we've pursuing throughout this chapter between the continuous and the discontinuous. Deleuze uses two examples to illustrate this distinction. The first comes from the Charles Dickens novel *Our Mutual Friend*. In it Dickens tells the story of a horrible individual who is found one day beaten and near death. His acquaintances take him in and nurse him back to health. While he remains near death his caretakers vigilantly and excitedly watch for any sign of life. As the man slowly heals and returns to himself his caretakers begin distancing themselves. For Deleuze this shows very clearly the distinction between *the* man, the individual that his caretakers actively disliked, and *a* life, which manifested itself in singular signs during the man's convalescence but became increasingly difficult to see when it became subsumed under the individual. The second example Deleuze gives is of an infant. The infant is not yet fully individuated, yet it does "have singularities—a smile, a gesture, a grimace—such events are not subjective traits."<sup>31</sup> To think a life is to think the singular, the intensive, the continuous, immanence, without subordinating it to the individual, the discrete point, the extensive, the discontinuous, transcendence.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that Deleuze's metaphysical project can be summed up as the pursuit of continuity in distinction from the dominant trend of Western metaphysics, which actively takes discontinuity to be its starting point. In the chapters that follow the continuity thesis will inform the background metaphysics that guides my reading

of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Each chapter will correspond to a plateau in Deleuze and Guattari's book. Each plateau is itself an assemblage and, as such, will be articulated in terms of which intensities it selects, what it is capable of, and its tendencies toward stability and change. In an effort to clarify what is at stake in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of a particular assemblage, I will use contrasting conceptions to raise and respond to objections. As much as possible, I want to show that Deleuze and Guattari's project follows from a new way of looking at the world, a perceptual semiotics. While my analysis of *A Thousand Plateaus* is dependent on the framework I lay out here in the Introduction, I have tried as much as possible to make each chapter self-contained to facilitate the use of this book as a reference work.

## NOTES

1. "In any case, the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us: it is just tiresome, idle chatter." Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 9.
2. Paul Hinlicky and I discuss this at length in *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze*.
3. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, p. 60.
4. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 76.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
6. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 94.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
8. See Smith, "Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Deleuze and Badiou Revisited," in *Essays on Deleuze*, for an extended discussion of this idea.
9. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 280.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 264, emphasis in original.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 181–2.
12. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. xiii.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
14. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 131.
15. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 3.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 74ff.
19. Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, p. 71.
20. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 45.
21. Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, p. 177.
22. Later published as an appendix to *The Logic of Sense* (1969).
23. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, p. 60.

24. See Smith, "Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Deleuze and Badiou Revisited."
25. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 179.
26. "Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (TP 500).
27. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 280.
28. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 32. Quoted in Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p. 10.
29. Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, p. 456.
30. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 199.
31. Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in *Two Regimes of Madness*, p. 387.

# 1

## *Rhizome*

How is it possible to create something new? Artists struggle with this problem all the time. For them it is a battle against cliché. The artist does not begin with a blank page or a blank canvas. The canvas is not white but black, covered with every past style, color, and shape. The artist's first task is to scrape away all the accumulated layers of cliché so that something new can be created.<sup>1</sup> The philosopher faces a similar difficulty with regard to concepts. Thought is bound not only by its venerable history but also the good sense (single direction) and the common sense (stable entities) that it seeks to replicate. These strictures make the creation of new concepts very difficult. In terms of the continuity thesis, thought also has a tendency toward stability, and philosophy has tended to amplify this tendency rather than ameliorate it. As we saw in the Introduction, the trajectory of Deleuze's thought replaces the discontinuity thesis, which takes the discrete moments of stability and universalizes them, with the continuity thesis, which argues that these discrete moments of stability are temporary accretions of an immanent process that late in his career Deleuze simply referred to as "life." Deleuze and Guattari's focus in *A Thousand Plateaus* is on assemblages, and foregrounding the tendency of an assemblage toward change allows them to create new concepts, rather than merely fit things into pre-existing forms. Within this context the first plateau functions as a sort of user's guide. It provides a method for creating new concepts that Deleuze and Guattari use throughout the book. More importantly, I think, for Deleuze and Guattari it provides readers with a way to begin creating their own concepts.

They begin the opening plateau, "Rhizome," by calling into



question the very notion of a book. They want to write a new kind of book, not a book that reproduces what we already know, but a book that creates something new and is itself something new. A book that merely reproduces good sense and common sense reproduces the hoariest cliché for thought itself, the tree. The tree is a marvel of stable, hierarchical organization. Lines of descent are always clear, as is the process of differentiation. Logic uses trees. Biological species are organized according to trees. Linguistics is quite fond of trees. Trees reveal the deep structure that lies behind the messiness of reality. Trees are so useful that it's hard to think without them. It is even difficult to conceptualize what thought would be like without trees. What is the opposite of a tree? For Deleuze and Guattari the opposite of a tree is a rhizome. We encounter rhizomes all the time. Potatoes are rhizomes. Grass is a rhizome. Colonies of aspen trees are rhizomes. Rhizomes do not propagate by way of clearly delineated hierarchies but by underground stems in which any part may send additional shoots upward, downward, or laterally. There is no hierarchy. There are no clear lines of descent. A rhizome has no beginning or end. It is always in the middle. All that is required to grow potatoes is burying the discarded skin of a potato. They simply begin again wherever they are. The key to the rhizome, and the reason Deleuze and Guattari take it up as a way of thinking about not only books but things in general, is that the rhizome continually creates the new. It is not predictable. It does not follow a linear pattern of growth and reproduction. Its connections are lateral not hierarchical. What this means for *A Thousand Plateaus* is that "each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau" (TP 22). Not only do Deleuze and Guattari want to create new concepts in this book, they want to enable readers to create their own new concepts by making new connections. The ideal book for Deleuze and Guattari is a single flat sheet. On this sheet lines can be drawn that would connect various points in the text. These lines would be new concepts. They wouldn't represent or reproduce anything. They would, by virtue of their traversing the plane of the book, create a territory that would spawn other lines, other concepts, other connections (TP 9).

What animates this plateau, then, is not the arborescent question, What is a rhizome? Rather, the pertinent question is the experimental, pragmatic question, What might a thing be capable of if it were described as a rhizome rather than a tree? Or better, How can I make a rhizome out of this book? In fact one could go so far as to say that each of the plateaus asks a question of this type: How can I

make a rhizome out of language? How can I make a rhizome out of space? How can I make myself a rhizome? Thus, while *A Thousand Plateaus* is a book of metaphysics, it is *not* a book of ontology. It is an experimental, pragmatic metaphysics that replaces ontology's "to be" with the series generated by the conjunction "and . . . and . . . and . . ." This, of course, brings us to the question of method: How exactly do we make a rhizome out of this book or anything else for that matter? In response to this question Deleuze and Guattari provide six principles: 1) principle of connection, 2) principle of heterogeneity, 3) principle of multiplicity, 4) principle of asignifying rupture, 5) principle of cartography, and 6) the principle of decalomania, which is the methodological inverse of cartography.

### CONNECTION AND HETEROGENEITY

The principle of connection states that in order to make something into a rhizome, one must not make connections based solely on hierarchy, but rather experiment with new connections not predicated on hierarchy. A rhizome multiplies connections, follows the "and," pursues connections that transform it, creates something new. A rhizome has no up or down, right or left. It is always in the middle. What might we be able to do with a book, *A Thousand Plateaus* for instance, if we did not suppose that it must be read in the order it was written? What kinds of connections might we be able to make by asking, What can this book do?, rather than, What is the authorial intent behind this book? The kinds of connections that we might make Deleuze and Guattari call "lines of flight," or the tendency toward change. This is where something new is created.

If the principle of connection tells us the kind of connections that will produce something new (promiscuous and non-hierarchical), then the principle of heterogeneity tells us which kinds of objects will produce something new. The principle of heterogeneity proposes that not only should we experiment with connections when making a rhizome, but that these connections should be among wildly diverse things. There is no requirement that portions of one book be connected with other portions of the same book, or even other books. To create a rhizome be promiscuous; connect a portion of *A Thousand Plateaus* with a plant, with a feeling, with a song, with a mathematical formula. An assemblage is the interconnection of wildly diverse things. The example that Deleuze and Guattari give here is language. Language is not pure, connected only as a series of hierarchical signs. To see language as a rhizome

is to see it as a heterogeneous mixture of words, things, power, and geography. The tendency of linguistics has been to separate out the abstract structure of language. Deleuze and Guattari respond to this by saying, "Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the *abstract machine* that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field" (TP 7). It is important to recall at this point what "abstract" means in this context. "Abstract" is not the opposite of concrete, as is clear from the examples given. Rather, abstract is the opposite of discrete.<sup>2</sup> The criticism of linguistics, then, is that it functions according to a series of discrete points. In contrast to this language is a continuous phenomenon (lines not points) in which there are no rigid boundaries between word and thing, between power and geography. "Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil" (TP 7). Of course, Deleuze and Guattari note, it's possible to treat language as a hierarchical connection between homogeneous elements. To do so, however, is to reassert the discontinuity of word and thing.<sup>3</sup>

### *MULTIPLICITY*

Making a rhizome also requires a principle of multiplicity. Here Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to avoid the dialectic of the one and the many. The traditional way of handling the many is to subsume it under the one. The many are just parts of a greater whole, which is of course organized arborescently. Such a view ensures that nothing new is created, but that any multiple is only a reflection of the one. On this view the one remains transcendent to the many and is unaffected by any changes in the many. In contrast to this traditional view Deleuze and Guattari propose to make a rhizome out of the same material. The first step is to treat the multiple not as an adjective modifying a separate unity but as a substantive, in other words without a governing principle whether it be subject or object. "A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature . . ." (TP 8). In order to explicate what Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here with the compact phrase "determinations, magnitudes,

and dimensions," I'd like to turn briefly to Spinoza's *Ethics* and his conception of a body. A body for Spinoza cannot be defined by substance. The reason for this is there is only one substance for Spinoza and it is the whole of which bodies are merely a part. As a result, Spinoza is left to define bodies in terms of the "ratio of motion and rest" among their parts.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the fact that my arm is connected to my torso by means of a ball and socket joint determines to a certain degree what I'm capable of. This particular joint allows me to move my arm in a complete circle. This relation is one *determination* in the multiplicity that is my body. I do not, however, continuously move my arm in a circle. That is, the determination provided by this particular relation of body parts is exercised to a certain degree. The degree to which it's exercised is a *magnitude*. A multiplicity's *dimension* describes the number of connections to other multiplicities that are made possible by its determinations and magnitude. For example, as I write this sentence the possibility of my interacting with the multiplicity of the keyboard and computer is made possible by my determinations and magnitude. However, insofar as I connect with the keyboard my dimension is increased. That is, I am now capable of things in this combination that I would not be capable of without it. I can write a book. I can do a search on the internet (a very complex multiplicity, indeed, that vastly increases my dimension). I can check my email and connect with other people via email. As Deleuze and Guattari say, "the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows" (TP 8). A multiplicity (or a body for Spinoza) is not a discrete, static unity, but something constantly entering into and breaking off combinations with other multiplicities. The boundaries between multiplicities are neither stable nor distinct but form what Deleuze and Guattari call a "zone of indiscernibility."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, however, we do come across what appear to be discrete, static unities. Deleuze and Guattari make two claims about these unities. First, that the appearance of unity is the result of "a power takeover in the multiplicity" (TP 8). Second, the unity itself "operates in an empty dimension supplementary to that of the system considered" (TP 8). A power takeover would be the restriction of the determination and magnitude of a multiplicity to a certain range. The shift to being defined as "a criminal," for example, follows from the restriction of determination and magnitude through the imposition of handcuffs and incarceration. Furthermore, this restriction of determination and magnitude is organized by the supplementary dimension of the state's judicial

apparatus that appears to exist over and above the individual “criminals” that it creates. This is precisely the same logic that animates Plato’s theory of forms, and even Heidegger’s account of “enframing” (*Gestell*), which begins by distinguishing the mountains (*Berge*) from the mountain range (*Gebirg*) that gathers and organizes the mountains.<sup>6</sup> At bottom, this supplementary dimension is nothing other than an application of the discontinuity thesis, which argues that form and content are distinct ontological kinds.

### ASIGNIFYING RUPTURE

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates defines dialectic as consisting of two principles: collection and division. Collection is the principle by which “scattered particulars” are brought together under one idea. Division is the principle of “dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver” (265d–266a). While we might see the previous principle of multiplicity as aimed at the principle of collection, the principle of asignifying rupture is aimed at the principle of division. The issue is not so much with the idea that collection and division are basic principles of thought; the principle of continuity, in fact, argues that these are the two basic tendencies of assemblages. Rather, the issue lies with what gets collected or divided. For Socrates one collects scattered particulars under a single idea in order to gain clarity and consistency, and by the same token one divides in order to understand the *naturally* (*pephuke*) constituent parts. The idea that there are naturally constituent parts of things presupposes first and foremost discontinuity, presupposes that there are discrete and atomistic units that constitute any given thing and are in principle separable. The principle of asignifying rupture opposes this arborescent view of things with the rhizome, which surely has tendencies toward stability but at the same time has lines of flight. On Socrates’ model, proper division would preclude lines of flight. This would be an errant connection, an indication that one had failed to carve nature at the joints, like a bad butcher.

Deleuze and Guattari give three examples of refusing to carve nature at the joints and instead creating a rhizome: wasp and orchid, cat and baboon, book and world. In each case, it would seem easy to naturally divide these pairs into discrete entities. The point of all of these examples, though, is that the drive to divide nature neatly at the joints obscures a rhizomatic account of the same process. Take the wasp and the orchid, for example. There

are species of orchid that look sufficiently like female wasps to male wasps such that the latter attempt to mate with the orchid. The result is that under the guise of its own reproduction the wasp ends up pollinating other orchids. To be sure, the most obvious way to describe this interaction between orchid and wasp is that the orchid through natural selection sufficiently imitates the wasp, so that the orchid's genetic material is more widely dispersed. Deleuze and Guattari argue, however, that this is not the only way to look at the interaction. In order to see the orchid and the wasp as a rhizome, we need to abandon the concepts of mimicry and imitation. Mimicry and imitation suppose that the orchid is representing or signifying something, in this case a female wasp. Rhizomes, however, do not function according to representation. Nothing in a rhizome represents something else. There are only connections. Sometimes these connections are transformative, that is, create a line of flight. In the case of the orchid and the wasp the connections have been transformative over the course of millennia in a parallel evolution. The orchid's line of flight is a becoming-wasp, and the wasp's line of flight is a becoming-orchid. The becoming, though, does not happen on the level of extensive, discrete properties. It happens on the level of continuous intensities that circulate between the orchid and the wasp.

If the orchid and the wasp are an example of parallel evolution, the cat and the baboon are an example of *aparallel* evolution. Evolutionary biology has now advanced to the point where it is clear that genetic development does not happen in strictly linear lines of descent. Some of our genetic code comes from species not in our evolutionary line through viral intermediaries. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari note that the DNA of some cats is connected to the DNA of some baboons through a certain type of virus. This is a becoming-baboon of the cat, but this becoming does not involve the cat acting like a baboon, looking like a baboon, or representing a baboon in any way. The cat-baboon rhizome connects two sets of disparate genetic codes transversally. For this reason, the rhizome is "anti-genealogical." Making a rhizome does not seek clear lines of descent, it seeks to scramble the codes and make new connections.

To conclude this section, Deleuze and Guattari return to the idea of the book. One of the results of arborescent thinking is to suppose that the book represents the world. But, the book no more represents the world than the cat represents the baboon. No, the book forms a rhizome with the world, seeks to make transversal connections with it, seeks to transform it as the connection with

the world will undoubtedly transform the book. Representing the world would only reproduce good sense and common sense, cliché and opinion. There is no natural joint between the book and the world. There are always lines of flight between the two. The evolution of both book and world may be both parallel and aparallel. Form rhizomes by making an asignifying rupture, that is, not by trying to represent something else, but by following a line of flight in order to see where it leads, see what new connections it's capable of. This can never be known beforehand; it can only be discovered through experimentation. Paraphrasing Spinoza, no one knows what a rhizome can do.

### *CARTOGRAPHY AND DECALCOMANIA*

We'll take the last two principles together, since they are opposed to one another methodologically. Here Deleuze and Guattari highlight the difference between creating a rhizome and reproducing a tree. Cartography is the creation of a rhizome or "mapping." This is strictly opposed to decalcomania, which reproduces trees everywhere and out of everything. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this as "tracing." The word "decalcomania" is where we get the word "decal" and refers to the process of transferring ready-made pictures onto another surface. We would probably just call them "stickers" today. When my kids were younger they loved to play with stickers. They still have quite a few in the back of a closet somewhere. They much prefer drawing their own pictures to stickers now, though. The reason for this is that while stickers are great and reproduce exactly what you want on the page, they are also limiting. If I want a stegosaurus, but all my stickers are of dimetrodons, then I have to make a picture with dimetrodons or learn how to draw a stegosaurus.

Deleuze and Guattari think that the dominant tendency in philosophy has been to use stickers instead of drawing. Stickers are safe. They do not risk anything, but they keep reproducing the same image of thought over and over again. Take psychoanalysis, for example. Deleuze and Guattari reread the cases of Melanie Klein's patient Little Richard and Freud's patient Little Hans as a conflict of these two methodologies. Neither Little Richard nor Little Hans have any interest in stickers, each wants to draw his own map, make new connections, experiment. Klein and Freud only have three stickers, though, mother, father, and child. Whatever map the patients draw the analysts insist that these stickers be placed over the top so the pictures always come out the same, as Oedipus. The

method here is to restrict the map by enclosing it within a tracing, to cut off all lines of flight, to ensure that everything signifies and represents.

At this point Deleuze and Guattari warn us of a trap that's easy to fall into. First, it's tempting to think that the opposition between map and tracing lands us back in the discontinuity thesis. "Have we not, however, reverted to a simple dualism by contrasting maps to tracings, as good and bad sides?" (TP 13). Their answer is no, because the dualism here is methodological. Any assemblage will evidence tendencies toward both stability (tracing) and change (mapping). If our goal, however, is to create something new we need to find a way to put the tracing on the map. When my kids played with stickers, they almost never made a picture solely with stickers. Instead, they would incorporate stickers into a drawing already in progress. Need a dragon? Use a dinosaur sticker, but draw flames coming out of its mouth and wings on its back. Here the tracing is put back on the map and as a result the tracing itself is transformed by the lines of flight created by making new connections with the sticker.

Deleuze and Guattari return to the problem of dualism that keeps popping up throughout this plateau. As we have seen already, the dualisms they posit are methodological rather than ontological, strategic rather than moral. The task is not to claim that rhizomes are wholly good and trees are wholly bad. Deleuze and Guattari freely admit that rhizomes "have their own, even more rigid, despotism and hierarchy" (TP 20). The point of their methodology, though, is not to maintain this dualism or any dualism for that matter. The goal of the methodology is to create something new. One way we might think about what it might take to create something new is to ask what prevents the formation of the new. What the above principles outline negatively are the blocks to creating something new. Inhibiting connection and striving for homogeneity prevents creation. Seeing difference as a dialectic of the one and the many prevents creation. Insisting that nature must be carved at the joints ensures that all lines of flight are cut off. Finally, insisting that everything conform to a pre-existing idea reproduces that pre-existing idea *ad infinitum*. These arborescent principles see only trees and reproduce only trees.

In contrast to this no one knows what rhizomatic principles will produce. No one knows if it will be good or bad, fascist or liberating, a line of flight or recaptured by the arborescent model. All that one can know is that these principles *might* create something new, but this cannot be known beforehand. It can only be known



through experimentation. Deleuze and Guattari's experiment in *A Thousand Plateaus* is to write the rhizome, to create something new. This requires a new model, not a model that might be opposed to the arborescent model as a superior type of the same thing, but a model that "operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel" (TP 20). Creating the new is risky. It requires eschewing the safety of models sanctified by centuries of thought, and there are no guarantees how the new creation will turn out.

Creating a model that overturns models proceeds by way of dualisms. "We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models" (TP 20). Dualisms create *exclusive* disjunctions, or biunivocal relations between terms. What Deleuze and Guattari are proposing is an *inclusive* disjunction by which we "arrive at the magic formula we all seek—PLURALISM = MONISM" (TP 20). It might seem strange to invoke monism at this point, when everything in Deleuze and Guattari has seemed to argue against it. In fact, it is precisely claims such as this, as well as claims about the "One-All" in *Difference and Repetition*, that led philosophers such as Badiou and Žižek to argue that Deleuze and Guattari's monism actually prevents the creation of the new. They reason, in an argument that has parallels to Hegel's objections to Spinoza, that if monism is true, then nothing new can arise, because everything is already contained in a complete and static "One." At bottom, the debate is about the nature of the new and the conditions for its possibility.<sup>7</sup> The monism arrived at here, though, is not an Eleatic stasis in which movement is an illusion. It is the monism of the continuity thesis, the monism of univocity. The claim is not that ontology is a monotonous sameness, but that everything exists in the exactly the same way. There is no dualism of form and content that must then be related by analogy. There is no transcendence, only immanence. All the assemblages are arrayed on the same plane. The formula (pluralism = monism) is magic precisely because it allows for the creation of the new.

The creation of the new requires first and foremost a new way of seeing. Deleuze and Guattari's claim is not that the world naturally divides into rhizomes and trees, but that every assemblage will have rhizomatic and arborescent tendencies. "There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots" (TP 20). Furthermore, as a methodology the task is to create something new by focusing on the rhizomatic aspects of an assemblage. Find the

lines of flight. See what they may be connected to. Finding the lines of flight requires a new way of seeing that Deleuze and Guattari call a "perceptual semiotics" (TP 23). The temptation when looking is to grasp things as stable and complete rather than in the process of transformation. The key is to grasp things "in the middle." "It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes" (TP 23). Every plateau in the book is an attempt at seeing things in the middle. Each plateau takes up something that we're used to seeing from above or below, as whole and discrete, and seeing it in the middle. That is, seeing where the lines of flight are, seeing what other assemblages it might be connected to.

In the next three plateaus, for example, the subject, the world, and language are all grasped in the middle. They're each unmoored from psychoanalysis, the judgment of God, and linguistics, respectively. The result of unmooring the subject from psychoanalysis, for example, is not that we get a new and better theory of the subject. To do so would simply be to replace one tree with another. What we get instead is the creation of a new concept, the pack, that opens up new connections and generates new lines of flight. Because of these new connections *A Thousand Plateaus* ranges wildly across art, music, literature, science, mathematics as these new connections branch out and make further connections. Deleuze and Guattari are not content to speak only to other philosophers, although they do provide much new material for philosophers to ponder. They are not even particularly interested in expounding a new philosophy in any traditional sense. Rather, as they say repeatedly, they want to write a rhizome that connects to the outside, and that transforms their book and the outside. They want not so much readers as fellow creators. They do have a few principles concerning the conditions under which creation might take place and a few examples of these principles in action. There are also limits. As they say in a later work, "A work of chaos is certainly no better than a work of opinion."<sup>8</sup> The task is not to imitate Deleuze and Guattari or to reproduce their work, but to grasp it in the middle, to see where the lines of flight are and make new connections.

## NOTES

1. Deleuze and Guattari discuss this at length in *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 201-5.

2. In a lecture from 1978, Deleuze says, “the true opposite of the concrete is not the abstract, it’s the discrete . . . Lived experience is an absolutely abstract thing” (3/14/78). Quoted in Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 307.
3. There is an editing error in both the Minnesota and Continuum editions of *A Thousand Plateaus* that suggests the opposite of the French text. The English version reads, “it is *not impossible* to make a radical break between regimes of signs and their objects” (TP 7, my emphasis). The French reads, “et *l’on peut pas* établir de coupure radicale entre les régimes de signes et leurs objets” (MP 13, my emphasis), which might be better translated as, “one *may not* establish a radical break between regimes of signs and their objects.” The additional negative in the published translation reverses the meaning. This issue becomes particularly relevant in the next plateau where Freud’s distinction between the neurotic and the psychotic hinges on the rigid distinction between word and thing.
4. Spinoza, *Ethics* IIP13ff. See also my *True Freedom: Spinoza’s Practical Philosophy*, pp. 55–62.
5. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 19–20.
6. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” pp. 19ff.
7. See Smith, “Conditions of the New,” and my “Deleuze and Badiou on the Nature of Events.”
8. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 204.

## 2

### *1914: One or Several Wolves?*

Freud turned the Wolf-Man into a tree. How can we make him into a rhizome and thus create something new? This is the task that Deleuze and Guattari set themselves in the second plateau, which is dated the year that Freud declares the Wolf-Man cured, and they complete this task through the development of the concept of “multiplicity.” After seeking treatment for crippling depression and a family history that included the suicides of his sister and father, the Wolf-Man arrived in Vienna seeking Freud’s help. The majority of Freud’s analysis focused on a dream from the Wolf-Man’s childhood:

I dreamt that it was night and that I was lying in my bed. (My bed stood with its foot towards the window; in front of the window there was a row of old walnut trees. I know it was winter when I had the dream, and night-time.) Suddenly the window opened of its own accord, and I was terrified to see that some white wolves were sitting on the big walnut tree in front of the window. There were six or seven of them. The wolves were quite white, and looked more like foxes or sheep-dogs, for they had big tails like foxes and they had their ears pricked like dogs when they pay attention to something. In great terror, evidently of being eaten up by the wolves, I screamed and woke up. My nurse hurried to my bed to see what had happened to me. It took quite a long while before I was convinced that it had only been a dream; I had had such a clear and life-like picture of the window opening and the wolves sitting on the tree. At last I grew quieter, felt as though I had escaped from some danger, and went to sleep again.<sup>1</sup>

Freud is adamant about dealing with every detail of the dream. He writes in a footnote, “It is always a strict law of dream-interpretation

that an explanation must be found for every detail."<sup>2</sup> The detail that's most troubling for Freud is the number of wolves. Everything would have been so much simpler for his analysis if there had only been one wolf. So, Freud tries very hard to reduce the number of wolves. The Wolf-Man's sister used to scare him with a picture of a wolf from a fairy tale, "The Seven Little Goats." Ah, here we go—there is really only one wolf, but in the dream logic the number seven got transposed from the goats to the wolf. It also turns out that the Wolf-Man had a Latin teacher named Wolf who terrified him. Now we're getting somewhere. Because, of course, for Freud the wolf is the father, and the reason that the Wolf-Man fears his father is that he fears the father will castrate him.

It is only by reducing the wolves to one that Freud can make the dream represent Oedipus. However, the case is not even that simple. The Wolf-Man is maddeningly vague about the number of wolves. Freud accounted for seven wolves, but not six *or* seven. Freud's explanation of this in a footnote is that in the story of "The Seven Little Goats" six of the goats are eaten and one escapes by hiding.<sup>3</sup> Surely, this explains the vagueness with regard to number. Of course, for Freud the number is only important insofar as it can be reduced to one. Does dreaming about six or seven wolves produce anxiety? It's really your father. Problems regarding the number of wolves continue to multiply, though, when we look at the image of the dream the Wolf-Man draws while in analysis—he draws only five wolves.<sup>4</sup> Freud notes that the number five is no doubt related to either the time at which the Wolf-Man witnessed the primal scene or the time of at which his fever ran highest during an illness in infancy.<sup>5</sup>

The number of wolves, though, isn't the only point at which the Wolf-Man is vague about numbers. In recounting his age at the time of his dream the Wolf-Man says, "I was three, four, or at most five years old at the time."<sup>6</sup> Freud's response to this imprecision is nearly identical to his response to the number of wolves. He doesn't need to put as much effort into it, because it's not part of the dream interpretation. Notice, though, that the move to reduction remains the same.

If it was to be assumed that behind the content of the dream there lay some such unknown scene—one, that is, which had already been forgotten at the time of the dream—then it must have taken place very early. The dreamer, it will be recalled, said: "I was three, four, or at most five years old at the time I had the dream." And we can add: "And I was reminded by the dream of something that must have belonged to an even earlier period."<sup>7</sup>

The "unknown scene" that Freud refers to is, of course, the primal scene of the Wolf-Man's parents having sex that must have been witnessed at least once (but perhaps as many as three times) in the Wolf-Man's infancy.<sup>8</sup> Based on his assumption of the primal scene, Freud places words in the patient's mouth that allow him to reduce the age of the dreamer to the age that he was at the primal scene.

It is this continual attempt to reduce the dream to a one that signifies and represents that so disturbs Deleuze and Guattari here. It is particularly disheartening, since Freud is always on the verge of discovering something truly revolutionary. Or, better, Freud does discover something truly revolutionary, namely, the unconscious, and at every point he backs away from the implications of his discovery. In essays such as "The Unconscious" and "Negation" Freud uncovers the vast, unruly, productive mechanisms of the unconscious and then continually insists that these mechanisms are all subordinated to the unities of the father, the mother, castration, and above all Oedipus. Freud finds a rhizome in the unconscious but is determined to see it as a tree according to which all the lines of flight are recaptured and made to signify Oedipus. Deleuze and Guattari took up this criticism of psychoanalysis at much greater length in *Anti-Oedipus*, but their essential point remains unchanged: psychoanalysis everywhere constricts by insisting on the reduction to unity. In opposition to this reduction to unity, Deleuze and Guattari propose schizoanalysis, which seeks to follow the lines of flight that escape from every assemblage.

In order to clarify the distinction between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, let's look at Freud's distinction between neurosis, which is amenable to analysis, and schizophrenia, which is inaccessible to analysis. Freud surmised that his inability to treat schizophrenics arose from their narcissistic disavowal of all connections to the external world. Neurotics, on the other hand, simply repressed a particular connection to the external world. Briefly, schizophrenics remake reality in their own image, while neurotics accept reality but repress part of it. The repressed part returns not directly but symptomatically in neurosis. Toward the end of "The Unconscious" Freud clarifies the mechanism by which the schizophrenic detaches from reality. It is the confusion of word and thing. Or better, the schizophrenic attaches to words instead of things. As the examples that Freud gives make clear, a neurotic is able to make a comparison between a sock and a vagina, precisely because there is a similarity in the object. For the schizophrenic, though, the comparison happens at the level of words not the level of objects.

Thus, the schizophrenic notes that since the tiny openings created by stretching knit fabric and a vagina can all be called "holes" they are comparable.<sup>9</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari think that Freud's discovery of the difference between the neurotic and the schizophrenic is significant. At the same time, they also think that he missed an important opportunity. For Freud the distinction marks the difference between two kinds of people: those amenable to analysis and those resistant to it. For Deleuze and Guattari, though, this difference is not a difference in kind, nor a difference between two basic types of people. Rather, the difference is between tendencies toward both stasis and change that may be found in any assemblage. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the difference between neurotics and schizophrenics as "a whole difference in styles" (TP 27). An assemblage with neurotic tendencies has a reproductive, representational style. Such an assemblage prefers that words and things mirror one another as much as possible and that change be managed by subordination to a unity or goal, good sense and common sense. An assemblage with schizophrenic tendencies does not assume that words and things represent one another. In fact such an assemblage may freely associate words without worrying whether such connections are "proper," such as a field of stitching and a field of vaginas.

At precisely this point, we run up against Freud's greatest worry, namely, that his analytic technique is essentially schizophrenic. In "The Unconscious" he writes, "When we think in abstractions there is a danger that we may neglect the relations of words to unconscious thing-presentations, and it must be confessed that the expression and content of our philosophizing then begins to acquire an unwelcome resemblance to the mode of operation of schizophrenics."<sup>10</sup> This is precisely what we saw in Freud's analysis of the Wolf-Man's dream and the question of number. Freud's analysis was utterly dependent on connecting numbers in the abstract rather than the thing numbered. In his discussion of whether there were six or seven wolves in the Wolf-Man's dream, for example, Freud focuses on the fact that a story from the Wolf-Man's childhood featured seven goats, even though seven goats eaten by a wolf seems a very different thing from seven wolves. Freud's schizophrenic technique becomes even more pronounced in his attempt to explain why the Wolf-Man draws only five wolves. Freud again fixates on number, but at this point there is no slippage from wolves to goats but from wolves to time. As we saw above, Freud's supposition is that perhaps the primal scene that the Wolf-Man is working through happened

at five o'clock, and that's why there are five wolves in the drawing. This appears to be precisely the kind of free association among words that Freud finds characteristic of schizophrenics and at the same time is trying to ward off in his own technique.

In response to this Deleuze and Guattari argue that the problem does not lie in Freud's technique, but in the goals of analysis. The goal of analysis for Freud is normalcy. That is why this plateau is dated with Freud's declaration of a cure for the Wolf-Man. What if the goal isn't normalcy? What if the goal isn't to make words mirror things? What if the goal is to create something new? Or, and this is the same thing, what if the goal is to do away with goals? What might this look like? Deleuze and Guattari respond to these questions by offering a story about Franny. Franny is listening is listening to a program about wolves and Deleuze asks if she would like to be a wolf. Her response is surprising, "How stupid, you can't be one wolf, you're always eight or nine, six or seven" (TP 29). What is perhaps more surprising is Deleuze's response. Unlike Freud, Deleuze doesn't begin to wonder how underneath the indeterminate number of wolves there is secretly a single wolf that is actually the father. Rather, Deleuze begins to ask the opposite question, What if the unconscious is irreducibly a multiplicity? "Freud tried to approach crowd phenomena from the point of view of the unconscious, but he did not see clearly, he did not see that the unconscious itself was fundamentally a crowd" (TP 29).

For the most part Deleuze and Guattari use the term "multiplicity" to talk about crowds, but what does it mean to talk about the unconscious as a crowd or multiplicity? In our discussion of the rhizome we saw that one of the goals behind speaking of multiplicities is to avoid the dialectic of the one and the many that has dominated philosophy since Plato. In this case, Deleuze and Guattari think that Freud has fallen prey to this dialectic by subordinating the manifold drives and cathexes of the unconscious to the one of Oedipus. In contrast to this strategy Deleuze and Guattari eschew this arborescent dialectic in favor of thinking the unconscious (and indeed everything) as a multiplicity. The multiplicity has a completely different logic from the one and the many though. To begin with, multiplicities are statistical aggregates. That is, they are so complex that they do not function according to linear causality but according to statistical probability. The example of this that we're probably most familiar with is the weather. Predicting the weather is never certain precisely because the factors that produce the weather are irreducibly complex. For this reason rain on any



given day is never certain only more or less likely. At the same time, however, these daily complexities produce stabilities over the long term that we call "climate." In this light, Deleuze and Guattari's objection to Freud can be stated this way: First, Freud has mistaken historically produced regularities for universal essences, namely, Oedipus. Second, insofar as universal essences are singular, Freud's technique subsumes the many by the one. Third, as a result Freud's method can only reproduce the one and thus tends toward stasis. In contrast to this Deleuze and Guattari propose a method that tends toward change rather than stasis: schizoanalysis.<sup>11</sup>

Schizoanalysis, however, does not presume that all multiplicities tend toward change. Certainly Deleuze and Guattari want to replace a dialectic of the one and the many with multiplicity, but (following Elias Canetti) they recognize that a multiplicity is itself always a combination of tendencies toward both stasis and change. Those multiplicities in which the tendency toward stasis dominates they call "masses," and those multiplicities in which the tendency toward change dominates they call "packs." This, of course, brings us back to the question of the number of wolves. From Freud's perspective the number is crucial, but only insofar as it's reducible to one. For Freud the pack is not a pack, and the unconscious is not a crowd, because what counts is not the many but the one. In an interesting parallel, the number of wolves is also crucial for Deleuze and Guattari, not because they are reducible to one, but precisely because they are *not* reducible to one. But, are we not still caught in the dialectic of the one and the many at this point? Haven't we just overturned the one in favor of the many? Or, to put the question in a slightly different way: What is the difference between the many and multiplicity? The answer to these questions lies in the continuity thesis. The dialectic of the one and the many depends on discrete, countable entities. It depends on the idea that whatever is countable can be grouped in a set that is itself discrete and countable. In contrast to this, multiplicity is a way of thinking the continuous and uncountable. It is a way of thinking intensities rather than extensities. From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective the question of how many wolves is already the wrong question, because it begins from discontinuity rather than continuity. Imagine, for example, that you go dancing at a club. The music is very good, and the crowd on the dance floor is all moving in time with the music. You have a very good time. The next day suppose that you're explaining to a friend what a great time you had dancing the night before, and he asks, "How many people were dancing?" Dancing is an intensive

phenomenon and a crowd phenomenon; as a result the number of people in the crowd is irrelevant. By the same token, the pack is an intensive assemblage. To ask how many are in the pack is already the wrong question. The right question is, Which intensities circulate through and are captured by the pack?

The question of intensities brings us to Deleuze and Guattari's first discussion of the "body without organs" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, a term that they borrow from the playwright Antonin Artaud. In this context they analyze the components of the unconscious. We have already discussed the intensive multiplicities, but the other component is the body without organs. The body without organs is that *on which* intensive multiplicities circulate. In the example above, the body without organs is the dance floor. In the Wolf-Man's dream the body without organs is the tree on which the wolves sit. A couple of clarifications need to be made at this point. First, for Deleuze and Guattari the body without organs does not function as a dead substratum, or even as a Kantian intuition of space. The body without organs is the continuum of life itself. A life. Not a life subjected to the dialectic of the one and the many where many organs are organized into a unitary organism. No, this is life thought from the perspective of continuity, multiplicity, the rhizome. Second, it is tempting to think of the body without organs as somehow pre-existing the multiplicities that are found on it. This is not the case for Deleuze and Guattari, who see the body without organs as produced alongside and along with the multiplicities that populate it. In this respect, it might be better to think of the body without organs as a limit beyond which a given multiplicity transforms into something else. If we think of a river, for example, the flow of water creates the riverbed in which the river flows. The very creation of this riverbed, though, at some points constricts the flow of water, which increases the intensity of the flow, and at other points the bed widens and decreases the intensity of the flow.

In later chapters we will be able to discuss further concepts such as the body without organs, intensity, and becoming-animal. At this point it is sufficient to return to Deleuze and Guattari's project of creating concepts and ask what's been created here. The short answer is the concept of the unconscious as multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari reject Freud's mania for reducing the many to the one and replace it with a multiplicity, the pack. The perceptual semiotics at work here require that there are only multiplicities. One never arrives at indivisible, discrete units out of which things are constructed. The components of a multiplicity are themselves

multiplicities. This requires that one always think in terms of populations, in terms of statistical aggregates for which there will always be means (moments of stability) and deviations from the mean (moments of change, lines of flight). Deleuze and Guattari's method is scalar and does not seek to organize according to a discrete punctuality or a totalizing whole. Rather, any moment of stability is to be analyzed according to the populations that make it up, regardless of the scale. In the Wolf-Man's case the object of stability is the unconscious and the populations that make it up are intensities, a pack of wolves.

#### NOTES

1. Freud, SE XVII, p. 29.
2. Freud, SE XVII, p. 42n1.
3. Ibid.
4. Freud, SE XVII, p. 30.
5. Freud, SE XVII, p. 37.
6. Freud, SE XVII, p. 29.
7. Freud, SE XVII, p. 33.
8. Later in the essay, Freud goes on to raise the question of whether the primal scene must be witnessed in order to produce neurosis in the subject. His conclusion is that whether it is actually witnessed or not is irrelevant, since it is ultimately constructed retroactively by the patient (SE XVII, pp. 58ff).
9. Freud, SE XIV, pp. 200–1.
10. Freud, SE XIV, p. 204.
11. See my *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger, and Deleuze* for further explanation, especially 170ff.

### 3

## *10,000 BC: The Geology of Morals*

In the third plateau Deleuze and Guattari take up the problem of stratification. The problem of stratification is the problem of stasis. How do assemblages acquire tendencies toward stasis? Are there different kinds of stasis? Or, better, are there different ways in which intensities are captured and regulated? In order to answer these questions Deleuze and Guattari organize the plateau around a lecture given by the fictional character Professor Challenger, the protagonist in Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World*. The professor's lecture is directly about stratification and is interwoven with an imagined debate between Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Georges Cuvier. Geoffroy and Cuvier were nineteenth-century naturalists concerned about the question of speciation. While they were colleagues at one point they ultimately came to disagree about whether species were fixed types, as Cuvier held, or subject to modification, as Geoffroy held. Even at this point we can see that what is at stake in these two views is an account of stasis. Cuvier holds that stasis pre-exists and forms the individual members of a species, while Geoffroy holds that not only must stasis be the result of some genetic process, but also that stasis itself is temporary. In this plateau Deleuze and Guattari seek to create a new concept out of Geoffroy's insight into speciation, a concept that accounts not only for different species but for any kind of stasis whatsoever.

Deleuze and Guattari say that stratification is both fortunate and unfortunate, that it is both important and inevitable. As we saw, the first two plateaus were primarily focused on the lines of flight that escape from static formations and the thought processes that impose these static formations and attempt to recapture lines

of flight. In short, the first two plateaus are focused on change. This plateau focuses on stasis. Not surprisingly, the production of assemblages with tendencies toward stasis is a complex, multivalent affair. The chief reason for this complexity lies in what I've called the continuity thesis. Insofar as the continuity thesis precludes universal, transcendent forms to organize unruly matter, Deleuze and Guattari must give an account of formal genesis, which I've called "hylozoism" to contrast it with the dominant tradition of "hylomorphism." The result of Deleuze and Guattari's work here is that they isolate three types of stasis or stratification along with the genesis for each type. There are physical stratifications, organic stratifications, and linguistic stratifications.

Before we proceed to look at the distinction among these types of stratification, we must look at the process of stratification as such. Deleuze and Guattari briefly summarize what stratification is:

They [strata] consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, of producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates. Strata are acts of capture, they are like "black holes" or occlusions striving to seize whatever comes within their reach. They operate by coding and territorialization upon the earth; they proceed by code and by territoriality. The strata are judgments of God (but the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized). (TP 40)

We already know enough to unpack some of the claims of this passage. Other claims will have to wait until we discuss other plateaus. At this point I want to focus on Deleuze and Guattari's claim that strata are "judgments of God." While there is a complex history to this phrase that Deleuze and Guattari filter through their reading of Artaud, we can relate the phrase to Cuvier's (and not just Cuvier's) belief that species are fixed types. For Cuvier they are fixed types precisely because God made them that way. This belief is itself a reading of the account of creation in Genesis, which says, "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures *after their kind*: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth *after their kind*'; and it was so" (Gen 1:24, my emphasis). "Judgment of God" in Deleuze and Guattari thus becomes shorthand for talking about the fact of stratification, but also for the theological baggage that is attached to most ways of thinking about stratification. Beyond that,

it is clear that the judgment of God is not final. It is contrasted with what escapes it, namely, the body without organs.

Precisely between the judgment of God and the body without organs we find the assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari write, "The assemblage is between two layers, between two strata; on one side it faces the strata . . . but the other side faces something else, the body without organs . . ." (TP 40). This confirms what we've already seen, namely that any assemblage has tendencies toward stasis (stratification, the judgment of God) and change (the body without organs); what we lack at this point is an explanation of how a strata might come about. In order to explain this Deleuze and Guattari indulge in some heretical theology. They grant the strong historical connection between stratification and God and therefore conclude, "God is a Lobster" (TP 40). What they mean by this is that stratification is always a process of "double articulation." Wary of proposing a general model for something so varied, Deleuze and Guattari begin with an example: sandstone. Two things need to happen in order to produce sandstone. First, there must be a process of sedimentation. In a fluid medium sediment will organize itself into homogeneous layers of particles roughly the same size. Sedimentation is the first articulation. The second articulation is the process by which stratified particles stabilize into sedimentary rock.

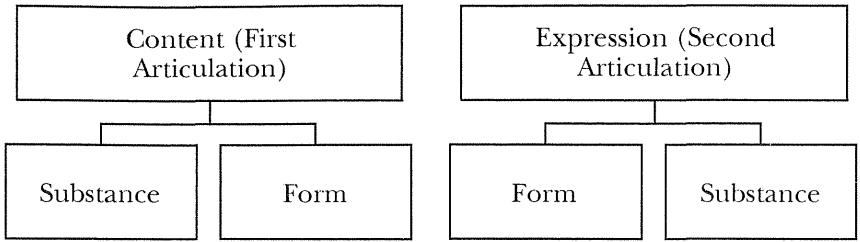
Deleuze and Guattari express this double articulation in terms of a passage from substance to form (first articulation) and from form to substance (second articulation). In the first articulation there is a selection of material (substance) upon which statistical regularity is imposed (form). In the case of sandstone above, the selection of material is simply the particles suspended in the river. These particles are the substance. The very movement of the river organizes these particles according to size and weight. In this way form is imposed on substance. This process of selection and organization is the first articulation. The second articulation fixes (in the case of sandstone "calcifies") the statistical regularities into stable structures (forms), which are at that time constituted as a compound with rigid, extensive relations among its parts (substances). Thus in the move from sediment to sedimentary rock, the pre-selected and organized material is converted into a rigid assemblage that tends mostly toward stasis.

Even at this early stage it is important to see the way in which Deleuze and Guattari differ from traditional accounts of the same process. First, even though they invoke God here, there is no suggestion that God functions as an external agency. If we suppose

that Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with creating the new but without resorting to the discontinuity thesis, they cannot have recourse to a theistic *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, they must show how the new is created immanently. Thus, "God" is the name of that immanent process of creation by double articulation. Second, and in parallel with their reappropriation of God, Deleuze and Guattari also rework two terms from the history of Western metaphysics, form and substance. As we've seen, particularly in the case of form, the concept easily lends itself to a metaphysics of discontinuity in which a form, ontologically different in kind, imposes itself on unruly matter. By the same token, substance also lends itself to a metaphysics of discontinuity as that unchanging ground that grants stability to things. On the one hand, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned to account for the stability of things, and as a result use the classical terms for doing so, "form" and "substance." On the other hand, they want to sever the connection between these terms and a metaphysics of discontinuity. In order to do this, they must show how form and substance are generated by intensive processes rather than imposed on intensive processes from without. They do this through double articulation. The first articulation shows the production of substance and form in an intensive process (sedimentation), while the second articulation shows the production of form and substance in an extensive process (sedimentary rock). This is the starting point for solving the problem of stable things that can be grouped according to kinds without resorting to a metaphysics of discontinuity.

Although Deleuze and Guattari think that stratification in general always requires a double articulation, they borrow some terminology from Louis Hjelmslev, the Danish linguist. In particular they borrow the distinction between content and expression to correspond to the first and second articulations. As a result, one could say that content has both a substance and form, and expression has both a form and substance.<sup>1</sup> This terminological addition allows us to think more clearly about what Deleuze and Guattari want to do with this distinction other than criticize traditional metaphysics. If we return to the sandstone illustration we can see how this works. The content of sandstone is a selection (substance) of particles that have been organized in a particular way (form), and the expression of the sandstone is the hardening of the particles (form) into striations of varied colors (substance). Of course, there is no necessity that this content expresses itself in this way. The same content (particles suspended in a fluid medium) might express itself as a

Chart 1



river delta with constantly shifting channels. Furthermore, while Deleuze and Guattari say that the distinction between content and expression is a real distinction (as opposed to the form/substance distinction, which is merely modal or mental), they argue that the distinction between content and expression is also a relative distinction. Returning to the sandstone again, we can see how the sandstone is the expression of a particular content, but we can also imagine a mason using sandstone to construct a wall. In this instance the sandstone is the content and the wall is the expression. We can diagram the relation as shown in Chart 1.

At this point, things seem to have gotten very nebulous, very quickly. Let's not lose sight of Deleuze and Guattari's purpose here. They are trying to account for both stasis and change, and their account of stratification is focused primarily on stasis. They put it this way, "The question we must ask is what on a given stratum varies and what does not. What accounts for the unity and diversity of a stratum?" (TP 45). Deleuze and Guattari claim that a stratum is a thickening or accretion of a flow of matter (or earth or body without organs). This thickening may become very thick indeed, say in the case of sandstone, which results in a very stable, unified assemblage. Or, it may be quick and ephemeral, in the case, for example, of a smoke ring. The point that Deleuze and Guattari want to make is that every stratum requires this double articulation.

The fact that every stratum is produced by double articulation, however, should not obscure the differences among strata. Here Deleuze and Guattari must walk a very fine line. They must distinguish among types of strata without resorting to some kind of essentialism. They cannot distinguish between the physical and organic strata, for example, by arguing that the organic stratum contains something called "life" that the physical stratum does not. On the contrary, they must show that life is *produced* on the organic stratum as the result of the content and expression of the matter selected



and organized on that stratum. The physical stratum selects from the same material flow, but its content and expression differ. "Thus there is no vital matter specific to the organic stratum, matter is the same on all strata" (TP 45). In short, Deleuze and Guattari must distinguish among strata while maintaining the continuity thesis.

### *ABSTRACT MACHINES*

The three strata that interest Deleuze and Guattari in this plateau are the physical, the organic, and the linguistic. In order to fully understand these strata and what distinguishes them, we need to introduce another term: "abstract machine." Strata can be distinguished from one another because their abstract machines differ. The physical stratum differs from the organic stratum, precisely because each stratum has a different abstract machine. An abstract machine is nothing other than the process of double articulation. Thus, an abstract machine is not the same as a stratum but it is "embedded in the stratum" (TP 45). An abstract machine is also not the same as an assemblage, though both operate machinically (that is, by making and breaking connections). An abstract machine does not transcend or pre-exist the stratum on which it is lodged. Rather, the abstract machine is constituted by the stratum on which it is lodged. To put these claims in Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary, stratum, assemblage, and abstract machine all exist on the same plane.

### *THE PHYSICAL STRATUM*

If, then, an abstract machine is the process of double articulation, and if this process differs for each strata, what is the abstract machine embedded in the physical strata? In order to answer this question we need to discuss thresholds and induction. Depending on their composition physical systems have various stable states that are achieved when a threshold is crossed. Take the compound  $H_2O$ , for example, it has three stable states ice, water, and steam. The transition among these stable states is achieved at certain temperatures,  $0^\circ C$  or  $100^\circ C$ . These temperatures are thresholds for water, and the crossing of a threshold, the movement from one stable state to another, Deleuze and Guattari call induction. The word "induction" suggests several different meanings at once. In order to clarify what Deleuze and Guattari mean here, it might be helpful to think about induction in the sense of an induction ceremony. What

do we mean by the phrase, "Michael Jordan was *inducted* into the Basketball Hall of Fame"? It means that his career was characterized by play that set him apart from other players. Over the course of his career his statistics settled into a stable state that was deemed superior. This superiority led to his induction into the Hall of Fame. By the same token water is inducted from its liquid state into its gaseous state when its temperature exceeds 100°C. Of course, not all thresholds on the physical stratum are based on temperature. In the case of sandstone, for example, the transition from a liquid suspension to sedimentary rock is a chemical induction rather than a thermal induction. The abstract machine of the physical stratum, then, is a process of double articulation in which the move from the first to the second articulation, the move from content to expression, occurs by induction.

Another way to explain the characteristics of the abstract machine of the physical stratum is by reference to the terms "molecular" and "molar." Deleuze and Guattari introduced these terms in the previous plateau, where they distinguish between types of assemblages but warn us (as usual) not to create a dualism of assemblages, since molecular and molar assemblages are constantly mixed. The most straightforward way to think about this distinction is in terms of stasis and change. Molecular is the tendency toward change, and molar is the tendency toward stasis. This basic idea can be fleshed out further by noting that the molecular is intensive, while the molar is extensive. Thus, calling an assemblage "molecular" is a claim to the effect that its parts are related to one another intensively; that is, they are fluid and continuous in relation to one another. A molar assemblage, in contrast, is such that its parts are related to one another extensively, in a fixed relation of discrete parts. Deleuze and Guattari's claim here with regard to the abstract machine of the physical stratum is that the distinction between content and expression is also the distinction between the molecular and the molar. Thus, on the physical stratum the induction from content to expression is also the induction from the molecular to the molar. We've seen this already in the discussion of sandstone. The content, the sediment in a fluid medium, is molecular, and the expression, the stratified sandstone, is molar.

The next characteristic that we need to explore in relation to the abstract machine of the physical stratum is what Deleuze and Guattari call "deterritorialization." What we will discover as we continue working through the different abstract machines is that each one is capable of greater deterritorialization. The first thing to note

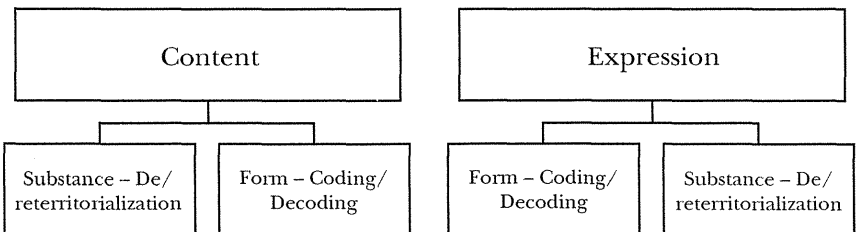
about deterritorialization is that it is inseparable from a process of reterritorialization. Furthermore, while both de- and reterritorialization are also tendencies toward change and stasis, it will be helpful to think about these tendencies as occurring on a different axis. For example, if I am driving a car, I have a rate of change that is occurring on at least two axes. I have both a direction and a speed. Both of which can be constant or change independently of one another. Deterritorialization is the selection or extraction of some set of intensities in order to compose them or place them in a different relation to one another. Again, this sounds very abstruse expressed in such general terms, but the idea can be illustrated quite easily. When an apple grows on a tree, it is territorialized on the tree. When I pick the apple, I deterritorialize the apple. At the same time, I also reterritorialize the apple by eating it or placing it in a fruit bowl. Of course, the process of de/reterritorialization extends infinitely in every direction. The apple only grows on the tree insofar as it is able to deterritorialize nutrients from the soil, energy from the sun, and pollen carried by insects and the wind. Each of these (soil, sun, insects) is in turn caught up in a process of de/reterritorialization.

In the case of the abstract machine lodged on the physical stratum, Deleuze and Guattari say that deterritorialization is both voluminous and superficial. In order to illustrate this they discuss the formation of a crystal. Crystals develop in every direction at once; that is, they develop by increasing their volume. Crystals are voluminous. By the same token, crystals only develop by adding to their surface layer (epistrata). Crystals increase by adding layer after layer onto an already stable core. Deleuze and Guattari conclude from this that deterritorialization is superficial. The developing crystal continually deterritorializes the molecular medium (parastrata) within which it sits and reterritorializes that same material into the molar structure of the crystal. Notice again that we see content and expression divided according to molecular and molar. What we will discover on other strata is that their abstract machines are able to deterritorialize further because they are not bound to deterritorialize only on the surface. These other abstract machines can reproduce.

The final characteristic of any abstract machine is decoding. Much like deterritorialization, decoding cannot be thought apart from a process of coding or overcoding. Furthermore, it is also the case that decoding and coding are ways of talking about change and stasis, but that these tendencies lie on an axis that's

distinct from de/reterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari clarify the distinction in this way, "Forms relate to codes and processes of coding and decoding in the parastrata [the outside, external milieu]; substances, being formed matters, relate to territorialities and movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization on the epistrata [the surface layer of the assemblage]" (TP 53). Aside from the introduction of the terms "parastrata," the external milieu in contact with an assemblage, and "epistrata," the surface layer of an assemblage in contact with an external milieu, the important distinction that Deleuze and Guattari draw here is between form and substance. Coding and decoding relate to form, while de/reterritorialization relate to substance. We can thus update the chart from above. In Chart 2, both content and expression have a form and a substance, and as a result both content and expression will have de/coding and de/reterritorialization. If we return to the example of sandstone we can see how this works for the physical stratum. The selection of materials (particles in a fluid medium) is a deterritorialization (and simultaneous reterritorialization), while the imposition of statistical regularity (the sorting of the particles by size and weight) is a decoding (and simultaneous coding). Thus we see both de/coding and de/reterritorialization in the first articulation, content. In the second articulation (which on the physical stratum is the movement from molecular to molar), we also see both processes of de/coding and de/reterritorialization. Here the statistical regularities become fixed as each successive layer calcifies. This calcification expresses the underlying physical and chemical constituents and is a de/coding of form on the molar scale. At the same time, as the material crosses the threshold from liquid to solid, it undergoes a process of de/reterritorialization that expresses a new substance known as sandstone. At this point the sandstone is subject to (and in fact helps create) a new external milieu with which it interacts. Thus, wind, water, and tectonic upheaval might

**Chart 2**



both deterritorialize and decode the sandstone. Or, a mason might deterritorialize but not decode the sandstone. While it is tempting to treat de/coding and de/reterritorialization as interchangeable, they are in fact distinct processes.

### THE ORGANIC STRATUM

The bulk of this plateau is taken up with discussions of the organic and linguistic strata. Our primary task at this point is to discover how the strata differ from one another. What we will find is that in each case content and expression have a different relation to one another depending on the strata. What follows from this is that all of the processes related to content and expression (de/coding, de/reterritorialization) as well as the relation of substance and form will relate to one another differently. This shouldn't come as too great a surprise, though. Deleuze and Guattari are straightforwardly trying to account for basic differences among things as diverse as rocks, animals, and language. The tricky part though, and this is what sets the project of *A Thousand Plateaus* apart philosophically, is that they're trying to do it without resorting to a metaphysics of discontinuity, or any kind of hylomorphism. They write,

As long as preestablished forms were compared to predetermined degrees, all one could do was affirm their irreducibility, and there was no way of judging possible communication between the two factors. But we see now that forms depend on codes in the parastrata and plunge into processes of decoding or drift and that degrees themselves are caught up in movements of intensive deterritorialization and reterritorialization. (TP 54, translation altered)<sup>2</sup>

By shifting to a metaphysics of continuity, Deleuze and Guattari are able to account not only for the stability of assemblages (e.g., a species of animal), but also for a process by which new forms are produced. The difficulty with discontinuity as Deleuze and Guattari see it is that the gap between discrete forms is insuperable and subject to something like Zeno's paradox. That is, moving between forms would require the establishment of an intermediate form, but the number of intermediate forms would multiply to infinity and the distance between two forms could never be traversed. Deleuze and Guattari's account of stratification avoids this difficulty by not positing discrete forms in the first place. Stability is not pre-established but is the result of statistical regularities (thickenings) that are more or less stable.

What sets the organic stratum apart from the physical stratum is its reproductive ability. This reproductive ability is what differentiates the abstract machine of the organic stratum from the abstract machine of the physical stratum. As we saw, assemblages on the physical stratum grow and develop (crystals and sandstone) but they do not reproduce. A crystal develops not by making more crystals but by adding to its surface. Only the exterior of a crystal is subject to change. Its interior is unaffected by the process of crystallization. An organic assemblage, however, can reproduce. Furthermore, it is by way of reproduction that the organic stratum de/codes and de/reterritorializes. Deleuze and Guattari summarize the distinction between the physical and the organic by saying that while the abstract machine lodged in a physical stratum functions by induction, the abstract machine lodged in an organic stratum functions by *transduction*.

In biology transduction is the transfer of foreign genetic material into an organism by a virus. The reason that Deleuze and Guattari take up this term is that unlike induction, which works only on the surface, transduction organizes interiority and exteriority differently. Transduction allows the transfer of material directly from the interior of one assemblage to the interior of another assemblage. The transduced material is then replicated through genetic reproduction. In this case there is both a de/reterritorialization of substance (genetic material) as well as a de/coding, which is now ordered differently with the introduction of new material. Deleuze and Guattari, however, do not limit the use of the term "transduction" to instances where a virus transfers genetic material into a bacterium. They use it much more generally to refer to the way that the organic stratum produces a unity and diversity that differs from the physical stratum.<sup>3</sup>

The organic stratum produces unity and diversity through separating content and expression. While on the physical stratum expression was dependent on the content, on the organic stratum expression is independent of the content. For example, the redness of sandstone (expression) is completely dependent on the amount of iron oxide in the sediment (content). When we move to the organic stratum, though, we discover that the dependence of expression on content no longer holds. Let's take eye color as an example. Eye color is clearly an expression of genetic content, but it is also widely variable. My wife and I both have green eyes, but one of our children has hazel eyes and the other blue eyes. If expression was dependent on content we would expect both children to

have green eyes, but eye color is not governed by the kind of direct dependence that we see in the color of sandstone but by statistical regularity. That's why a Punnett Square can be used to determine the likelihood of inheriting certain traits. However, even a Punnett Square cannot account for "genetic drift," the idea that over time the replication of genetic code spontaneously introduces modifications into it that are then further reproduced. Genetic drift further enhances the independence of content and expression on the organic stratum. This independence of expression allows a greater possibility of deterritorialization on the organic stratum compared to the physical stratum.

We can take a moment to more fully illustrate the process that Deleuze and Guattari envision for the organic stratum, and then work through the vocabulary that they provide here. Let's begin with two fundamental contributions to a "science of multiplicities." First, Darwin replaces types with populations. What this means is that Darwin does not see species as a fixed type, he sees a species as a temporary and statistical aggregate of traits. Second, Darwin replaces degrees (of difference) between species for differential relations. The issue here concerns the development from one species into another. If a species is a population, then its traits will be grouped around a more or less stable point. However, at the margins the members of a population will deviate from the mean and possess a different differential relation among traits. The classic example here is the peppered moth. Prior to the industrial revolution in England the dominant color in the population was white with dark spots (hence the name). This color provided excellent camouflage against the light-colored tree trunks of the time. At the margins of the population of moths, though, a few were darker. As pollution increased with the industrial revolution the tree trunks became darker. As a result, the darker moths were better camouflaged. This shift in color created a shift in the population as the darker moths became dominant in the population. Recently, a decrease in pollution in England has reversed the process again, and now light colored moths are dominant. Deleuze and Guattari think this process is better accounted for not in terms of degrees, where we would posit a series of increasingly darker moths, but as a differential relation within the population in which the statistical aggregate of traits re-organizes into a new statistical aggregate.

Obviously one of the key factors in this shift is the environment, particularly predation. A light moth on a dark tree trunk is much easier to see than a dark moth on a dark tree trunk. Environmental

factors (part of the *parastrata*) place pressure on expression and in this case end up shifting color expression from light to dark. Importantly, though, and this supports Deleuze and Guattari's contention that expression is independent of content on the organic stratum, the moth remains the same species in its light or dark form. We can also imagine an instance, indeed evolution demands that we do, in which the expression of content so radically diverges as to create a new species, a new population independent of the first. For Darwin, the quintessential example of this is the different species of finches he catalogs on his voyage to the Galapagos Islands. In this case not only do we have environmental pressures, notably different food sources on different islands, but we also have populations isolated from one another. As a result any deviations from the mean are amplified, because they cannot be easily reabsorbed into a larger population. Reproductive isolation coupled with environmental pressures serve to generate new and distinct populations.

It would be a mistake, though, to assume that these new populations arrive fully formed. Evolution is blind but fecund. Numerous possible aggregates of traits may arise simultaneously. Any number of these may result in a new stable state around which traits are organized. Or, the new population may not survive at all. There is no progression by degrees to the fittest aggregate (and here Deleuze and Guattari become more neo-Darwinian than Darwinian). There are rather multiple simultaneous attempts to coalesce around a stable state. Evolution works by attrition not according to teleology.

With these illustrations in mind, let's return to Deleuze and Guattari's rather formidable recasting of this process in their own terminology of stratification. Species are stratifications. That is, they are more or less stable aggregates of a population. Stratifications are a process of thickening on the body without organs that requires a double articulation, one of content, one of expression. There are different kinds of thickening that result in different kinds of strata. Deleuze and Guattari call the distinct processes of articulation on the differing strata "abstract machines." The abstract machine for the physical stratum thickens, organizing itself by induction. The abstract machine for the organic stratum thickens, organizing itself by transduction. In the case of Darwin's finches, we can imagine that a subset of a larger population (a denser thickening) leaves the mainland in search of food or perhaps is blown off course by a storm and arrives in a new environment. This separated population is already a thickening (a selection of genetic materials expressed in



a particular way), but here its epistrata (surface) is faced with a new parastrata (external milieu). This creates selection pressures that may move the statistical mean of the population. In some cases, as we saw with the peppered moth, the shift in mean does not result in speciation. However, in the case of Darwin's finches, the mean not only shifts but splinters into a series of divergent populations, each with its own mean. The divergence is significant enough in this case to produce different species of birds.

Because the organic stratum functions by transduction, because expression is independent of content, content and expression are not divided along molecular and molar lines. There is both molecular and molar content and molecular and molar expression. In the case of Darwin's finches the molecular content that is selected is the various nucleotides making up a genetic sequence. The molar content is the formation of those nucleotides into particular genes. At the level of expression, the molecular content is the intensive expression of the genome. All of Darwin's finches have muted colors, but even these will be expressed on a range of intensity. Furthermore, young finches have either yellow or pink beaks, an expression that disappears in adulthood. The molar expression of the genome brings us the particular bird itself. This determines exactly which of Darwin's finches we're looking at.

For Deleuze and Guattari our thinking is often hampered because we take the molar expression of population genomics as both our starting point and ending point. As a result the molar expression becomes a pre-established type, and other molar expressions become either their own type or a predetermined degree between types. Deleuze and Guattari want to replace questions of the type, What kind of finch is it? with much more subtle questions about the degrees of intensity that are sorted and organized on a particular stratum. Questions of this type are important because they necessarily entail questions about lines of flight. This allows us to ask, What might this become? Which edge is this assemblage deterritorializing along? Questions such as these allow us to account for the genesis of the new without devolving into a paradox of infinite regress.

The final aspect of the organic stratum that we need to discuss here is what Deleuze and Guattari call the linearity and unidimensionality of expression on the organic stratum. This aspect of the organic stratum contrasts with the physical stratum, which is characterized by voluminous and superficial expression. Recall that voluminous and superficial expression of the physical stratum

means that deterritorialization happens at the surface and in three dimensions. The abstract machine lodged on the organic stratum functions differently. To begin with it does not deterritorialize solely on its surface, but reciprocally deterritorializes both its interior and exterior. As we saw with the finches external pressures privilege a certain grouping of intensities, which becomes amplified through reproduction. This process is what Deleuze and Guattari call the "detachment of a line of expression" (TP 59). Thus, whereas a crystal grows three dimensionally, on the organic stratum it is possible to speak of a "line of descent." That is, a single line detaches from a population and is able to produce a new population.

### *THE LINGUISTIC STRATUM*

The final stratum that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in this plateau is the linguistic stratum. It is at this point that we can see clearly why this plateau is called a "geology," since it is a study of strata and their formation. It is also clear that the title itself is a play on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. In this light two questions come immediately to mind: 1) What is the difference between genealogy and geology? 2) What does this plateau have to do with morals? In response to the first question Deleuze and Guattari are explicit that the "rhizome is an anti-genealogy" (TP 11). Their objection to genealogy at this point is that genealogy leaves no room for transduction, no room for genetic drift, no room for transversal communication between distinct species. A genealogy cannot fathom a cat with baboon DNA. But, as we've seen, a geology can. The second question is more difficult to answer and requires a rethinking of the nature of morality. Ironically, Nietzsche is quite helpful in this regard. So, perhaps, it is better to think of this plateau as an extension of Nietzsche's work rather than a critique of it.

In the *Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche argues that the terms that we use for moral concepts, such as "guilt" and "evil" are not self-evident, but in fact have a history. The first question that drives Nietzsche's analysis then is, Under what conditions has a particular set of moral terms arisen? For example, Nietzsche wants to know how the term "good" came to refer to altruistic acts. The second question that drives Nietzsche's analysis is, Is this dominance of a particular set of moral terms a sign of health or a sign of sickness in the population that it governs? Thus, is the fact that "good" refers to altruistic acts the sign of a healthy or unhealthy population? In

this respect it's easy to think about morality in Nietzsche's sense as a kind of stratification. Moral terms organize thought and behavior. They create some connections and disallow others. As a result, societies and cultures can be distinguished according to the content and expression of their moral terms. What Deleuze and Guattari want to add to Nietzsche's project here is a general account of stratification that explains not only morality, but language as a whole, and beyond that life itself. In the next plateau we'll pursue language even further, but for right now let's see how language is produced on the linguistic stratum.

At the outset, we need to make an important distinction between linguistics and semiotics. These two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, especially in the wake of structuralist linguistics, which can lead to a confusion in understanding Deleuze and Guattari's work. Deleuze and Guattari are interested in a general theory of "signs," and thus a semiotics. But "signs" are not primarily linguistic. This is why Deleuze and Guattari replace the usual linguistic division of the sign into signifier and signified with the distinction between content and expression (following Hjelmslev). As we've seen, this shift to content and expression as the two articulations of the process of stratification can be applied to the physical and organic strata not just the linguistic stratum. Furthermore, what distinguishes the linguistic stratum is not that it functions according to signs while the other strata do not. It is that the relation between content and expression is different on the linguistic stratum. Stratification is a general semiotics. The linguistic stratum is the application of a general semiotics to language. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari say, "a regime of signs is much more than a language" (TP 63).

What characterizes the linguistic stratum is "translation." Translation is in clear distinction from the induction of the physical stratum and the transduction of the organic stratum. At the same time, we must be careful to use "translation" in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari do. They write,

Translation should not be understood simply as the ability of one language to "represent" in some way the givens of another language, but beyond that as the ability of language, with its own givens on its own stratum, to represent all the other strata and thus achieve a scientific conception of the world. The scientific world (*Welt*, as opposed to the *Umwelt* of the animal) is the translation of all of the flows, particles, codes, and territorialities of the other strata into a sufficiently deterritorialized system of signs, in other words, into an overcoding specific to

language. This property of overcoding or superlinearity explains why, in language, not only is expression independent of content, but form of expression is independent of substance . . . [I]t must be noted that the immanence within language of universal translation means that its epistrata and parastrata . . . operate in an entirely different manner than those of other strata . . . (TP 62–3)

Translation, then, for Deleuze and Guattari is not simply a phenomenon that applies to the possible relation of one language to another, but a phenomenon by which the linguistic stratum organizes other strata. On the other strata the abstract machine is enveloped by the stratum, but on the linguistic stratum the abstract machine reaches into the other strata and overcodes them. That is, it reorganizes the other strata in its own terms. Let's take a simple example here to illustrate. It is irrelevant to Darwin's finches which genus or species they belong to. Their place in a taxonomy has no bearing on the population or deviations from it. The abstract machine of the linguistic stratum overcodes the genetic coding and reorganizes the finch populations, not only in relation to one another but also in relation to all other populations of organisms. Note, though, that the overcoding here doesn't replace the genetic coding. The genetic coding remains, but it is placed in the service of another coding, namely, scientific taxonomical organization.

Several illusions are created by translation. The first illusion is that the strata are hierarchically organized, that the organic stratum is superior to the physical stratum, and that the linguistic stratum is superior to both. This first illusion gives way to the second illusion that has been referred to the "linguistic turn" in philosophy. The *possibility* of overcoding has led to the supposition of the *necessary* mediation of language. As a result, knowledge claims necessarily become claims about propositions. Deleuze and Guattari do not deny the power of language, but they do claim that language cannot tell the whole story (not even by analogy), and that language itself is much more complicated than has been supposed by those arguing for its pre-eminence. The final illusion follows from the first two, the anthropocentric illusion. The ability to overcode the other strata seems to assure human superiority. This superiority is codified at the dawn of Western philosophy in Aristotle's definition of humans as "rational animals." Deleuze and Guattari's account of the linguistic stratum shows not only how these illusions arise as a result of translation, but also how we might think the same phenomenon in terms of an ontological continuity that does not depend on hylomorphism. The result is a flat ontology in which there is a

reciprocal (but never hierarchical) relation among strata, abstract machines, and concrete assemblages.

Another characteristic that separates the linguistic stratum from the other strata is that, whereas the other strata are spatial, the linguistic stratum is temporal. This temporal linearity (superlinearity) is what makes translation (overcoding) possible. While it is true that the organic stratum possesses linearity and that this genetic linearity is successive, the organic stratum does not possess the ability to code other strata. That is, the form of expression on the organic stratum remains an organic phenomenon. In contrast to this the linguistic stratum functions by “a formal synthesis of expression in which time constitutes a process of linear overcoding” (TP 62). Deleuze and Guattari say that this formal synthesis of expression is nothing other than translation itself. The question remains, however, How is this temporal? As we saw above, translation is the application of a new code on top of an already existing code. What this means in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms is that the form of expression on the linguistic stratum is detachable from the linguistic stratum and can give form to substances on other strata. This is the “formal synthesis of expression.” This formal synthesis imposes a new succession on what it overcodes that is temporal. Take Darwin’s finches again. The finches themselves have no idea that they’re part of a species that is related to other species on the Galapagos Islands, and that these species are related to a population of birds in South America. It is only by overcoding that this succession is formed. Furthermore this succession is a temporal and not a spatial succession.

The last characteristic that we need to discuss is the relation between content and expression on the linguistic stratum. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit that the distinction between content and expression is always real on all the strata. However, there are different kinds of real distinction, and “what varies from stratum to stratum is the nature of the real distinction between content and expression . . .” (TP 72). The real distinction between content and expression on the physical stratum is a formal distinction. What Deleuze and Guattari mean by this is that the distinction is “between orders of magnitude, with the establishment of a resonance of expression (induction)” (TP 72). As we saw, content and expression on the physical stratum were divided along molecular and molar lines (sedimentation/sedimentary rock). On the organic stratum, in contrast, the nature of the distinction between content and expression is real. This is a little confusing since we’re left with a real-real distinction at this point (*réelle-réelle* in French). The first

“real” here refers to the fact of the distinction between content and expression. The second “real” refers to the type of real distinction. In the case of the organic stratum this means a “distinction between different subjects, with the establishment of linearity of expression (transduction)” (TP 72). The subjects that Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here are genes on the content side and members of a population on the expression side. The distinction between content and expression on the linguistic stratum is essential “between different attributes or categories, with the establishment of a superlinearity of expression (translation)” (TP 72). If we bear in mind that translation is an overcoding we can see the type of categorical distinction at play here. These are the distinctions by which we organize our thought. In the case of Darwin’s finches the crucial distinction is between genus and species. In the case of linguistics the operative distinction has traditionally been between word and thing. *A Thousand Plateaus* itself is replete with distinctions of this sort, for example, the distinction between tree and rhizome. In Chart 3, we can see a schematic representation of the three strata along with their relevant characteristics.

Importantly, though, what Deleuze and Guattari do not do with this or any of the real distinctions between content and expression is convert them into ontological differences. Deleuze and Guattari remain committed to the univocity of being, even as they seek to demonstrate the complexity of this one kind of being. “There is no biosphere or noosphere, but everywhere the same Mechanosphere”

**Chart 3**

Strata			
Operation	Physical	Organic	Linguistic
		Induction	Transduction
Relation between content and expression	Dependent	Independent	Independent
Type of expression	Superficial	Linear	Superlinear
Ordering principle	Voluminous	Unidimensional	Temporal
Type of real distinction between content and expression	Formal	Real	Essential

(TP 69). Deleuze and Guattari thus hold two propositions in tension: 1) Being is univocal; and 2) Being is non-reductively complex. On the one hand, they do not claim that there are different kinds of being. As we've seen, different kinds of being invariably result in a metaphysics of discontinuity and a concomitant hylomorphism that reintegrates the different kinds of being. On the other hand, the stratifications of being, the different thickenings that we've explored here, are not reducible to one another. It is not possible to reduce everything to the physical stratum in an eliminative materialism. Nor is it possible to reduce everything to the organic stratum in a biologism, as evolutionary psychology might have you believe. Finally, it is not possible to reduce everything to the linguistic stratum in a radical constructivism. Each stratum has a distinct abstract machine in which the real distinction between content and expression is ordered differently.

### *RETURN OF THE CONCRETE ASSEMBLAGE*

We have spent so much time talking about stratification and abstract machines that it is easy to lose sight of assemblages. We've already noted that abstract machines are not to be confused with assemblages, but what exactly is the relation between the two? It is tempting to suppose that abstract machines precede concrete assemblages in some way, or that abstract machines produce concrete assemblages. Asking questions of chronological priority in Deleuze and Guattari's work is already heading in the wrong direction, toward discrete, arborescent, hierarchical figures. The fact of the matter is that while strata, abstract machines, and concrete assemblages are in principle separable, they are, in fact, mutually interrelated and never found apart. The relation that Deleuze and Guattari propose between a concrete assemblage and an abstract machine is "effectuation." They say, "The most important problem of all: given a certain machinic assemblage what is its relation of effectuation with the abstract machine? How does it effectuate it, with what adequation?" (TP 71). "Effectuation" is a strange word, though, and a transliteration of the French "*effectuation*." The valences in French and English are slightly different here with English tending more toward causality, effecting and French tending more toward making, creation, and performance. I think we can straightforwardly say that an assemblage is a concrete expression of an abstract process. But, we must introduce two caveats: First, we must take abstract in the sense of "continuous,"

“the opposite of discrete,” not in the sense that’s opposed to the concrete. Second, we must suppose that machinic assemblages and abstract machines are simultaneous. The relation between abstract machines and assemblages is not the relation between the possible and the real, which traditionally supposed that the possible in some sense preceded and determined the limits of the real.

If the relation between abstract machine and assemblage is not a possible/real relation, what kind of relation is it? In order to answer this question let’s look at a branch of mathematics that Deleuze (both with and without Guattari) has found very fruitful in his work for thinking about continuity: topology. While the name “topology” suggests spatiality, it is important to note at the outset that this is a non-metric, non-discrete, continuous space. The primary issue in topology is not the size or shape of the object but the relation of its parts to one another. The classic example of this is the donut and the coffee cup. Topologically speaking they are the same. The reason they are the same is that both a donut and a coffee cup have exactly one hole, the middle of the donut and the handle of the coffee cup. The cup part of the coffee cup can be thought of as a continuous deformation (or “folding” in Deleuze and Guattari’s language) of one side of the donut. This possibility in topology leads to the oft repeated joke: What is a topologist? Someone who can’t tell the difference between a donut and a coffee cup. Another brief example of topological relations is found in typography. In most fonts the letters “A” and “R” would have the same topology, while the letter “B” would have a different topology. The reason for this is that “A” and “R” have one hole and two legs, but “B” has two holes and no legs. “A” can be transformed into “R” through *continuous* deformation, but neither can be turned into “B” without “cutting” or discontinuous deformation. Or, to put this claim in familiar terms, “A” and “R” have the same abstract machine, but “B” has a different abstract machine. At the same time, though, and this brings us back to the original question, we cannot say that “A” and “R” are the realization of possibilities already contained in their abstract machine. Deleuze and Guattari’s reasoning for this is purely practical. Of course, it’s always possible to subsume topology under a Euclidean geometry that works precisely according to the logic of possibility and actuality. One sets the rules for a triangle; these rules determine what is possible for a triangle, and all actual triangles conform to these rules. But, this is to make a tracing not a map, a tree not a rhizome. In contrast to this Deleuze and Guattari are proposing that assemblages are problematic (Archimedean)



rather than axiomatic (Euclidean). This is how you make a map: show how assemblages are not simply the tracing of a pre-existing form (possible/real) but how they connect with the outside. Assemblages are solutions to a problem, whereas abstract machines are the problem itself.

All abstract machines pose the problem of the relation between the outside and the inside (the fold). To illustrate this let's return to Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. For Geoffroy there is only one animal (abstract machine) and all animals (assemblages) are continuous deformations in relation to one another. One of the problems posed by the abstract animal is the consumption of energy. An animal can only maintain a stable state to the degree that it can harness flows of energy, which ultimately come from the sun. We can compare two solutions to this problem. The first solution is the herbivores' solution, the big gut solution. Solar energy is available through the consumption of plants. The difficulty is that the plants guard this energy rather jealously (the solution to another problem) through various chemicals, thorns, and above all very tough cell walls. Some herbivores (ruminants) extract energy from plants by eating enormous amounts of plant material, having a complex system of digestion through multiple stomachs, and regurgitating and re-chewing their food multiple times. This solution requires a big gut with most time and energy devoted to digestion. The human solution to this problem (the same problem) has been to develop systems of external digestion, the big brain solution. Eating herbivores, for example, allows us to take advantage of their ability to convert plants into energy. We let the cows digest plants on our behalf. We have also externalized our digestion through cooking our food. Heat and fermentation allow us to break down the tough cell walls of plants prior to consuming them. Solving our energy problem by applying energy (fire) to it prior to consumption gave us access to vast amounts of previously inaccessible energy. Most of our energy goes to keeping our brains running instead of digestion.<sup>4</sup> Topologically speaking cows and humans are the same. They are not pre-existing types but continuous variations of one another. They are assemblages of the same abstract machine, different solutions to the same problem of how to produce bio-usable solar energy.

These solutions are always contingent and provisional and are constrained by numerous forces that are also contingent and provisional. In broad terms we have spoken of these constraints as the tendencies toward stasis and change. In this plateau we discover

that stasis and change occur simultaneously on multiple axes: de/reterritorialization is the tendency toward stasis or change with regard to substance; de/coding is the tendency toward stasis or change with regard to form. Substance and form themselves are doubled in content and expression, the double articulation of stratification. Strata are contingent and provisional coagulations of the body without organs (the unorganized as such) on which abstract machines are lodged and across which assemblages solve problems posed by multiple abstract machines on multiple strata. A pack of humans solves the energy consumption problem by connecting organic strata (plants) with physical strata (fire) with linguistic strata (coordinating the finding and cooking of food), and combines all three into a self-regulating tribal assemblage.

We still begin with an assemblage. This has been Deleuze and Guattari's strategy all along. Begin with the assemblage and ask how a rhizome might be created out of it (instead of a tree). Remember that this procedure is a question of "perceptual semiotics," of seeing differently. It is a question of topology, the non-metric, continuous spatiality of the problem and its solutions. The complication that Deleuze and Guattari add in this chapter is that one cannot create rhizomes without understanding stratification and that one cannot understand stratification without understanding abstract machines.

#### NOTES

1. There is an editorial error in the English edition of *A Thousand Plateaus* concerning this point. The translation refers to the "(form and content of expression)" (TP 43). The French edition reads, "(forme et substance d'expression)," which is clearly translated as "form and substance of expression" (MP 58).
2. The English translation has "territorialization," while the French reads "déterritorialisation" (MP 71).
3. Deleuze and Guattari's key inspiration here is Gilbert Simondon, particularly his *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*.
4. Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*; Michael Pollan, *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*.

## 4

### *November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics*

While the “Geology of Morals” explored the issue of stratification, the “Postulates of Linguistics” takes up the linguistic stratum at length. This plateau has two primary purposes: a critique of traditional linguistics and a positive account of language as an assemblage. The plateau is organized around what Deleuze and Guattari call the postulates of linguistics:

- 1) Language is informational and communicational.
- 2) There is an abstract machine of language that doesn’t appeal to any “extrinsic” factor.
- 3) There are constants or universals of language that allow it to be defined as a homogeneous system.
- 4) Language can be scientifically studied only under conditions of a standard or major language.

These postulates result in an arborescent account of language. What Deleuze and Guattari propose here is an account of language that is rhizomatic rather than arborescent. For them language is organized around “order-words” (*mot d’ordre*), and they define language as “the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech-acts current in a language at a given moment” (TP 79). This plateau is thus another exercise in “perceptual semiotics” where they show how to rethink an assemblage in such a way that its tendency toward change is made explicit.

In order to see how Deleuze and Guattari’s linguistic experiment works, let’s take a look at the notion of a postulate. The word “postulate” comes with heavy philosophical connotations, particularly Kantian connotations. Kant uses the term “postulate” in his *Critique*

*of Practical Reason*. There the postulates answer the question, Under what conditions can we will the good? For Kant, in a tradition reaching back to Aristotle, the object of the will is the good, but Kant pursues this further, wanting to know how the good can be willed in the first place. His response to this is that in order to will the good one must presuppose an immortal soul and a God who judges one's willings. These two postulates, God and the immortality of the soul, make it possible that virtue is rewarded, vice punished, and that goodness and happiness are ultimately harmonized. A postulate, then, in the Kantian sense, is a necessary presupposition that allows the thinking of another claim. For Kant willing the good is inextricably and necessarily bound up with God and the immortality of the soul, whether one acknowledges these presuppositions or not. Applied to linguistics, the claim is that language can only be thought by presupposing the postulates listed above. This is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari want to dispute. Not only are these postulates unnecessary for thinking language, they are downright harmful. Much like Oedipus in Freud, these postulates do not create; they restrict creation by endlessly reproducing themselves.

#### *LANGUAGE IS NEITHER INFORMATIVE NOR COMMUNICATIVE*

Deleuze and Guattari begin this plateau with the wildly counter-intuitive claim that the basic unit of language is the order-word. To illustrate this they take the example of a teacher in a classroom. Their claim is that the teacher doesn't instruct, communicate, or inform but transmits order-words. In order to understand this claim, let us recall from the previous plateau that the linguistic stratum functions by translation. That is, it overcodes other codes. Order-words are overcodings, ways of organizing the relation between speaking and acting. Of course, organizing the relation between speaking and acting does not require information or communication, nor does it require belief or the inculcation of belief. It only requires that certain actions follow from certain words. Order-words are not to be believed only obeyed.

But, how can order-words be the basic unit of language? Everyone knows that commands are only a subset of language and probably not even its most important subset. Haven't Deleuze and Guattari confused the part for the whole here? In order to respond to this criticism we must bear two things in mind. The first is that what distinguishes language from other semiotic systems is its ability to be transmitted second- and third-hand. For Deleuze and Guattari this

claim is simply an expansion of language's translative (overcoding) power. Language can translate or overcode precisely because language is fundamentally "hearsay." To illustrate their claim here they borrow an example from the linguist Émile Benveniste. Benveniste argues that bees do not have language because a bee can transmit a sign, but not the sign of a sign. Thus, a bee that has located a food source can inform other bees of its location. However, bees that have not been to the food source cannot communicate the first bee's message to other bees. Bee communication only moves from a first party to a second party and can go no further. The result of this barrier between second and third party transmission is that bee communication can never rise to the level of translation or overcoding. It is only if language is fundamentally hearsay, only if it can circulate beyond the reception of first-hand accounts, that it can translate. For example, Darwin's finches cannot be placed in a taxonomy if language only reports first-hand accounts. The account must be in principle circulatable if it is to rise to the level of overcoding.<sup>1</sup> That is, the account must be connected with other accounts, in an ongoing scientific discourse that organizes and promulgates rights (and rites) of naming, which then makes these known to an even wider audience. Newspaper reports trumpet the discovery of a new species.

The second thing that must be borne in mind in order to understand why Deleuze and Guattari think that the order-word is the basic unit of language is J.L. Austin's theory of "speech acts." Austin is critical of the idea that language is composed of statements that are either true or false. He argues that there is a whole class of sentences that actually do something. Take the claim, "I promise . . ." Saying this is also doing something. The speech itself is an act. Statements of this type Austin calls "performative." Performative utterances, however, are not the only kind of speech acts. There are also speech acts in which an action is inherent in the statement itself. For example, I ask a question in English by placing a verb or interrogative pronoun at the beginning of a sentence. "Is this the way to the forum?" "What time is it?" It's also possible, though, to ask a question in English through inflection. "That's your move?" "You bought a speed boat?" Austin calls these instances where the action is part of the utterance "illocutionary." On the basis of Austin's claims here, Deleuze and Guattari argue that language is fundamentally illocutionary. That is, language is inseparable from action. There is no pure language, only language already bound up with action. Ultimately, we'll see that this claim lies at the heart of what they call a "collective enunciative assemblage."

For now, however, Deleuze and Guattari show that Austin's work generates three "impossibilities" for traditional linguistics. First, language can no longer be conceived of as a code, and speech can no longer be conceived as communication. The first half of this claim is a little confusing since it seems that Deleuze and Guattari have been claiming all along that language is a code. The problem with calling language a code is that all strata have codings. Calling language a code doesn't sufficiently distinguish it from other codes. Furthermore, it risks treating the other codes like language or treating language like other codes. That is, it risks a "linguistic turn," or a reduction to cybernetics (information theory, where everything is data to be processed). Furthermore, and this is the second half of the first claim, speech can no longer be conceived as communication, because defining speech as communication presupposes that the purpose of speech is to produce true sentences containing information provided by language. As Austin shows, however, speech is not defined by its truth function. It's defined by what it does.

The second consequence of Austin's work is that language can no longer be separated from what Deleuze and Guattari call "pragmatics." Pragmatics is the necessity of thinking concrete assemblages first. The attempt to extract a pure science of language from the concrete expression of language merely reproduces the discontinuity thesis, which supposes that form is ahistorical and universal. "Instead, pragmatics becomes the presupposition behind all of the other dimensions and insinuates itself into everything" (TP 78). The third consequence is closely related to the second. Austin's work makes it impossible to rigorously separate language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*). Here Deleuze and Guattari target the project of structuralist linguistics rising out of the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and used to great effect in anthropology by Claude Lévi-Strauss and in psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan. Here again the fundamental issue is the introduction of discontinuity into the study of language that seemingly allows the separation of universal and necessary structures from their contingent deployment.

Even if we grant Austin's theses and the claim that all language is indirect discourse, it's not clear that we're any closer to answering the original question: How can order-words be the fundamental unit of language? For Deleuze and Guattari order-words do not refer simply to a class of statements (imperatives) but to the relation between words and speech acts. "Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a 'social obligation.' Every statement displays this link, directly

or indirectly. A question, a promise, these are order-words" (TP 79, translation altered). One way we might think about this claim is in terms of pragmatics. If language can no longer be cleanly separated from its concrete deployment, then how must we think about it? We must think about language in terms of the intrinsic relation between speaking and acting. These two can no longer be separated. Nor can the purity of language be saved by cloistering it away from actions. This, no doubt, makes thinking about language much messier. The boundaries are no longer so clearly defined. Language is always opening on to something new. This is why for Deleuze and Guattari language is a map, not a tracing. In this regard it is crucial to note that the relation between speaking and acting is *intrinsic*. The claim is not that, practically speaking, one never finds speaking and acting apart, but that speaking and acting *cannot* be separated.

Speaking and acting are both part of a collective enunciative assemblage. As with any assemblage it will have tendencies toward stasis and change. Deleuze and Guattari's claim here is that the tendency toward stasis is produced by order-words. The claim here is not one of linguistic constructivism, though. The claim is that the interrelation between speaking and acting is stabilized by order-words. Of course, order-words themselves do not arise out of the aether. They too are produced by a reciprocal and non-linear process that coagulates at certain points on a body without organs. Sometimes these order-words are specific to certain regions and cultures. Walking into a restaurant in America and asking, "Posso vedere il menu?" is likely to get to get me strange looks and further questions rather than a menu. This is one aspect of what Deleuze and Guattari mean by "social obligation." In most circumstances in America I have a social obligation to speak English otherwise my order-words will fail. That is, because I did not speak the order-words required of me by social obligation, the encounter in the restaurant will fail to proceed along established lines.

Most of Deleuze and Guattari's efforts here are focused on the tendency of collective enunciative assemblages toward stasis instead of change. However, insofar as their ultimate purpose is to see language as a rhizome instead of a tree, they speak briefly at the end of the plateau about the tendency toward change. Instead of order-words, though, they speak of "pass-words" (*mots de passe*). A pass-word is precisely what connects a language to its outside, allows the development of something new within a language. We will return to pass-words at the end of this chapter.

In the remainder of this section Deleuze and Guattari pursue the relation between speaking and acting. We already know that this relation is characterized by order-words, but Deleuze and Guattari go further here. The first claim they make is that speaking and acting are immanently related, but that this relation is not one of identity. Rather the relation is one of "redundancy." As with most things an episode of the Simpson's illustrates this perfectly. In "Itchy & Scratchy Land" the Simpson family goes to a theme park filled with robots from the Itchy & Scratchy television show. In homage to *Westworld* the robots turn on the people in the park. In the midst of the carnage the Simpsons discover by accident that a camera-flash is sufficient to disable the robots. In the midst of Bart and Homer disabling all the robots with flash photography Lisa shouts, "Dad, the flash must have scrambled their circuits." To which Homer replies, "What are you, the narrator?" In the episode, Homer's reply is no doubt meant as a jab at action movies that explain the obvious. This, however, presupposes that language informs and communicates, and thus can be sorted by whether it truly informs and communicates or not into ratios of signal to noise. Deleuze and Guattari are proposing that redundancy is primary and that signal to noise ratios are secondary. The real opposition is between the unruliness (*indisciplines*) at work in language (tendency toward change) and the order-word as the discipline of language (tendency toward stasis). Information and communication, then, become the effects of redundancy.

If information and communication are effects of redundancy, this requires us to rethink the nature of speaking itself. If language consists of order-words, and if order-words are characterized by redundancy, then language is inherently social. Deleuze and Guattari make this claim because for them there are no "individual enunciations." Or, in Wittgensteinian terms, there are no private languages. A private language, though, is precisely what would be required to have speech that wasn't composed of order-words. Subjectivity is an effect of order-words. "I" itself is an order-word. The "I" cannot ground order-words. There is only the pack, only the multiplicity. The individual does not say, "I." Only a collective assemblage of enunciation can say "I."

As Deleuze and Guattari further discuss collective assemblages of enunciation, they expand on Deleuze's work on Stoicism from *The Logic of Sense*. The primary question they're trying to answer is, How do collective assemblages of enunciation work? The answer is through "incorporeal transformations." Obviously, "incorporeal"



suggests that there are “corporeal” transformations as well. That is, it is possible to distinguish between the ways bodies affect and are affected and the way in which order-words transform. Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari there are two distinct assemblages at play, a concrete machinic assemblage of bodies and a collective assemblage of enunciation. What is at stake here is the way that a collective assemblage of enunciation transforms a machinic assemblage of bodies without changing the bodies themselves. As we’ve seen from the beginning, language has this transformative power because it is fundamentally illocutionary, fundamentally order-words. Examples of this can be multiplied infinitely, but let’s look at a few. The bride and groom transform from being engaged to being married by saying “I do.” This transformation is both incorporeal and immediate. It is incorporeal because saying, “I do,” doesn’t modify their bodies. However, there is clearly a transformation that takes place. The transformation is immediate because it happens in the saying. The date attached to this plateau, November 20, 1923, provides another example of incorporeal transformation. The date refers to the shift in Germany from the *Papiermark* to the *Rentenmark* following the hyper-inflation in the wake of World War I.<sup>2</sup> The shift from one currency to another was simply announced by the German government. The physical properties of the *Papiermark* were unchanged, but it was instantly transformed from legal tender to mere paper by this announcement.

It is important to note, though, that the relation between incorporeal transformations and bodies is not linear. Order-words and the incorporeal transformations they effect are not separable from a particular set of circumstances. “The galloping inflation in Germany after 1918 was a crisis affecting the monetary body, and many other bodies besides; but the sum of the ‘circumstances’ suddenly made possible a semiotic transformation that, although indexed to the body of the earth and material assets, was still a pure act or incorporeal transformation . . .” (TP 82). Incorporeal transformations require a particular organization of bodies to take effect. Saying “I do” only effects an incorporeal transformation under a very specific set of circumstances. Changing the monetary policy of a country can only be done by a very select group of people and only under particular economic and social conditions.

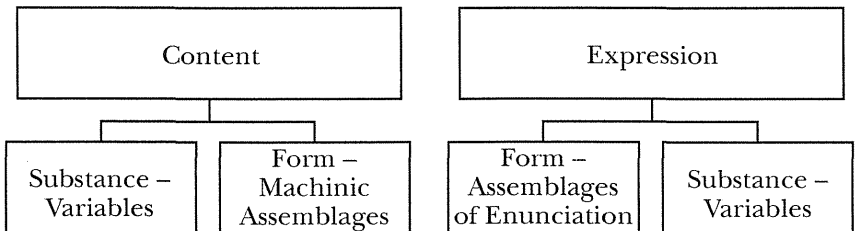
Deleuze and Guattari nicely summarize their shift away from treating language as a carrier of information and medium of communication in this way: “We have gone from explicit commands to order-words as implicit presuppositions; from order-words to the

immanent acts or incorporeal transformations they express; and from there to the assemblages of enunciation whose variables they are" (TP 83). An assemblage of enunciation is thus a particular relation of order-words. Different assemblages will have different relations of the same order-words and include some order-words not found in others. Furthermore, there are always multiple assemblages operating and overlapping in a given time and place. "To the extent these variables enter at a given moment into determinable relations, the assemblages combine in a *regime of signs or a semiotic machine*" (TP 83). Language is relatively stable, but one cannot account for this stability by treating it as informing and communicating. In order to account for this stability one must treat language as composed of order-words and in constant interaction with other types of assemblages, which further stabilize the deployment of order-words by restricting their use.

*THE ABSTRACT MACHINE OF LANGUAGE APPEALS TO  
EXTRINSIC FACTORS*

As Deleuze and Guattari take up the second postulate of linguistics, they return to the vocabulary developed in the previous plateau. In particular they are interested in applying the distinction between content and expression found on any stratum to the interaction of machinic and enunciative assemblages. As we've seen already in this plateau, machinic assemblages are a particular ratio of corporeal modifications, while enunciative assemblages are a set of incorporeal transformations. On the linguistic stratum machinic assemblages belong to the first articulation, content, and enunciative assemblages belong to the second articulation, expression. Furthermore, these assemblages are the formal component of their respective articulations (see Chart 4). As we also saw in the previous chapter, while form concerns de/coding, substance concerns

Chart 4



de/reterritorialization. What is being de/reterritorialized on this stratum Deleuze and Guattari refer to as “variables.” The idea here is that coding/formalization always happens relative to a degree of deterritorialization. These degrees of deterritorialization are what, up to this point in the plateau, Deleuze and Guattari have referred to as “circumstances.” These circumstances are the variables that are in play and always at a certain degree of deterritorialization.

To illustrate this let’s take what Deleuze and Guattari call “the feudal assemblage.” The feudal assemblage has a content, its machinic assemblage. This would include all the ways in which bodies intermingle: lords, vassals, and serfs in a particular hierarchy. It would include which crops are planted and by whom. It would include technologies of planting and harvesting and differences in diet among the various classes. In short, it would include all of the ways that bodies affect and are affected. At the same time the feudal assemblage has an expression, its assemblage of enunciation. This would include all of the order-words that effect incorporeal transformations and attribute them to bodies in the machinic assemblage. Words such as “honor,” “love,” and “loyalty.” It would also include signs such as heraldry, and judicial proclamations such as, “I knight you.”

For Deleuze and Guattari, content and expression, these two assemblages, form a single horizontal axis. The vertical axis that crosses it would be the “circumstances” or “variables” or “degree of deterritorialization.” Let’s take a particular set of circumstances, the Crusades, in order to see how this plays out. On the one hand, the Crusades are a deterritorialization of content. Thousands of people across all social classes begin moving east in order to wrest Jerusalem from Muslim control. As the various armies move eastward they come across new technologies (“Damascus steel”) and new techniques for organizing bodies (military strategy), which further deterritorialize these bodies. On the other hand and at the same time, there is a deterritorialization of expression. As a result of a plea for help from Byzantium, Pope Urban II calls for a “crusade.” Thus, out of particular set of circumstances (variables, degree of deterritorialization) a new order-word is born. The march of the armies themselves resulted in a mingling of vernacular languages as disparate forces merged. There was also an encounter with Islamic philosophy and theology that ultimately required a rethinking of Christian philosophy and theology (particularly with regard to the Trinity). Notice that the degrees of deterritorialization are relative to content and expression and need not happen at the same speed.

The ebb and flow of bodies between Europe and the Middle East happens on a scale of years, while the impact of Islamic thought happens on a scale of centuries.

Deleuze and Guattari call this analysis of an assemblage in terms of its content and expression "pragmatics." Pragmatics is not content to deal with language abstracted from its complex interaction with bodies and circumstances. To do so is to misunderstand not only language but bodies and circumstances as well. Deleuze and Guattari keep returning to the image of weaving to describe the relation between content and expression here. The content is the woof, and the expression is the warp. Content and expression are woven together, mutually implicated in one another. This mutual implication forces Deleuze and Guattari into a difficult position. On the one hand, the independence (real distinction) of content and expression requires them to say that content and expression are distinct. On the other hand, they want to argue that language cannot be understood in isolation from extrinsic factors. But, it is the very distinctness of content and expression that has made it possible for linguistics to treat language in isolation from extrinsic factors. How can Deleuze and Guattari maintain the real distinction of content and expression without granting the possibility that language can be studied in isolation from extrinsic factors?

The answer to this question lies in the nature of the real distinction between content and expression on this stratum. The first thing to note is that even though the distinction between content and expression is real, it is also relative. Thus, sandstone, as the expression of a sedimentation process, can itself become the content of a new expression by a mason building a wall. The second thing to note is that the real distinction between content and expression on the linguistic stratum is a categorical or attributional distinction. Let's take up briefly Spinoza's account of attributes in order to clarify what this might mean. For Spinoza the three main categories of his ontology are substance, mode, and attribute. Substance is Spinoza's way of talking about the whole, while modes are the parts or finite expressions of the whole. It's tempting to lump attributes in with substance and mode and ask, What kind of thing is an attribute? For Spinoza, though, an attribute is not a thing but a "way of perceiving." From our finite, human perspective substance may be perceived in two fundamentally distinct ways, as thought or as extension. In this way Spinoza cuts to the heart of Descartes' dualism and dissolves it. He shows that Descartes' mind-body dualism arises because he attempts to treat mind and body

as if they were two distinct substances instead of two attributes of a single substance. Instead Spinoza argues that there are only individuals that may be perceived in two distinct ways, under the aspect of thought and under the aspect of body. Think about it this way: if a poet and a botanist both write about a flower, we will expect their accounts to be quite distinct from one another. The poet and the botanist perceive the flower differently. However, we do not suppose that because there are two different accounts there are, therefore, two different flowers. No, there are two accounts, but only one thing. Or, we could say that the poet and the botanist each describe different attributes of the flower.

Deleuze and Guattari are arguing here that in the same way that a botanist and poet may speak about different attributes of a flower, the distinction between words and things in an assemblage is also about distinct attributes of the assemblage. Where Deleuze and Guattari depart from Spinoza, though, is in holding that words and things can interact with one another in an assemblage in a way that mind and body cannot interact in Spinoza. However, and crucially, the relation between words and things is not one of representation. Deleuze and Guattari write:

The independence of the form of expression and the form of content is not the basis for a parallelism between them or a representation of one by the other, but on the contrary a parceling of the two, a manner in which expressions are inserted into contents, in which we ceaselessly jump from one register to another, in which signs are at work in things themselves just as things extend into or are deployed through signs. An assemblage of enunciation does not speak "of" things; it speaks *on the same level as* states of things and states of content. So that the same  $x$ , the same particle, may function either as a body that acts and undergoes actions or as a sign constituting an act or order-word, depending on which form it is taken up by (for example, the theoretico-experimental aggregate of physics). In short, the functional independence of the two forms is only the form of their reciprocal presupposition, and of the continual passage from one to the other. (TP 87)

Words do not represent or signify things. Each attribute has its own logic, but it is a logic of their interaction. Words perform incorporeal transformations on things, but words are inseparable from things. If we return to the fabric illustration above, it is impossible to run one's hand across woven fabric and feel only the warp or the woof. The feel of the fabric is constituted by the interaction of the warp and woof. Thus, in response to the original question, Deleuze and Guattari are able to separate words and things and at

the same time posit their mutual implication, because the distinction between words and things is attributional.

Deleuze and Guattari conclude their discussion of this postulate by returning to the work of Noam Chomsky, who revolutionized linguistics by positing the existence of a deep grammatical structure that made the acquisition of language possible. Not surprisingly, their criticism of Chomsky focuses precisely on the very idea of a deep grammatical structure. The criticism is two-pronged. On the one hand, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Chomsky's deep grammatical structure is not abstract enough. On the other hand, they argue that Chomsky's model treats language as if it were separable from pragmatics (i.e., content and variables). In fact, for Deleuze and Guattari these criticisms are interrelated, because it is Chomsky's insufficient abstraction that allows him to treat language in isolation from its extrinsic factors. But, why would increased abstraction result in making language more connected to its extrinsic factors? Aren't abstraction and isolation directly correlated?

Part of the answer to these questions lies in Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term "abstract." As we've seen already, "abstract" is not opposed to "concrete," much as "virtual" is not opposed to "real." Rather, "abstract" is opposed to "discrete." That is, the problem with Chomsky's model, or the problem with his "abstract machine," is that it continues to think in terms of discrete units that can be isolated from the continuum of the machinic assemblage of things, manipulated in relation to one another, and ordered arborescently. What Deleuze and Guattari are proposing with their abstract machine is a rhizomatic continuum, always open to an outside, an outside that is recursively related to the abstract machine itself. The abstract machine here is not language in isolation but the "diagram" of an assemblage. "The abstract machine as it relates to the diagram of the assemblage is never purely a matter of language, except for lack of sufficient abstraction. It is language that depends on the abstract machine, not the reverse" (TP 91). As we saw in our brief discussion of topology in the previous chapter, an abstract machine is the set of continuous variations that a set of variables undergoes. If we return to our example of the feudal assemblage above, Deleuze and Guattari's claim is that the diagram of that assemblage, its abstract machine, would unavoidably say something about language. It would say something about language because language is one of the variables set in variation in relation to other variables in the assemblage. The attempt to extract some of these variables from the assemblage and then "discover" an "abstract

machine” underneath these isolated variables results in a tree, a tracing of the Chomskian type, in which anything that does not fit the model is relegated to the non-linguistic and is therefore extrinsic. Deleuze and Guattari have a different goal. They want to be done with trees. They want to create a rhizome out of language, but to do this they must create an abstract machine in which linguistic and non-linguistic variables reciprocally interact with one another.

*LANGUAGE HAS ONLY VARIABLES AND FORMS A  
HETEROGENEOUS SYSTEM*

For Deleuze and Guattari the problem posed by linguistics is the problem posed by science in general. Science, as we’ve seen, functions by segmenting continuity into discrete units. These discrete units are then arranged as constants in a homogeneous system. This process is what Deleuze and Guattari call “royal” or “major” science. For the most part linguistics operates according to the same procedure as other royal sciences. For linguistics to be a science it must take the admittedly very messy fact of language and extract something stable from it in order to study it. Chomsky exemplifies this tendency perfectly. His account of language eschews the messiness of everyday language and replaces it with a deep structure that is the proper object of linguistics. William Labov exemplifies the opposite tendency of rejecting deep structure in favor of the messiness of language. Chomsky’s response is that the messiness of language is certainly interesting but it cannot rise to the level of science. For Chomsky, Labov isn’t doing linguistics but pragmatics. Deleuze and Guattari agree with Chomsky but think that linguistics not only cannot be separated from pragmatics but is in fact grounded in pragmatics. They see in Labov an attempt to make linguistics into a minor science.

Making linguistics into a minor science requires conceptualizing “continuous variation.” That is, language is not made of constants but of variables, and it does not form a homogeneous but a heterogeneous system. Making linguistics a minor science or conceptualizing continuous variation is nothing other than making a rhizome out of language. It is a perceptual semiotics that allows us to see language as a creative process rather than the repetition of a set of relations that remain constant. In order to illustrate what Deleuze and Guattari have in mind let’s take the statement, “I swear!” Now let’s think about how different the statement is depending on whether it is said by a child to a parent, one spouse to another, or by

a witness in a courtroom. One might object that the statement stays the "same" in every case, and it's precisely that "sameness" that linguistics studies. Or, one might readily agree that the statement does indeed change in each situation and is thus completely dependent on context. For Deleuze and Guattari this is a false dilemma. These two choices are two ways of extracting constants in order to make a royal science out of them. The first choice extracts a constant out of expression, while the second choice extracts a constant out of content. Continuous variation pursues neither of these options. "To place the statement in continuous variation is to send it through all the prosodic, semantic, syntactical, and phonological variables that can affect it in the shortest moment of time (the smallest interval)" (TP 94). There is an abstract or virtual line (diagram) that weaves together the "*continuum* of 'I swear!'" Each one is a deformation of the other in exactly the same way that topologically we can move from the letter "A" to the letter "R" or from a donut to a coffee cup by deformation. Both content and expression are in variation, neither can anchor the other as a constant.

Furthermore, the abstract machine does not serve as a constant that anchors content and expression. The abstract machine is not the formal, a priori condition for content and expression. Content and expression each have variables (substance), while the abstract machine describes (but does not determine) the variation that these variables undergo. The abstract machine "has, not invariable or obligatory rules, but optional rules that ceaselessly vary with the variation itself, as in a game in which each move changes the rules" (TP 100). No doubt Deleuze and Guattari have in mind the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary games from *The Logic of Sense*. While ordinary games are characterized by pre-existing rules that determine all possible outcomes (i.e., categorically), extraordinary games have no pre-existing rules, and every turn affects every other turn both past and future.<sup>3</sup> Precisely because extraordinary games have no pre-existing rules, they can create the new. Thus, the abstract machine does not determine the possible for the variation of variables, but is itself in a constant state of variation on the basis of the ways in which the variables interact. The new, the line of flight, is not precluded by the abstract machine but included in it.

These considerations allow Deleuze and Guattari to make some important claims with regard to abstract machines and assemblages. Abstract machines, as we have seen, are not "abstract" in the usual sense of the term, but are a way of talking about the variation of variables. As a result, abstract machines are not the universal that



lies behind and unifies a set of phenomena. The abstract machine is always singular. "Singular" here is meant in the mathematical sense in which it is opposed not to the plural or the multiple but to the ordinary. In this sense a triangle has three singular points. The points that lie between the singular points are ordinary points. The abstract machine of the triangle is the variability of those three singular points. In the case of language all of the different ways of saying "I swear!" are the singular points that form an abstract machine.

Assemblages are always collective. As we've seen, throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* assemblages are complex amalgamations of a number of intersecting lines of force with tendencies toward both stasis and change. "There is no primacy of the individual; there is instead an indissolubility of a singular Abstract and a collective Concrete. The abstract machine does not exist independently of the assemblage, any more than the assemblage functions independently of the [abstract] machine" (TP 100). The individual is not the unit of measure for Deleuze and Guattari. An individual is only the temporary effect of the way in which an abstract machine and a concrete assemblage presuppose one another. In fact, to focus on an individual obscures both the abstract machine and the concrete assemblage. The resulting account is destined to tend toward stasis and arborescence instead of change and creation. This remains the case for language. A linguistics focused on constants (individuals) is bound to result in a homogeneous system. Only a linguistics that focuses on both the abstract machine (variation) and the concrete assemblage (variables) can hope to create something new.

#### *LANGUAGE DOES NOT REQUIRE A STANDARD LANGUAGE TO BE STUDIED<sup>4</sup>*

This section returns to the concept of "order-word" introduced earlier and furthers Deleuze and Guattari's insistence that language cannot be understood extracted from its pragmatic conditions. In particular, they insist that the scientific study of language is coextensive with a political project of homogenizing, centralizing, and standardizing language. "The scientific enterprise of extracting constants and constant relations is always coupled with the political enterprise of imposing them on speakers and transmitting order-words" (TP 101). For Deleuze and Guattari the state functions by the promulgation of laws. They're explicit about this in *Anti-Oedipus* as well as later plateaus such as "Nomadology" and "Apparatus of Capture." Laws can only function as organizing principles for the

state under two conditions. First, laws must be fixed. A law under constant revision is not a law. Second, laws must be understood. They must be disseminated in language. But, which language? The promulgation of laws requires not only a language for them to be disseminated in, but a standardized language predicated on constants. What this often means is that a particular language is elevated above other languages for this purpose. This elevation often takes the form of a political fiat in which one language is declared the official language of the state. This is the institution of a major language. The flip side of the institution of a major language is the simultaneous creation of minor languages as subordinate to and “unofficial” in relation to the major language. Notice how language itself is organized by an order-word and undergoes the kind of “incorporeal transformation” that result from order-words.

Understanding language rhizomatically, however, is not simply a matter of dividing languages into major and minor. In fact, to say it this way is already misleading. “There are not, therefore, two kinds of languages but two possible treatments of the same language” (TP 103). Here again, we see the same “perceptual semiotics” that have characterized Deleuze and Guattari’s project from the beginning. In precisely the same way that there are not two kinds of things, trees and rhizomes, there are not two kinds of languages, major and minor. There are, in fact, two ways of seeing language: one that sees it as a series of constants à la Chomsky, and one that sees it as a series of variables set in constant variation. The first view of language is arborescent. The second is rhizomatic. The first squelches creation. The second creates something new. As we’ve seen from the beginning, language is an assemblage with two tendencies, one toward stasis and one toward change. Deleuze and Guattari’s project emphasizes the tendency toward change but not at the expense of stasis. Their criticism of the Chomskian view of language is that it attempts to relegate the tendency toward change to an extra-linguistic realm of pragmatics and study only that which remains the same.

Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on the tendency toward change leads them to posit not only the major and minor as functions resulting from the collusion of politics and science but also a “becoming-minor,” as the process that continually interrupts the major and drives it toward change. They will explore this process at greater length in the plateau “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible . . .,” but for now we can say that becoming-minor is nothing other than that tendency toward change. The crucial point that Deleuze and Guattari want to make is that this

tendency toward change is not external to an assemblage but always part of it. We can see this clearly in their analysis of the order-word that concludes the plateau. Following Elias Canetti they note that the order-word has two sides. We have already examined at length the first side, namely, the way in which order-words order, impose a judgment through incorporeal transformations. This side of the order-word always renders the same judgment, death. The judgment is always death because it extracts the discrete and unchanging out of the flow of life, *rigor mortis*. The other side of the order-word is flight, escape, revolution, what Deleuze and Guattari call a “pass-word.” Not only is language an assemblage, but an order-word is itself a complex assemblage. The tendency toward change, the becoming of the order-word, is a pass-word. The pass-word is not a different word, but a different way of seeing the order-word that puts its judgment in variation. “A single thing or word undoubtedly has this twofold nature: it is necessary to extract one from the other—to transform the compositions of order into components of passage” (TP 110).

Language has the remarkable ability to organize and stabilize, and the science of linguistics capitalizes on this ability by looking for the source of this organization and stability within language itself. The cost of pursuing linguistics in this way can be stated as the four postulates of linguistics, which function by excluding everything deemed extra-linguistic. In response to these four postulates of linguistics, Deleuze and Guattari propose an experiment in which they reverse these postulates and replace them with what we might call the four postulates of pragmatics:

1. Language is neither informative nor communicative.
2. The abstract machine of language appeals to extrinsic factors.
3. Language has only variables and forms a heterogeneous system.
4. Language does not require a standard language to be studied.

The postulates of pragmatics are not interested in the goals of linguistics as a major science, but in opening language up to the outside in order to create something new. The result of the experiment is the discovery of “becoming-minor,” the pass-word that is the inverse of every order-word.

## NOTES

1. Here Deleuze and Guattari come very close to Jacques Derrida’s discussion of “iterability.” See, in particular, Derrida’s engagement with speech act theory in *Limited, Inc.*

*Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus*

2. I'm using "*Papiermark*" here instead of "*Reichsmark*" even though Deleuze and Guattari (and their source J.K. Galbraith) use "*Reichsmark*." The reason for this is that "*Reichsmark*" is also the name of the currency that replaced the *Rentenmark* in August 1924. "*Papiermark*" or simply "*Mark*" are now used as the terms for the currency that preceded the *Rentenmark*.
3. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 58–60.
4. A typo in the English edition heads this section of *A Thousand Plateaus* as the sixth postulate instead of the fourth.

## 5

587 BC–AD 70:

### *On Several Regimes of Signs*

This plateau concerns four regimes of signs, though there are many more and all of them are always mixed together. A regime of signs concerns the form of expression when the expression is linguistic. This definition returns us to the conceptual apparatus articulated in the “Geology of Morals.” Content and expression are the two sides of double-articulation. Each side of the articulation has both form and substance. Thus, an analysis of the regime of signs is the analysis of the form of expression for a linguistic assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari note, however, that this way of going about things is already artificial. There are no purely linguistic assemblages. To claim so would be a return to the postulates of linguistics. What we will discover in this plateau is that even as we examine the linguistic aspects of an assemblage we will be confronted continually with its heterogeneity, what Deleuze and Guattari call the pragmatics that ground linguistic expression. As always the goal is experimental. The plateau asks, What can we create if we take the form of linguistic expression as our starting point? Or, to put this in the vocabulary of the previous plateau, What are some ways that order-words organize and stabilize linguistic expression, and what lines of flight do the resulting pass-words create?

The four regimes that Deleuze and Guattari examine are the presignifying, the signifying, the countersignifying, and the postsignifying. The critical edge of this plateau comes from delimiting the role of the sign. In contrast to structuralist accounts (whether anthropological, linguistic, or psychoanalytic), which pursue an ahistorical and universal account of the sign, Deleuze and Guattari argue that signs order and are ordered differently in different regimes. In fact,

the structuralist account of the sign is relegated to the signifying regime. The mistake of structuralism has been to take the signifying regime as the only possible model. The signifying regime is nothing other than the state-form reproduced linguistically.

Deleuze and Guattari first broach the connection between the psychoanalytic (Lacanian) account of the sign and political formations in *Anti-Oedipus*. There the argument is straightforward. Psychoanalysis has taken a recently formed and delimited psychological formation, Oedipus, and turned it into the universal, a priori structure of both the individual and society. For Deleuze and Guattari, a formation that is hierarchically organized around a central figure ("center of signifi-ance") is despotic, whether its expression is in an assemblage of enunciation or a concrete machinic assemblage. This basic despotic formation they call the *Urstaat*, and their primary concern in *Anti-Oedipus* is to articulate the way in which this hierarchical formation is transformed and reinscribed within capitalism, and to ask what escapes both of these formations. This is the meaning of the term "schizophrenia" in both volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, but the more common term in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as we've seen, is "rhizome" or "line of flight."

While there are clear parallels between the signifying regime of signs and the despotic formation in *Anti-Oedipus*, there are also parallels between the presignifying regime of signs and the savage formation in *Anti-Oedipus*. As we'll see in our discussion of the "Faciality" and "Apparatus of Capture" plateaus below, the presignifying regime is the regime that continually wards off the hierarchical formations of the signifying regime. It does not pre-exist the signifying regime so much as it posits the signifying regime as its own limit. Deleuze and Guattari further claim in "Micropolitics and Segmentarity" that the difference between these two regimes lies in the difference between rigid and supple segmentarity. We'll discuss segmentarity below in relation to the postsignifying regime. What *A Thousand Plateaus* adds here are the two other regimes, the countersignifying and postsignifying, neither of which have strict parallels in *Anti-Oedipus*. We will discuss the postsignifying regime at length here and in the "Faciality" plateau. The countersignifying regime is the war machine and will not be discussed until "Nomadology." It is also the case that capitalism doesn't arise here in direct relation to the savage and despotic. However, Deleuze and Guattari will return to the relation between the state and capitalism in the "Apparatus of Capture" plateau. They are also much more explicit than they are in *Anti-Oedipus* that the regimes are always mixed.

Since all of the other regimes are articulated in relation to the signifying regime, let's begin there. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari say that their analysis of this regime "is applicable not only to the imperial despotic regime but to all subjected, arborescent, hierarchical, centered groups: political parties, literary movements, psychoanalytic associations, families, conjugal units, etc." (TP 116). Their analysis is applicable to all of these disparate groups insofar as they all have the same diagram, the same abstract machine. Also, and this is no doubt the reason they begin here, the signifying regime is the regime that treats signs as discrete constants amenable to codification by linguistics as we discussed in the previous chapter. This is a regime of signs in which the tendency toward stasis is dominant. The signifying regime has several characteristics that distinguish it from the other regimes. Or, we might say, these are the components by which stasis is maintained.

The first component of the signifying regime is the center around which the regime is organized. It is the face or body of the despot. All the signs in the regime are organized around and refer to the despot in some way. Everything is done in the name of the king. Books and bridges are dedicated to the king. His face is everywhere on banners and on the money in everyone's pockets. The king speaks, and his word is law. To break the law is a direct offense against the king. The center must remain occupied at all times. The king is immortal. Even when the king dies, the proclamation of his death is followed by the installation of a new king. "The king is dead. Long live the king."

The words of the king radiate outward in concentric circles. The king's inner circle knows his will, but it is not so clear for those outside the circle. Who will explain the king's will to his loyal subjects? The king is too exalted for such a lowly task. Others must be deputized to interpret the king's words for the great unwashed. Some of these words may even be written down and form a sacred text. Even the sacred text requires interpretation, though. Thus, those deputized with the power to interpret the king's word on the king's behalf are distributed throughout these concentric circles. Most people don't understand the king well enough to get close to him, though it does remain possible to move from circle to circle. Perhaps a common soldier that served with the king in his youth might become a trusted advisor in the king's later years.

It's easy to see how such a regime would tend toward stasis. Power is ensconced in the center and radiates outward. As we've seen, though, assemblages have tendencies toward both stasis and

change. What does the tendency toward change look like in this regime? It looks like a goat, a scapegoat to be exact. In order to maintain stasis, the king's men must vilify anything that seeks to escape the ever-expanding rings of the king's power. Moreover, this vilification must be interpreted by the king's men so that its meaning necessarily refers back to the king. The scapegoat is allowed to leave but only on the condition that it is properly feted and driven out in a ceremony. The ceremony refers back to the king in a negative way. The scapegoat is everything evil in the signifying regime. The scapegoat ceremony takes the power of destabilization (line of flight) within the regime and expels it, thus eliminating the line of flight and reinforcing the stability of the regime.

The bulk of this plateau is concerned with the distinction between the signifying regime and the postsignifying regime. What characterizes the postsignifying regime is its positive relation to a line of flight. One could say that the regime is constituted on a line of flight. Deleuze and Guattari write:

What happens in the second [postsignifying] regime, by comparison with the signifying regime as we have already defined it? In the first place, *a sign or packet of signs detaches from the irradiating circular network* and sets to work on its own account, starts running a straight line, as though swept into a narrow, open passage. Already the signifying system drew a line of flight or deterritorialization exceeding the specific index of its deterritorialized signs, but the system gave that line a negative value and sent the scapegoat fleeing down it. Here, it seems that the line receives a positive sign, as though it were effectively occupied and followed by a people who find in it their reason for being or destiny. (TP 121)

A concrete example of what Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here is the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Egypt is, of course, a despotic signifying regime in which the god-king, Pharaoh, sits at the center and all meaning radiates from him and resounds back to him. Meanwhile, in a fertile part of the Nile delta known as Goshen, a group of people with their own customs, who were allowed to live there because one of their ancestors had once saved Egypt from famine, are enslaved by a new Pharaoh who saw no need to reward the past so extravagantly. Laboring under Pharaoh's yoke they kept their customs as best they could until one of their number led them out of slavery on a line of flight into the desert. Here the line of flight achieves escape velocity and constitutes itself as a new people no longer beholden to the Pharaoh's signifying system.



Of course, the Jews do not maintain a pure, postsignifying regime of signs. Assemblages always have mixed regimes. At different times and in different places any regime may predominate. The Jews wandering in the desert had not only a postsignifying regime but also a nomadic, countersignifying regime. Ultimately, in their desire for a king they reinstalled a signifying regime, but given its mixture with the other regimes and other geographic, economic, and religious factors, there was no way it would be anything like the Egyptian signifying regime, or the signifying regimes of any of the surrounding nations the Jews were trying so badly to emulate.

Even if we bear in mind the *de facto* mixture of regimes, we can see several remarkable facets of the postsignifying regime. The first difference is the face. Whereas in the signifying regime the visibility of the king's face is paramount, in the postsignifying regime the face is always turned away. The Jews are commanded not to represent their God in any way. Even Moses is not allowed to see God's face. He can only see God's backside as he passes by. The turned face, the face in profile, leads to the next characteristic of the postsignifying regime, betrayal. Betrayal lies in stark contrast to the deception that characterizes the signifying regime. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the signifying regime is characterized by deception for two reasons. The first reason lies in the ability of people to skip from one circle to another, to occupy different positions on the basis of their relation to the king. The second reason lies in the infinite interpretation required by the signifying regime. In such a regime there are only interpretations. Even interpretations are already interpretations of interpretations. There is no bottom, only endless interpretation.

The examples that Deleuze and Guattari give of betrayal are quite striking. They begin with Cain. Cain betrays God by killing Abel, and God betrays Cain by marking him and setting him to wander in the land of Nod. Moses betrays God by striking the rock twice, and God betrays Moses by refusing to let him enter the Promised Land. Jonah betrays God by fleeing from him, and God betrays Jonah by sparing Nineveh. While this is not the only line running through the Hebrew Bible, it is "this double turning away that draws the positive line of flight" (TP 123). That is, the positive relation toward deterritorialization that characterizes the postsignifying regime is made possible by betrayal. Think about it this way: the kind of strict loyalty required by the signifying regime engenders stasis not change. Any betrayal in the despotic regime is vilified

in the form of the scapegoat. In order for change to be valorized betrayal or turning away must have a different status.

The Jewish postsignifying regime is taken up by Christianity but forms a new assemblage with the imperial, Roman signifying regime. The central figure here is Jesus with his cry of dereliction on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Beyond that, though, the Apostle Paul carries Christianity beyond the confines of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and throughout the Roman Empire in a direct betrayal of their authority. Through this betrayal Christianity reterritorializes itself on a much larger population. Betrayal comes again with Martin Luther, who mobilizes a few signs (*sole fides, sola scriptura, sola gratia, solus Christus, soli Deo gloria*), which then become detached from the signifying regime of the Catholic Church and become part of a new assemblage that includes disparate political formations as well as vernacular linguistic formations.

In addition to the double turning away and the betrayal that are constitutive of the postsignifying regime, Deleuze and Guattari add existence under reprieve. Existence under reprieve is the prolongation of the life of the betrayer, but a prolongation that exists under a curse. They have two figures explicitly in mind here, Cain and Oedipus. Both are cursed and live out that curse as one marked by the death sentence that hangs over them. K. from *The Trial* also comes to mind here. Everyone he meets somehow knows about the case against him. These three components together form "the point of subjectification." What Deleuze and Guattari mean by this is that the point of subjectification is the point of departure, the point where the line of flight begins. God withdrawing his face is a point of subjectification for the Jews. The idea of the infinite in Descartes is a point of subjectification for modern philosophy. Nineteenth-century psychiatrists distinguished between general madness (mania) and madness with relation to a particular object (monomania). Monomaniacs would include kleptomaniacs, who are only mad with regard to stealing objects; anorexics, who are mad with regard to food; and arsonists, who are mad with regard to fire but may seem completely normal in every other aspect of their lives. That which the monomaniac is mad about is his or her point of subjectification.

The line of flight that begins with a point of subjectification Deleuze and Guattari call a "proceeding" (*procès*).<sup>1</sup> They read Kafka, for example, as exploring a series of proceedings that follow from a point of subjectification. Gregor Samsa awakens one day as a

cockroach. That is a point of subjectification from which a proceeding or line of flight follows. K. being summoned to court in *The Trial* (*Der Prozeß*) is a point of subjectification and his subsequent search for the courtroom is a proceeding. Proceedings are linear in contrast to the circularity of the signifying regime. Proceedings are also segmented. That is, when one proceeding comes to an end another one begins. But, another proceeding cannot begin without a new point of subjectification. It would be a mistake to assume that Deleuze and Guattari are looking for singular points of subjectification or singular proceedings that follow from them. A person or group might have multiple points of subjectification and, as a result, multiple proceedings. Furthermore, there is no requirement that these points of subjection or proceedings be in harmony with one another. A person or group may have multiple conflicting points of subjectification with the resulting proceedings being at odds with one another.

The point of subjectification determines what Deleuze and Guattari call a “mental reality.” Think of this as the mindset that follows from a life-changing event. If we return to the example of the Jews, we can posit the Exodus as such an event, a point of subjectification. “We are the ones called out of Egypt.” This proceeding that follows from this event is segmented, though. It runs to the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the first Temple in 587 BCE. “We are the ones in exile, and we weep for our lost home.” A new proceeding begins with the return from exile and the construction of the second Temple. This proceeding comes to a halt with the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE. This point of subjectification requires the Jews to develop a mental reality that encompasses all of these points. “Let misfortune befall us: this formula punctuates Jewish history” (TP 122). A point of subjectification thus determines a mental reality, a mindset. A mental reality produces a “subject of enunciation” (*sujet d’énunciation*). A subject of enunciation is a function of a mental reality. The ability of someone to say, “I am a Jew,” is a function of a particular mindset that follows from the way a set of signs escapes from another regime of signs.

The subject of enunciation is not the only subject created by this process. At the same time a “subject of the statement” (*sujet d’énoncé*) is also created. The subject of the statement is “a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality (of which the mental reality just mentioned is part, even when it seems to oppose it)” (TP 129). Thus, the subject is never singular but always doubled, and these two subjects are always dependent on

one another mutually reinforcing one another. Before we proceed further with this relation, though, let's think briefly about the subject of the statement. What Deleuze and Guattari have in mind can be seen in the passive sense of "subject." That is, one who is "subjected to" something. In this case, what one is subjected to is the "dominant reality." Here they borrow a concept from Foucault, "normalization," to illustrate what they mean. To be normalized means that one's actions fall within a statistical range of actions deemed acceptable by society. To deviate from the average is likely to get one incarcerated, hospitalized, or placed under psychiatric care. The subject of the statement is that which (or who) gets normalized.

The two subjects generated by the point of subjectification can be separated into individual roles, psychoanalyst and patient, for example. Even here, though, it's not entirely clear which is which. On the one hand, insofar as the patient speaks to the analyst during the session, he is a subject of enunciation. That is, he is the subject who speaks. In this situation the analyst is the subject of the statement, the one who has internalized the dominant reality. On the other hand, in every other aspect of his life the patient is the subject of the statement. He is the one trying to conform himself to the strictures of the dominant reality, and the analyst assists in this by forcing the patient to interpret his own utterances, by forcing the patient to think about his next session. Thus, the two subjects generated by the point of subjectification are not coextensive with individual persons. Furthermore, it is often the case that a person contains both subjects simultaneously. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari seem to have the Kantian model of the moral subject in mind when they analyze these two forms of subjectivity. Kant argues in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* that the autonomous moral subject would be both law-giver (subject of enunciation) and law-follower (subject of the statement). The price of escaping heteronomy (despotic signifying regime) is the paradox of these mutually interdependent subjectivities, whether they are contained in one person or distributed in a group.

Ultimately, for Deleuze and Guattari the difference between the signifying and postsignifying regimes lies in the way that each deterritorializes. On the one hand, as we've seen, the signifying regime has a high degree of deterritorialization. This is because signs only refer to other signs. It is a semiotic that requires endless interpretation. At the same time, the deterritorialization is only a *relative* deterritorialization. The reason for this is that even though

signs only refer to other signs, all of the signs are organized around the face of the despot. Any sign that tries to escape the orbit of the despot is assigned a negative value (the scapegoat). On the other hand, the postsignifying regime pursues an absolute deterritorialization, since it assigns the line of flight a positive value.

So, are Deleuze and Guattari saying that we should begin forming postsignifying regimes to combat despotism? No, not quite. While it's true that the postsignifying regime is a formation that escapes the signifying regime, and that it escapes precisely because of its positive relation to a line of flight, it's also the case that the postsignifying regime "segments" the line of flight. We'll examine what segmenting is in more depth in our discussion of "Micropolitics and Segmentarity," but for now we can say that the postsignifying regime's line of flight is always stopping and restarting. This becomes clear if we think about our discussion of Jewish history above. Jewish history is segmented, punctuated by events (points of subjectification) that force it into new directions: Exodus, Temple, Captivity, Return, Destruction of the Temple. "This is because subjectification essentially constitutes finite linear proceedings, one of which ends before the next begins . . ." (TP 133). We can see the same segmentation on a much smaller scale in relationships. Two people meet and commence a line of flight. When the relationship ends, the line of flight ends, but if a new relationship begins the line of flight recommences from that point. Because the line of flight produced by the postsignifying regime is segmented in this way, it relativizes the absolute deterritorialization created by the line of flight. For Deleuze and Guattari this is unsurprising: "forms of expression and regimes of signs are still *strata* . . . subjectification is no less a stratum than signifiante" (TP 134). As we have already seen in the "Geology of Morals" a stratum is the organization of content and expression. It ensures stability, but it does so by limiting the avenues of change. Thus in the case of the signifying regime, change is limited by making it wholly negative (the scapegoat). In the case of the postsignifying regime, change is limited by segmenting it, by turning the line of flight into a series of discrete points.

The real issue for Deleuze and Guattari, then, is not pitting regimes of signs against one another or privileging one over the other but asking what exceeds stratification as such. What would it mean to de-stratify? Given mixed semiotics that combine several regimes of signs and stabilize on various levels in various ways, what does the tendency toward change look like?

The principal strata binding human beings are the organism, significance and interpretation, and subjectification and subjection. These strata together are what separates us from the plane of consistency and the abstract machine, where there is no longer any regime of signs, where the line of flight effectuates its own potential positivity and deterritorialization its absolute power. (TP 134)

Deleuze and Guattari explicitly name the organic stratum and the linguistic stratum here as the strata that provide stability for human beings. Notice, though, that they subdivide the linguistic stratum into the two regimes of signs that have concerned us here, the signifying (significance and interpretation) and the postsignifying (subjectification and subjection). Notice also that what these hallmarks of stasis are opposed to are the "plane of consistency" and the "abstract machine." Plane of consistency and abstract machine are thus ways of talking about the tendency toward change.

Identifying the tendency toward change returns us to Deleuze and Guattari's method, which they have variously called rhizomatics, schizoanalysis, and pragmatics. At this point, we can schematize their method into four components: generational, transformational, diagrammatic, and machinic. We've already discussed the generational and transformational a great deal. The generational component of pragmatics makes a tracing. With regard to regimes of signs it traces the differing regimes found in a mixed semiotic. The transformational component makes a map. That is, it looks for moments of becoming, lines of flight, where one regime becomes another regime. The diagrammatic component is the moment of abstraction, but abstraction in the sense opposed to discrete not opposed to concrete. Such a moment of abstraction extracts the continuums of intensity (matter) out of the substance of content and expression, and it extracts "tensors" (function) out of the form of content and expression. The diagram (abstract machine) deals strictly in matter-function, in speeds and slownesses, and what sets variables in variation. It is independent of substance and form; it is independent of content and expression.

In order to illustrate how pragmatics works at this level, Deleuze and Guattari return to the phrase, "I love you." The phrase itself exists in some concrete and mixed semiotic. For Deleuze and Guattari the most common type of mixture is a mixture of the signifying and postsignifying regimes. Other mixtures are certainly possible but much rarer. Once the contours of this mixed semiotic are traced, and the ratio of its mixture determined, we can move to the next stage and uncover which regime of signs this particular "I

love you” belongs to. There is a great deal of difference between an “I love you” that belongs to a despotic (signifying) regime and one that belongs to a passional (postsignifying regime). The “I love you” in a despotic regime is oriented directly or indirectly toward the face of the despot and “uses interpretation to make a whole series of signifieds correspond to the signifying chain” (TP 147). The “I love you” of the postsignifying regime proceeds from a point of subjectification, a proceeding that becomes segmented and proceeds from new points of subjectification. Here we might think of a couple falling in love, exchanging their first “I love yous” and then marriage vows. As the relationship proceeds, we can imagine the couple having children, which would fragment the “I love yous” and constitute a new subject, the family. The proceeding is thus segmented as the “I love yous” begin differing from one another, but nonetheless proceeding from points of subjectification.

At this point a further issue can be pursued. Once we establish which regime of signs a phrase belongs to we can ask what its tendencies are toward stasis and change. What avenues are opened up in this particular regime and which ones are closed down? Is the familial subject proceeding from a particular “I love you” likely to get trapped in a despotic regime governed by Oedipus? Is the passion of first love likely to lead the couple to the black hole of suicide, as in *Romeo and Juliet*? Or, is it possible that a regime of signs might be transformed into something new? Where do its lines of flight go? Can they be followed? “One could try to create new, as yet unknown statements for that proposition . . .” (TP 147). We get a glimpse of what Deleuze and Guattari have in mind in a scene from Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall*. The scene is a flashback of a couple (Alvy and Annie) coming to the realization that they love each other.

ANNIE: Come on. Yeah. You know what? You know, I like you. I really mean it. I really do like you.

ALVY: Yeah, but do you love me? That’s the key question.

ANNIE: Do I love you? Well, I certainly . . . I think that’s . . .

ALVY: I know you’ve only known me a short while.

ANNIE: I think that’s sort of . . . Yeah. Yeah . . . Do you love me?

ALVY: I-uh, love is, uh, is too weak a word for the way I feel . . . I lurve you. You know, I loave you. I luff you with two “f’s.” Yeah. I-I have to invent. Of course, I love you.

Here we see Alvy trying to invent new statements for the phrase “I love you,” “even if the result were a patois of sensual delight,

physical and semiotic systems in shreds, asubjective signs, signs without significance where syntax, semantics, and logic are in collapse" (TP 147). Alvy and Annie proceed as a couple from a point of subjectification and in this scene Alvy latches onto a line of flight and begins to invent, to create something new, a becoming that is not bound to any regime of signs. In the context of the film it's also noteworthy that in the moments leading up to this scene Alvy suggests that Annie is "polymorphously perverse," a Freudian term that refers to pre-Oedipal pleasure. Except that Alvy uses the term positively. It's as if Annie's line of flight from Oedipal sexuality prompts Alvy to invent something new of his own. Alvy and Annie then enter into this becoming together.

This plateau more fully fleshes out the methodology of pragmatics hinted at in "Postulates of Linguistics." Indeed this plateau can be read as a further elaboration of the linguistic stratum first introduced in the "Geology of Morals." Deleuze and Guattari's goal here is twofold. First, they maintain that one of the blockages to the creation of new concepts lies in structuralist interpretations of the sign, whether anthropological, psychoanalytic, or linguistic. They show that the sign is different depending on which regime of signs it appears in. Second, regimes of signs are always mixed. While the "Postulates of Linguistics" showed that there is no pure linguistic sign, this plateau further shows that even if signs are relegated to regimes of signs, the regimes themselves are mixed. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this mixture is most often of the signifying (despotic) and postsignifying (passional) regimes. The task of pragmatics given this concrete mixture is to discern the ratio of the mixture, limn the contours of each regime in the mixture, uncover blockages and flows, and pursue lines of flight unique to each mixture. This is pragmatics, rhizomatics, schizoanalysis. It is a method that can create the new rather than merely trace the status quo. Pragmatics makes a rhizome rather than a tree out of signs because it does not seek to extract signs out of their concrete assemblage.

While Deleuze and Guattari spend the majority of this plateau distinguishing between the signifying and postsignifying regimes of signs, in the "Faciality" plateau they will show the ways in which these two regimes function together as a white wall/black hole system that they call the "Face." Furthermore, they hint at but do not explore other possibilities for the organization of signs, namely the presignifying and countersignifying regimes. Both of these regimes are explored at length in "Nomadology" and "Apparatus



of Capture.” In the context of these plateaus, though, Deleuze and Guattari speak in terms of social formations rather than regimes of signs. A presignifying regime of signs is a social formation that actively wards off capture by the hierarchical state-form. A countersignifying regime of signs is a nomadic social formation that actively resists the hierarchical state-form once it has formed. It is the war machine. As we’ll see the countersignifying regime not only organizes signs differently, it organizes space differently. It is the semiotic of the tendency toward change, and it is found to some degree in every concrete assemblage.

*NOTE*

1. The translation of “*procès*” by “proceeding” at this point obscures one of the connections that Deleuze and Guattari want to make with Kafka. “*Procès*” can also be translated “trial” just as “*Prozeß*” can in German. We do speak of “legal proceedings” in English, but the connection is much less direct.

## 6

### November 28, 1947: *How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?*

In his introduction to the English translation of *Anti-Oedipus* Michel Foucault writes, “*Anti-Oedipus* . . . is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time.”<sup>1</sup> Not only is *Anti-Oedipus* a book of ethics, so is *A Thousand Plateaus*. Several qualifications are in order, though. *A Thousand Plateaus* is a book of ethics in the way that Spinoza’s *Ethics* is an ethics, or Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* is an ethics. All of these are books of ethics precisely because they are not books of morality. What is the difference between ethics and morality? A morality functions according to principle, while an ethics functions according to experimentation. A morality presupposes a discontinuity between principle and action, while an ethics presupposes a continuity of action and character. A morality tells one what one *ought* to do, while an ethics asks what one *might* do.

In Spinoza’s *Ethics*, for example, Spinoza conceives of everything (modes) as existing on the same plane (substance). Given this, the question for Spinoza is, How do these modes interact with one another? What are there ways of affecting and being affected? The answer to this question lies in Part 3 of the *Ethics*, which is essentially a taxonomy of ways of affecting and being affected. For Spinoza there are two basic ways of being affected, pleasure and pain, and one way of affecting, desire (*conatus*). Desire, here, is not to be thought of as mere wanting, though. Spinoza’s desire does not arise out of a lack. Rather, desire should be thought of as entering into combinations with other modes such that our ability to affect and be affected is increased rather than diminished. Understood in this way, Spinoza’s ethical project consists in showing that entering into

some combinations increases one's ability (virtue, power, *potentia*), and that entering into other combinations decreases one's ability. Importantly, though, this identification of beneficial and harmful combinations does not result in a set of moral principles for Spinoza. Spinoza's analyses are couched in the conditional not the imperative. He does not say "You ought . . ." or "You ought not . . ." He says, "If you enter into these kinds of combinations, then you will flourish," and "If you enter into those kinds of combinations, you will not flourish." Even here, it's important to note that for Spinoza the kinds of combinations are very broad—those combinations that produce pleasure, pain, or desire. Spinoza fully recognizes that for different people, the same combination may have different results. Thus, I love chocolate and combining with it usually results in an increase in my ability. If you're allergic to chocolate, though, combining with it will result in a decrease in your ability. It's in relation to this complexity that Spinoza says, "No one knows what a body can do," not because he's skeptical about knowing bodies, but because he eschews moral principles that would determine what a body should do a priori, and because he thinks that determining what a body can do can only be the result of experimenting with the body.

Nietzsche's account of the eternal return in *The Gay Science* functions in a similar way. Nietzsche proposes a thought experiment in which a demon comes to you in your loneliest hour and tells you that you will have to live this exact same life over and over again forever. How would you treat such a message, as a blessing or as a curse? For Nietzsche whether you treat the message as a blessing or curse says a great deal about how you feel about life. Do you affirm life, say yes to life, or are you holding out in the hope for something better? Nietzsche's account of the eternal return is often fruitfully compared to Kant's categorical imperative. It's certainly true that formally both are thought experiments that allow one to think about whether an action is worth doing. The crucial difference, though, is that for Kant the categorical imperative generates a duty, an ought. It gives form to our action. It's precisely the point where noumenal causality intersects with phenomenal causality. Nietzsche's eternal return doesn't generate an ought, though. It generates two conditionals: If this thought crushes you, then you do not affirm life. If this thought is a blessing, then you do affirm life. There is no a priori principle adduced to give form to action. There is only affirming or denying the life one lives. This is an ethics, not a morality.

So, if *A Thousand Plateaus* is an ethics, it is an ethics in the same way that Spinoza's and Nietzsche's books are ethics. The ethical dimension becomes explicit in the sixth plateau, "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" But this raises the further question, What does the body without organs have to do with ethics? Deleuze and Guattari make this clear in the opening lines of the plateau, "[the body without organs] is an inevitable exercise or experimentation" (TP 149).<sup>2</sup> The connection between ethics and experimentation is clear enough, but what we really need to know is, What is a body without organs?

The term itself comes from the French playwright Antonin Artaud and follows from his desire to be done with the judgment of God. For Artaud the judgment of God is seen most clearly in the organism, which is "organ-ized," that is, a static concretion of discrete organs, each with a distinct function. Thus, for Artaud the organism is the emblem of the tendency toward stasis. In reaction to this Artaud imagines a body that is not an organism, that is, a body that escapes the judgment of God. Such a body would not be organ-ized, fixed. It would be capable of change. Artaud calls such a body, "the body without organs." The body without organs is thus crucial for Deleuze and Guattari's ethical project. If ethics is experimentation, then one must think a body that is actually capable of being experimented on, that is a body that can enter into new relations, new combinations. New relations and combinations, though, are exactly what the organism cannot enter into. All of its relations are preordained by the judgment of God. An organism cannot become, only a body can become. The problem of the body without organs is, then, really the problem of becoming. How does one think becoming? How does one create space for change? These are profoundly ethical questions for Deleuze and Guattari and in this plateau at least they think them through the body without organs.

Thinking about becoming, though, is notoriously difficult, particularly if you don't want to subordinate it to some kind of stasis. As we've seen throughout the previous plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari are trying to do precisely this. Rather than grafting a stable form onto an unruly and ontologically different change, they propose assemblages with tendencies toward both stasis and change that are thought hylozoically on an ontological continuum. In this plateau, the body without organs is the way that they think the tendency toward change. The discussion of a body without organs in *A Thousand Plateaus* differs from the account given in *Anti-Oedipus*, at least in scope. Both books refer to the body without organs as a limit,

but the limits that concern Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* are the limits of three large social formations that they call “savagery,” “barbarism,” and “capitalism.” In *A Thousand Plateaus* there is first and foremost a difference in scale. In addition to large social formations they speak of bodies without organs of the masochist, the addict, and the “full body without organs.” The second difference is the sense that in *Anti-Oedipus* the bodies without organs of large social formations superseded one another, that the body without organs of barbarism (i.e., the despot) replaced the body without organs of savagery (i.e., the earth). This isn’t an entirely accurate account of *Anti-Oedipus*, and the story becomes much more complicated with capitalism, but Deleuze and Guattari are much more explicit in *A Thousand Plateaus* that multiple bodies without organs coexist and overlap on multiple scales and even on the same scale. For example, we saw in “Several Regimes of Signs” that semiotics are always mixed, and that mixture is often of the signifying and post-signifying regimes. For Deleuze and Guattari, though, each regime would have a different body without organs.

These differences aside, the question of the body without organs remains unanswered. Even if we grant that it’s a way of talking about becoming, that doesn’t get us very far. Here we can turn to what *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* have in common. In both books the body without organs is described as a limit. A limit of what? In *Anti-Oedipus* the answer is straightforwardly the limit of desiring-production. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the answer is intensities (*Anti-Oedipus* also speaks in terms of intensities, but most often in terms of desiring-production). The body without organs is the zero degree of intensity. Now we have several terms related to the body without organs (becoming, limit, zero degree of intensity), but it’s not yet clear what their relation to one another is. Or, rather, the connection between limit and zero degree of intensity seems clear enough. Both seem to indicate the point at which something stops. But, this seems to be opposed to becoming, which has connotations of continuation rather than stopping. To begin with, the body without organs is a limit but it is a constructed limit. It is a limit toward which one tends, when one wants to change, create something new. The minute that one begins such an experiment, the body without organs is constituted.

The first example that Deleuze and Guattari give of this is the masochist body without organs. The masochist tells his mistress to bind him, sew him up, and then whip him and stick him with pins. It’s tempting to ask the question of meaning at this point.

Why would someone do that? What does it mean? For Deleuze and Guattari these are questions of interpretation, the kinds of questions that psychoanalysis excels in. For them, attempting to interpret the masochist misses the point. Interpretation will always reinscribe within a signifying regime. In this case the masochist will be reinscribed within the despotic Oedipal regime. Deleuze and Guattari propose instead, not to interpret, not to trace, but to map, to ask, What can the masochist body do? What kind of experiment is it? To answer these questions they turn to intensities. The masochist body seeks to bind itself in such a way that only intensities of pain can circulate on it.

The relevant distinction here is between the intensive and the extensive. Temperature, for example, is an intensity, while volume is an extensity. We can see this clearly if we imagine a cup of hot water. The water has both a volume and a temperature. If we pour out half of the water, the volume is reduced by half. That is, the extent of the volume is discrete and can be added to or subtracted from incrementally. Temperature, however, is a whole other matter. If we pour out half the water, the temperature is not reduced by half. It stays exactly the same. Temperature is intensive, continuous, indivisible. Pain is an intensity. The masochist seeks to have only pain circulate, but he cannot convert his body entirely to intensities. He fights against the way it's organ-ized, but he can only go so far. The limit that the masochist approaches (having only the intensity of pain circulate) but never reaches is the body without organs. Notice, though, that the body without organs is created by the masochist's experiment. It doesn't pre-exist the experiment, but it is generated simultaneously with the experiment as its limit.

At this point we can see the connection between the body without organs as a limit and as a becoming. Every experiment, every program, every becoming generates its own limit. At the threshold between the extensive and the intensive one finds the body without organs. "The [body without organs] is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and signifiences and subjectifications as a whole" (TP 151). "Signifienc" and "subjectification" point to the two dominant regimes of signs, the signifying and postsignifying. "Phantasy" is the psychoanalytic (signifying) interpretation of the masochist's scene, which itself presupposes desire predicated on a lack. The body without organs is thus a way of talking about what Deleuze and Guattari called "matter-function" in "Several Regimes of Signs." Stratification, as we've seen, requires a double articulation into

content and expression, but the body without organs allows them to think the de-stratified. De-stratification requires the undoing of content and expression. That is, content must be deterritorialized (substance) and decoded (form), and expression must be deterritorialized (substance) and decoded (form). What remains when you take everything away is the body without organs, the tendency toward change, becoming itself.

There are thus two phases to the body without organs, fabrication and circulation. The body without organs is created as a limit to a program. This limit allows for the circulation of some affects, some intensities, and blocks other intensities. Because intensities circulate on the body without organs, Deleuze and Guattari say that the body without organs is populated by multiplicities. Intensities suggest multiplicities, because extensities are bound up in discussions of the one and the many. As we saw in the "One or Several Wolves" plateau, Freud's refusal to think in terms of a pack prevented him from understanding the Wolf-Man. The pack is a multiplicity, a set of overlapping intensities spread across a smooth space, a desert, a body without organs. Freud wanted to organize the pack, make it extensive so that its many (six or seven wolves) could be reduced to one (the father). Crossing the threshold from the intensive to the extensive, though, never creates something new. It only repeats the same; it traces rather than maps.

At this point it is tempting to think about the body without organs as spatial, as a container of some sort. Even words like "limit" suggest a kind of spatiality. Deleuze and Guattari would remind us, though, that "space" is an extensive term. It is measurable and divisible. Since the body without organs is not extensive but intensive, it cannot be spatial in any typical sense of the term. At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari call the body without organs here a *spatium*. Deleuze used the term already in *Difference and Repetition*, and here he's even more explicit, often using the phrase "intensive *spatium*."<sup>3</sup> Even with this added qualification, though, the term remains confusing. The important thing to bear in mind is that the body without organs is not a container. "It is not space, nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree—to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced" (TP 153). What Deleuze and Guattari have in mind becomes clearer if we return to the example of the masochist and then turn to the example of the egg. No doubt, the masochist's body is the site where these intensities circulate, but the masochist is not concerned about his body as an extended object. His entire program is an attempt to overcome

this extension and simply feel the waves of pain cascading over him. By the same token, the egg prior to its development into a bird is nothing but intensive protein gradients, matter occupying space to a given degree of intensity. Eventually, the set of pure, intensive differences that make up the egg will cross a threshold and become extensive differences unified as an organism. Prior to crossing that threshold, though, there only intensive degrees. "That is why we treat the [body without organs] as the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs, before the formation of the strata . . ." (TP 153). In neither the case of the masochist nor that of the egg does the amount of space taken up by the body matter. This is why the Dogon egg is pictured at the beginning of this plateau. According to Dogon myth the whole universe is an egg, an intensive *spatium*.

The discussion of intensity and the body without organs brings us back to Spinoza. Deleuze and Guattari ask, "After all is not Spinoza's *Ethics* the great book of the [body without organs]?" (TP 153). They go on to clarify, "The attributes are types or genuses of [bodies without organs], substances, powers, zero intensities as matrices of production" (TP 153). Initially, it seems odd that Deleuze and Guattari focus on attributes in Spinoza's ontology. Spinoza has three basic categories in his ontology, substance, mode, and attribute. "Substance" is Spinoza's way of talking about the whole, the totality, the universe. "Mode" is any finite part of the whole. Modes interact with one another, form into compositions, and decompose. "Attributes" are neither whole nor part. In fact, they are not things at all, which is precisely why Spinoza has this third category. Spinoza writes, "By attribute I mean that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence."<sup>4</sup> Attributes concern the ways in which substance is perceived. I think Deleuze and Guattari take up Spinoza's conception of attributes precisely because of the way they differ from substance and mode. Recall that beginning from the "Rhizome" plateau Deleuze and Guattari have characterized their project as a "perceptual semiotics," thus making *A Thousand Plateaus* an answer to the question, How can we see things so that creating something new is possible? The answer that they give in this plateau is ensuring that any analysis of an assemblage also includes an analysis of the bodies without organs that are created at the same time as the assemblage. "For each type of [body without organs] we must ask: (1) What type is it, how is it fabricated, by what procedures and means (predetermining what will come to pass)? (2) What are its modes, what comes to pass, and with what variants



and what surprises, what is unexpected what expected?" (TP 152). For Spinoza humans can only perceive two types of attributes, thought and extension. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, imagine an infinite profusion of attributes with more being constantly created as new assemblages compose themselves. As a result, the types of bodies without organs are not predetermined but in constant flux.

Deleuze and Guattari, however, do not stop with attributes in drawing parallels with Spinoza. As the second question above shows, they are also concerned with modes. If attributes correspond with types of bodies without organs, then the "modes are everything that comes to pass: waves and vibrations, migrations, thresholds and gradients, intensities produced in a given type of substance starting from a given matrix" (TP 153). The intensities that circulate on the body without organs align with modes in Spinoza's ontology. Perhaps, if we look a little more closely at Spinoza's claims, the relation will be clearer here. As we've seen, the relation between attributes and modes is not a relation between things but a relation between things (modes) and a way of looking at things (attributes). This is why Spinoza continually returns to the locution "thought under the attribute of . . ." Take the act of stubbing your toe, for example. For Spinoza, that event could be thought under two attributes, thought or extension. Thinking it under the attribute of extension would mean telling a story about the causal interrelation of modes in purely physical terms. A damaged toe causes nerve fibers to signal the brain. In the brain C-fibers fire, generating the release of adrenaline and endorphins, and causing blood to flow to the damaged area to protect it from further damage and begin the healing process. At the same time, we could think the same event under the attribute of thought. This account would involve the concatenation of ideas. The idea of stubbing your toe causes the idea of pain, which causes the idea of you jumping up and down and swearing. Notice that the two accounts are completely separate. There are no causal relations between attributes for Spinoza. Notice also that there aren't two events. There are two accounts of a single event. For Spinoza dualism is the result of mistaking the two accounts for two different things, as Descartes does with mind and body. Now let's take this idea and apply it to Deleuze and Guattari's claims here. If there are different types of bodies without organs, then these are different ways of thinking/perceiving/grouping intensities. While the masochist seeks a single body without organs on which only intensities of pain can circulate, he also creates other

bodies without organs in the process. What about the relation between the masochist and his mistress? What intensities circulate there? Trust? Love? Hate? Pity? Joy? Each of these could be a type of a body without organs, an attribute under which we might think the becoming that's going on here. Or, the body without organs might be a mixture of several of these. A body without organs may be a complex array of intensities. In each case there would be an important similarity and an important difference. The important similarity is that what is grouped/perceived is always intensities. The important difference is that different bodies without organs have different sets of intensities.

The final parallel with Spinoza's ontology that needs to be explored is between the body without organs and substance. As we've seen, "substance" is the term that Spinoza uses to speak of totality, that beyond which there is nothing. Deleuze and Guattari pose the question this way, "The problem of whether there is a substance of all substances, a single substance for all attributes, becomes: *Is there a totality of all [bodies without organs]?* If the [body without organs] is already a limit, what must we say of the totality of all [bodies without organs]?" (TP 154, emphasis in original). Here again Deleuze and Guattari run into the danger posed by the dialectic of the one and the many. Is there a single, unitary body without organs that can corral all of these smaller bodies without organs? Ultimately, this way of posing the question presupposes an answer of discontinuity, in this case between the one and the many. How might this question be answered without presupposing ontological discontinuity? So far, the typical answer has been in terms of multiplicity. Here it is no different, "A formal multiplicity of substantial attributes that, as such, constitutes the ontological unity of substance" (TP 154). The unity is ontological rather than substantial. Deleuze and Guattari are not claiming that there is a single substance of which all bodies without organs are expressions. Rather, they are claiming that the unity consists solely in the fact that all bodies without organs exist in the same way. This ontological unity is the corollary to the continuity thesis, which is otherwise called the univocity of being. Deleuze and Guattari expand on this connection as follows:

There is a continuum of all of the attributes or genres of intensity under a single substance, and a continuum of the intensities of a certain genus under a single type or attribute. A continuum of all substances in intensity of all intensities in substance. The uninterrupted continuum of the [body without organs]. [Body without organs], immanence, immanent limit. (TP 154)

What all bodies without organs have in common is intensity. Intensities can only form a continuum, unlike extensities, which can only form discrete points. If one's ontology begins with discrete objects, then one is very likely to end up with a discontinuous ontology and privilege stasis over change. If, on the other hand, one begins with intensities, the ontology flattens, becomes continuous. Here the new is possible. Here creation is possible. Here becoming is not subordinated to being.

If we continue to press the parallels between this plateau and Spinoza's ontology, we will find ourselves back at ethics. What connects ontology and ethics in Spinoza, and Spinoza and the body without organs, is desire. As we saw above, desire in Spinoza is a way of thinking about how things strive to maintain their ratio of motion and rest. Nietzsche criticized Spinoza on this point, claiming that it was fundamentally conservative. Mere self-preservation, according to Nietzsche, is the sign of life under siege not a sign of robust health. What Nietzsche misses, though, is the degree to which striving requires not a siege mentality but experimentation. There is no withdrawal from the world for Spinoza. One must enter into combinations with the world. The ethical question, then, is not whether to withdraw from the world and refuse to enter into combinations, but which combinations to enter into. No doubt some of these combinations will be conservative and tend toward stasis, but ultimately for Spinoza the more we increase the number of combinations we're capable of, the better off we are. Deleuze and Guattari's primary concern in this plateau is thinking through the ways that we might increase the number of combinations we're capable of. For them, this project runs through the body without organs. "The [body without organs] is the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)" (TP 154, emphasis in original). Several things are worth noting in this dense quote. First, the body without organs is a way of talking about desire. Second, desire here is defined as productive, rather than predicated on a lack. Deleuze and Guattari pursue this notion of desire at length in *Anti-Oedipus*, but for our purposes here we can say that desire is productive because it continually makes connections, enters into combinations. This idea did not become clear to me until I had children. I had always assumed that desire was predicated on a lack, that the reason I wanted something was because I didn't have it. Watching my children play, however, showed me

that this was not the case. A child with a toy in each hand, who suddenly drops one in order to pick up a new toy, didn't "lack" the new toy. The child is simply interested in making new connections, and making a new connection requires breaking other connections. This is how desire works in Spinoza, and how it works in Deleuze and Guattari. Desire is fundamentally productive.<sup>5</sup> Finally, notice that Deleuze and Guattari connect several key terms here: "body without organs," "desire," and "plane of consistency." We will have cause to return to all of these terms in later plateaus. Suffice it for now to say that these three terms are connected because they are all ways of talking about the tendency toward change, becoming.

The question of ethics, then, is the question of desire, which Deleuze and Guattari argue is the question of making a body without organs. Making a body without organs, though, is not without its perils. Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly warn that caution must always be used when creating a body without organs. Why? Because, it's possible to botch it. There are two ways to botch the body without organs. The first way is to produce of type of body without organs that Deleuze and Guattari call "cancerous." A cancerous body without organs is one that proliferates stratifications. Here we can imagine an organization that continuously spawns new layers of management that increasingly micro-manage every situation. Or, on a smaller scale we can imagine a person constantly generating new rules to live by, rules of conduct, driving, diet, that stratify life to an ever-greater degree. The danger here is that we give the fascist inside of us the power to increasingly organ-ize our lives. The other way to botch the body without organs is to produce what Deleuze and Guattari call the empty body without organs. This is the suicidal body without organs that destratifies all the strata at once. In this case nothing is preserved. The body isn't merely opened to new combinations; it simply dissolves. The result, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, is usually an even more pernicious restratification that swings back toward a fascist and cancerous body without organs. Here we can think of the rise of the security state that becomes increasingly totalitarian as it responds to and attempts to ward off terrorist attacks both real and imagined.

The ethical dimension of this plateau thus lies in distinguishing the harmful bodies without organs from the salutary bodies without organs. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the salutary body without organs as the full body without organs. The full body without organs is the one that allows the maximum number of combinations to be pursued, the maximum becoming without collapse. This is not easy.

It cannot be determined a priori. Neither can it be determined by accident. It requires, in short, a program. Deleuze and Guattari lay out the bare outlines of such a program:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. (TP 161)

Deleuze and Guattari continually call for caution as a necessary component to their experimentalism. Ethics is about experimentation, to be sure, but experimentation is dangerous. Experiment with care. Make yourself a body without organs, but make yourself a full body without organs, not a cancerous or empty one.

#### NOTES

1. Foucault, "Preface," *Anti-Oedipus*, xiii.
2. For the sake of clarity, I've replaced Deleuze and Guattari's abbreviation "BwO" with the full term "bodies without organs."
3. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 233–41.
4. Spinoza, *Ethics*, ID4.
5. This is not to say that desire is never predicated on a lack. One of the tasks of both volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is to uncover where and why desire becomes so constrained as to be predicated on a lack. The problem of constraining desire is the problem of the priest, in whatever guise the priest might take, from religious to psychotherapeutic. On this point Deleuze and Guattari follow and expand on Nietzsche.

## *Year Zero: Faciality*

The beginning of this plateau returns us to some of the terms from previous plateaus, in particular “Several Regimes of Signs.” As we saw, one of the insights of that plateau is that while Deleuze and Guattari select four regimes of signs to discuss—presignifying, signifying, postsignifying, and countersignifying—most of their efforts are focused on the signifying and postsignifying regimes. The signifying regime is concerned with the circulation and interpretation of signs. Furthermore, it is organized in concentric circles around a despot through whom all meaning flows. The postsignifying regime is organized on a deterritorialized line of flight away from the face of the despot. This regime subjectifies; that is, creates subjects. Deleuze and Guattari also note that the distinction among the regimes is something that can only be done in principle. In practice regimes are always mixed. The reason, then, that they spend so much time discussing the signifying and postsignifying regimes is that their mixture predominates. The “Faciality” plateau explores this mixture in much greater depth. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari propose that the face is precisely what arises at the intersection of these two regimes. This account of the face also allows them to discuss intersections of religion, racism, and capitalism.

How do two regimes of signs produce a face? Weren't there always faces? Aren't faces independent of regimes of signs? Deleuze and Guattari confront a lot of difficult questions at the outset of this chapter, precisely because they propose that what we take as an accretion of the biological stratum (i.e., something “natural”) is in fact related to signs. Let's follow their opening reasoning. “Significance is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes

its signs and redundancies" (TP 167). "Significance" here refers to the despotic, signifying regime, and so the claim is that the signifying regime requires a white wall to write its signs on. We can take this claim literally. The kingdom is organized around the despot whose image is displayed everywhere. It is carved onto walls and minted onto coins. When the pharaoh dies his image is obliterated from the walls so that the image of the new pharaoh can take its place. A signifying regime needs a white wall. Deleuze and Guattari continue, "subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion, and redundancies" (TP 167). "Subjectification" refers to the passionate, postsignifying regime. In our previous discussion of this regime we noted that while it pursues a deterritorialized line of flight, it repudiates the positivity of this line by segmenting it. "Thus subjectification imposes on the line of flight a segmentarity that is forever repudiating that line, and upon absolute deterritorialization a point of abolition that is forever blocking that deterritorialization or diverting it" (TP 134). These points of segmentation are what Deleuze and Guattari are calling here "black holes." They call them black holes because the segmentation of the line of flight finitizes it, creates a series of endpoints toward which it tends. Since all of the black holes on a line flight portend the same thing (namely, death), they resonate with one another. Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this with Tristan and Isolde, who form a subjectivity as they call for one another in their undying but doomed love. This doom resonates musically throughout Wagner's opera. We can see the same thing happening in more mundane circumstances. A couple in a relationship creates a line of flight, becomes a subject. They know that the relationship cannot last forever. They are self-conscious of their subjective finitude. When the relationship ends and a new one begins, the new relationship will also be finite and its end will resonate with the previous end. Comparisons between the relationships will be made. Signs of discontent will be looked for until they are fulfilled in the dissolution of the relationship. These points of dissolution are the black holes toward which all subjectivities tend.

For Deleuze and Guattari, when these two regimes of signs mix together the result is a white wall/black hole system that they call a "face." The face is generated by an abstract machine they call "faciality." The abstract machine of faciality (as with any abstract machine) organizes the components of both the signifying and postsignifying regimes. There are two aspects to the way this abstract machine organizes: normality and deviance. The abstract

machine of faciality normalizes through exclusive disjunctions. That is, it establishes arborescent, biunivocal relations. This face is a man or a woman. This face is an adult or a child, rich or poor, leader or subject, military or civilian, etc. The abstract machine of faciality establishes the discrete units according to which any given face may be categorized. These are not so much actual, concrete faces, as they are "facial units" that one occupies at any given time. Furthermore, often these facial units are linked together as dyads in what Deleuze and Guattari call a "four-eye machine." In a classroom assemblage, for example, all of the faces are immediately divided into and constituted as teacher and student. When class is over, though, the same people will go on to occupy other faces: coach-athlete, boyfriend-girlfriend, clerk-customer, etc. "You don't so much have a face as slide into one" (TP 177). That is, the abstract machine of faciality generates a grid of facial units that constitute normality and that one occupies to a certain degree.

That one occupies a given facial unit to a certain degree brings us to the second aspect of the abstract machine of faciality, deviance. In addition to creating facial units that constitute concrete faces, this abstract machine also determines whether the face fits the category or not. There is an initial binary determination of the concrete face, a "yes" or "no." Beyond that, however, "it is necessary to produce successive divergence-types of deviance for everything that eludes biunivocal relationships, and to establish binary relations between what is accepted on first choice and what is only tolerated on second, third choice, etc." (TP 177). The primary illustration that Deleuze and Guattari give of this aspect is racism. They argue that racism is not a simple binarism but functions according to degrees. Once it is determined that a given face does not match one of the established facial units, the degree of deviance from that facial unit is determined. Within these degrees of deviance reactions move from tolerance to hostility as deviance increases.

From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be. The dividing line is not between inside and outside but rather is internal to simultaneous signifying chains and successive subjective choices. Racism never detects the particles of the other; it propagates waves of sameness until those who resist identification have been wiped out (or those who only allow themselves to be identified at a given degree of divergence). Its cruelty is equaled only by its incompetence and naiveté. (TP 178)



The white wall/black hole machine of faciality not only constitutes the face but also organizes other faces in relation to a standard. This standard doesn't divide a regime of signs into inside and outside. Rather, the dividing line is internal to the regime itself. The regime is normalizing as a product of its tendency toward stasis. It extends itself not by consciously identifying the other as other but by consciously (and unconsciously) reaffirming the norm. Deleuze and Guattari's reasoning here might be marshaled to provide an account of the pervasiveness of racism. Psychological studies that test for racial bias, such as those being pursued by Project Implicit, show among other things that racism is implicit, that there are degrees of racism, and perhaps most importantly for Deleuze and Guattari's claims, that people can have implicit racial bias against their own race.<sup>1</sup> This possibility suggests that racism isn't merely self-serving, or a simple division between us and them. It is an insidious problem that is organized around a standard.

What is that standard, though? Deleuze and Guattari don't pull any punches here and say flatly, "The face is Christ" (TP 176). The particular combination of the signifying and postsignifying regimes that resulted from the mixture of the despotic Roman Empire with certain passional elements of Judaism that broke away to form the suffering Messiah narrative of Christianity is a white wall/black hole system organized around the face of Christ. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit about what they mean here: "[the face] is not even that of the white man; it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes . . . The face is the typical European . . ." (TP 176). This gives new meaning to the Christian trope that upon his return Christ will sit in judgment of all the nations. According to Deleuze and Guattari, that judgment has been happening alongside the spread of Christianity itself. It happened through colonialism (often under the guise of conversion). It continues to happen in the prevalence of both explicit and implicit racism. It happened in the justifications given for slavery in America. It continues to this day in the treatment of US President Barack Obama. It also happens in sexism and all determinations of heteronormativity. It happens in the disenfranchisement of the poor. All of these constitute the judgment (that is, the organization) by a particular face constituted by a specific white wall/black hole system that lays out a matrix of facial units and determines degrees of deviance from the standard.

Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the face thus suggests several points of differentiation from other thinkers. The first and most

obvious example is Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95), a phenomenologist who wrote extensively about the face and the relation generated by it as the foundational ethical relation and “the original site of the sensible.”<sup>2</sup> For Levinas the appearance of the face is the appearance of “the other” as such. This alterity interrupts the selfsame satisfaction of the appropriating, intentional consciousness described by Husserlian phenomenology. The face is thus wholly other and precedes and dwarfs all attempts to convert it to an object of consciousness. The face points to a universal and transcendental structure of human existence for Levinas, and it is here that we can see the degree to which Deleuze and Guattari differentiate themselves. First, for them the face is not universal. The abstract machine of faciality could produce a different white wall/black hole combination given a different set of historical circumstances. The face of Christ, the White Man, however, is the result of a very particular set of contingent forces. It would be a mistake to confuse the widespread generality of the White Man as a standard with a universal. As we’ll see below, the face-to-face relation doesn’t inaugurate history as it does in Levinas, the face is a historically dateable concrete machinic assemblage. This in no way lessens its impact, as the concomitant history of racism, sexism, and colonialism indicates. Second, the face is not the trace of the other for Deleuze and Guattari as it is for Levinas. As we’ve seen, not only does the deviance-detection aspect of the abstract machine of faciality preclude a binary opposition between the same and other, but the face is that which unthinkingly obliterates otherness by transforming into degrees of tolerance.

Deleuze and Guattari are explicit, though, that it is not the face as such that drives their analysis but the face of Christ, the White Man. This brings us to Hegel, who was very concerned with the meaning of Christianity and its role in the development of thought. For Hegel the history of thought, the actualization of reason, required Christianity, because Christianity is determinate negation become concrete. The story of the incarnation, death, and resurrection, in short Trinitarian theology itself, is the way that the thought of negation (first seen in Heraclitus) becomes real in history, becomes not only thinkable but a principle of action for everyone, not just philosophers. The only difference between Christianity and philosophy for Hegel is that Christianity thinks the relation between the universal and the particular through representations (*Vorstellungen*), such as Father, Son, and Spirit, while philosophy understands this relation conceptually.

Deleuze and Guattari are also interested in the role that Christianity has played in history, but they address it in a very different way. As we saw, there is no necessity to Christianity for Deleuze and Guattari; it arises contingently, but this does not prevent it from having wide-ranging effects. Also, the impact of Christianity is not conceptual (or even representational) for Deleuze and Guattari. The impact of Christianity lies in the regime of signs constituted by this particular white wall/black hole assemblage. "It is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the ciphering [*chiffrage*] it makes possible, and in what cases it makes it possible" (TP 175). As with any assemblage, some connections are made possible by the relation of its parts; others are made impossible. Pragmatics is not dialectics. Deleuze and Guattari are not only interested in the conditions that gave rise to an assemblage, but also in the conditions under which it might become something else. Hegel is only interested in the degree to which Christianity contributes to the teleology of reason. Anything that doesn't contribute to the fulfillment of reason is relegated to the backwaters and dead ends of thought. We can see the difference between Hegel and Deleuze and Guattari on this point clearly if we look at Hegel's brief description of the progress of freedom. In his introduction to *The Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, called "Reason in History," Hegel distinguishes three ages in the development of freedom. Under oriental despotism only one is free, the emperor. In Greece and Rome, some are free, the citizens. In Christianity, all, in principle, are free. For Hegel then, the trajectory of history is one of converting the "in principle" to "in actuality." This conversion happens objectively in the work of the state, subjectively in the movement from "natural" to "spiritual," and absolutely in the work of art, religion, and philosophy. For Deleuze and Guattari these different stages do not form a teleology. In fact, they are governed by completely different regimes of signs. Ancient state formations are dominated by a despotic regime of signs, and in the case of the Chinese state-form there is often a mixture of the countersignifying regime of the nomadic war machine. Greece does not organize the state despotically but agonistically. This competitive dimension turns Greece into a marketplace of ideas on the frontier of the ancient Asian regimes. Both their geographic location on the edge of an empire and their agonism might be construed as an increase of freedom, but the freedom is not merely one of thought. The "in principle" freedom that Hegel sees in Christianity is nothing other than the normativity created by the face of Christ. Salvation is judgment.

At this point, it may seem as if Deleuze and Guattari are simply re-describing what Marx would call "ideology." Ideology has two functions in Marx. On the one hand, in classical Marxism an ideology is the set of principles by which the status quo is both explained and justified. For example, the ideology that explains and justifies industrial capitalism is a set of interlocking ideas predicated on the inviolable nature of private property. On the other hand, ideology also obscures what's really going on, namely the struggle between classes to control the means of production. That is, capitalist ideology obscures the material conditions that make it possible and at the same time prevents workers from seeing that they have more in common with each other in class struggle than they do with their nation, which only protects the interests of the ruling class.

Marx's notion of ideology has spread far beyond its use in political economy. It forms the core of what is broadly known as critical theory. Critical theory applies the critique of ideology not only to class, but also to race and gender. That is, there are explanations that also justify racism and sexism, and, at the same time, obscure the forces that bring these inequalities about. Critical theory differs from classical Marxism in that in critical theory these forces need not be material forces. Judith Butler, for example, argues that they are primarily discursive.

Deleuze and Guattari want to account for the same phenomenon as Marx and the critical theorists, How are notions of race, class, and gender explained and justified, and what do they obscure? Where they differ, though, is that they do not resort to ideology and its concomitant split between structure and superstructure. They write, "It is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the coding [*chiffrage*] it makes possible and in what cases it makes it possible. This is not an affair of ideology but of the economy and organization of power (*pouvoir*). We are certainly not saying that the face, the power of the face (*la puissance du visage*), engenders and explains social power (*pouvoir*). *Certain assemblages of power (pouvoir) require the production of the face, others do not*" (TP 175, translation altered). The face codes. That is, the face provides formal structure to the content and expression of some strata, some regimes of signs. The formal structure that Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here is the white wall/black hole system. Intensities are converted into extensities by this system. The face overcodes, that is, translates the other strata, particularly the biological strata, and gives them new form. The face, though, is not an ideology. It is

a particular (but not sole) way of organizing intensities. It does this first of all by converting them to extensities, and second, by blocking some combinations and allowing others.

We can summarize Deleuze and Guattari's point this way: they agree with Levinas that the face is a largely overlooked component of our experience; they agree with Hegel that things changed fundamentally in the West with the spread of Christianity; and they agree with Marx that certain historical conditions make some combinations possible and others impossible. They encapsulate these agreements in the face of Christ, which at the same time points to their disagreements. The face of Christ is a crucial component to the assemblage known as Western society. The assemblage is very complex so the face of Christ does not explain every aspect of it. It is a necessary but not sufficient condition. What it does explain, though, are aspects of Western society that particularly interest critical theorists, namely, race, class, and gender. But, Deleuze and Guattari do not characterize these aspects as ideological. Rather, they are the function of the abstract machine of faciality, which both normalizes and at the same time accounts for degrees of deviance from the norm.

Now that we've seen the way that faciality can function as political critique, let's take a look at faciality in general in order to see how it might function in other assemblages that do not have the face of Christ as a dominant component. Insofar as the white wall/black hole machine is already a mixture of two regimes of signs, this mixture will consist of a ratio of white wall to black hole. This ratio will thus have two poles. One pole at which the white wall dominates and the black holes are arrayed on it, and another at which the white wall is reduced to a line that tends toward its limit in a black hole. The pole in which the white wall dominates Deleuze and Guattari call "despotic" and "terrestrial." Faces at this end of the pole face directly outward as in a Byzantine icon. The pole in which the black hole dominates they call "authoritarian" and "maritime." At this end of the spectrum faces are seen in profile rather than straight on. Both these tendencies are already anticipated in their discussion of the face of the despot and the turned faces of betrayal in "Several Regimes of Signs."

Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the whole spectrum of faciality (and its escape) by recounting the story of Swann and Odette's relationship in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. First, Swann begins to organize everything around Odette's face. Odette's face becomes the despotic signifier, which everything refers to, and which gives

meaning to everything else. Swann sets up a system of signifiacance that requires a network of infinite interpretations. The borders around Odette's face continue to expand and absorb everything in Swann's world. Here we are nearest the despotic pole of faciality. Swann's jealousy, however, moves the whole assemblage toward the authoritarian end. Here Swann turns away from Odette in order to discover what she's hiding from him. Why is he forbidden to see her on certain days? What really happened in Marseille? Swann's jealousy ultimately and humorously finds him lurking outside the wrong apartment and knocking on a stranger's window. Now all the signifiers generated in the first stage of the relationship are recast. Music (the little phrase from Vinteuil) no longer signifies but only serves to produce melancholy. Everything now hurtles toward the black hole that marks the end of the relationship. In the final stage when Swann realizes that he no longer loves Odette, he's free to follow Vinteuil's little phrase wherever it leads him. His trajectory is no longer swallowed by the black hole of subjectification. It is an asignifying, asubjective line of flight.

In order to clarify what they mean by escaping from faciality it is important to distinguish between a head and a face. A head is part of a body, but a face overcodes a body and organizes meaning and subjectivity. A head does not require interpretation, but a face does. That is, a face immediately involves one in a system of signification. My students quickly learn, for example, that when I furrow my eyebrows it means that I'm skeptical of what they're saying. Several interesting things may happen at this point. The student may stop talking and await further instruction. Or, perhaps even more interestingly, the student may be oblivious to my face and continue talking. At this point other students who can see my face interrupt the student in an effort to interpret my face on the student's behalf. "No, that's not right. I think what Professor Adkins would say is . . ." Deleuze and Guattari's point is that only the intersection of the signifying and postsignifying regimes creates a face. Other regimes or combinations of them do not create faces. Even those non-hierarchical, presignifying regimes that use masks for ritual purposes do not produce a face. "Even masks ensure the head's belonging to the body, rather than making it a face" (TP 176). The face is not part of the body but an overcoding of the body. The intersecting intensities of power that produce a hunter's body in a presignifying regime do not require interpretation or produce a subject. Rather, they produce a temporary combination of affects that exist in a specific relation to the group affect at a certain time.

These affects are channeled by rituals by which the hunter's body connects the group's body to the body of the hunted.

At this point the Marxists and critical theorists might well be asking, "What is to be done?" If faciality is the source of racism, sexism, and classism, what is the solution? For Marx the issue would resolve itself in the coming revolution. Others who followed in his footsteps argued about the degree to which those who saw through capitalist ideology would need to foment revolution. Current critical theorists are more concerned with consciousness-raising than a violent takeover of the means of production. It's tempting to think that Deleuze and Guattari might be advocating a return to a pre-signifying regime of signs. After all, if the problem lies with faciality, then surely a return to a regime of signs that did not produce faces would solve the problem. This temptation to return is one that plagues any thinker interested in what Nietzsche would call a "philosophy of the future." The reason for this is that philosophies of the future look both forward and back. In Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, for example, he argues that the shift from master morality to slave morality is indicative of a weakening of humanity. The casual reader might then suppose that Nietzsche is arguing for a return to the master morality. If things were better before the slave revolt in morality, shouldn't we go back? While Nietzsche finds much to admire in the master morality when compared to the slave morality, there can be no question of going back. We've changed ourselves in fundamental ways and can never be those kinds of people again. Our only hope thus lies in the future, in the overcoming of the slave morality. Deleuze and Guattari's attitude toward past regimes of signs is similar. We cannot return. We've changed ourselves too much. They would also make the further point that any regime of signs stifles creativity, tends toward stasis. It's just that the pre-signifying regime does it without the face. As a result, the pre-signifying regime has different points of blockage compared to the mixed semiotic of the white wall/black hole system. Comparing the two systems highlights these differences, but we shouldn't conclude that one set of blockages is preferable to another. Deleuze and Guattari say it this way:

if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine, not by returning to animality, nor even by returning to the head, but by quite spiritual and special becomings-animal, by strange true becomings that get past the wall and get out of the black hole, that make faciality traits themselves finally elude the organization of

the face . . . Yes, the face has a great future, but only if it is destroyed, dismantled. On the road to the asignifying and asubjective. (TP 171)

Even if we grant, though, that they are not advocating a return to a presignifying regime, they seem to run into the same problem as Nietzsche with regard to the future. Nietzsche has hope for the future, a hope predicated on the overcoming of the present order, but he says very little about what that future might look like. Whereas Nietzsche speaks cryptically of the "overman," "the sovereign individual," "the right to make promises," and going "beyond good and evil," Deleuze and Guattari speak of becoming-imperceptible, not returning to animality but becoming-animal, destroying the face, and being on the road to the asignifying and asubjective. We've already encountered many of the phrases. What they all have in common is that they are ways of talking about lines of flight or the creation of the new. In this respect their reply would be similar to Nietzsche. They can only talk about the new in a formal way. They can only talk about the conditions under which the new might arise. Furthermore, as they've said repeatedly, meeting these conditions doesn't guarantee the creation of the new. There is always the danger that a line of flight will be reappropriated by the stratum from which it seeks to escape or obliterate itself in a suicidal collapse.

So, if we cannot turn the face back into a head, where do we go from here? Deleuze and Guattari's answer involves what they call "probe-heads." Probe-heads

dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of significance, pour out the holes of subjectivity, fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes, and steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight . . . Thus opens a rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible, as opposed to arborescent possibility, which marks a closure, an impotence. (TP 190)

If we return to our discussion of Proust above we can see this happening for Swann. Both signifi-ance and subjectivity break up for him when he realizes that he no longer loves Odette. All of the traits first organized in relation to Odette's face and then in relation to Swann's jealousy lose their coherence, de-stratify. This allows Swann to follow any one of these traits on a line of flight. Vinteuil's little phrase no longer orbits around Odette's face or is no longer a sign of her betrayal. It no longer circulates as a sign in Odette's social circle. Swann can follow it wherever it goes. Or, to take another example from Proust, the orchids (cattleyas) that Odette wears as



a corsage become a sign for intimacy between Swann and Odette, and “to do a cattleya” (*faire cattleya*) is “to make love.” As Swann’s jealousy escalates Odette increasingly refuses to do a cattleya. Once Swann and Odette fall out of love this trait becomes detached from a system of faciality and could become a line of flight, a probe-head.

Given regimes of signs, in what ways do they form knots of arborescence, and how might we discover their lines of flight? This is the question that Deleuze and Guattari pose in this plateau. Signifying and postsignifying regimes combine to form a white wall/black hole system that functions as an abstract machine of faciality. The face that this abstract machine articulates is the face of Christ. This articulation is completely contingent and singular, but at the same time it has achieved a generality that allows it to normalize and determine the degrees of deviance of other faces. This is the hegemony of the White Man, not as ideology but as a concrete assemblage that provides a new account of racism, sexism, and classism. To discover the lines of flight already at work in this assemblage is to see the ways in which the traits of faciality can be deterritorialized from the white wall of signifi-ance and the black hole of subjectification. As we have seen, this deterritorialization cannot come about solely through critique. It requires a program. It requires experimentation; the results of which cannot be known beforehand.

## NOTES

1. Project Implicit is a research program based out of Harvard University that researches “social cognition” and investigates “the gap between intentions and actions.” The program pursues a wide range of topics, not just racism, and collects an enormous amount of data through online testing. The project’s main page is here: <http://www.project-implicit.net/index.html>, and the online tests for implicit bias can be found here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo>.
2. Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” in *The Levinas Reader*.

1874:

*Three Novellas, or “What Happened?”*

Deleuze and Guattari begin this plateau by distinguishing between two tendencies in fiction writing, the novella and the tale. For them the distinction is not a function of length or even style. They do not think, for example, that the novella is simply a short novel. Rather, they argue that novellas and tales are distinguished by the question that each is organized around. The novella is organized around the question, “What happened?” The tale, by contrast, is organized around the question, “What is going to happen?” Other forms of fiction, such as the novel, hybridize these two tendencies “into the variation of its perpetual living present (*duration*)” (TP 192). The initial impression that Deleuze and Guattari give here is that they will organize fictional writing around notions of temporality. Novellas will relate to the past. Tales will relate to the future, while novels relate to the present. They quickly disabuse us of this notion, though, saying, “it would be an error to reduce these different aspects to the three dimensions of time” (TP 192). A little later they say, “Let us not dwell too much on the dimension of time . . .” (TP 193). If this plateau isn’t about time, what is it about? Deleuze’s earlier work, particularly *The Logic of Sense*, might lead us to believe that it’s about the event (Aion) in distinction from time (Chronos). There’s no doubt that this previous analysis is informing this plateau. However, Deleuze and Guattari do not import the vocabulary of *The Logic of Sense* here. In keeping with their project to create something new, they create a new vocabulary to explore this topic, a vocabulary of “lines.” “For we are made of lines. We are not only referring to lines of writing. Lines of writing conjugate with other lines, life lines, lines of luck or misfortune, lines productive of

the variation of the line of writing itself, lines that are between the lines of writing" (TP 194). Assemblages are temporary selections of a whole host of intersecting and diverging lines. As assemblages combine with one another these intersecting and diverging lines generate some new lines, as well as blocking other lines. These lines are continuous lines of intensity that compose and organize themselves on a body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari "would like to demonstrate that the novella is defined by living *lines*, flesh lines, about which it brings a special revelation" (TP 194–5). Another way we might state their thesis is to say that a novella is the kind of assemblage that reveals rather than conceals its lineal character.

The line, of course, has a long history in philosophy, especially as a representation of time. It figures prominently in Aristotle's definition of time as "the measure of motion,"<sup>1</sup> as it does in Nietzsche's discussion of the Eternal Return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>2</sup> Here Nietzsche poses a dialogue between Zarathustra and a dwarf. The dwarf argues that time is circular, whereas Zarathustra disputes this arguing that it is a path extending infinitely into the past and infinitely into the future and that the sign above its gate reads "Moment." Despite their wide-ranging differences Nietzsche and Aristotle both agree that time must be thought through the image of the line (which is not the same thing as saying that time is linear). In contrast to this, what Deleuze and Guattari want to do is think the line in a way that is decoupled from the thought of temporality. One way in which they do this is through mathematics. In our discussion of "Rhizome" we saw the distinction between point and line put to use. This distinction is another way of thinking about the continuous and the discontinuous. Deleuze and Guattari want to think the continuous without predicating it on a series of discrete points. The line thus becomes an image of the continuous in opposition to the discontinuous. We've also seen throughout our discussions that these oppositions are not ontological dualisms but the result of a "perceptual semiotics." The task is not to divide the world into two kinds of things, point-things and line-things. The task is to see the world as lines, because it's when we see the world as lines that we can create something new. Deleuze and Guattari continually warn us, though, that seeing things as lines does not guarantee that we will create something new. It certainly doesn't guarantee that if we do create something new that it will be safe. We can create suicide machines just as easily as we can create joyful machines.

We have already discussed one type of line, the line of flight. The line of flight is that which escapes signification and subjectification. It

escapes stratification. It escapes territory and coding. It is the cutting edge of deterritorialization. In this plateau Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of three novellas reveals two other kinds of lines in addition to the line of flight, a molar line of rigid segmentation and a molecular line of supple segmentation. All three of these lines get taken up in the next plateau "Micropolitics and Segmentarity" as a way of analyzing political formations. In "Three Novellas," though, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned to show what constitutes each kind of line and to begin to think about the ways in which these three lines might combine to form an assemblage.

Let's return now to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the novella. Before analyzing specific novellas they lay out the general structure of the novella. In order to do so, they revisit the content/expression schema first laid out in the "Geology of Morals." As we saw, content and expression are the two sides of the double articulation of stratification. Furthermore, both content and expression are divided into form and substance. In these terms, the content of the novella is "Body Posture." Not surprisingly the tale and the novella differ with regard to content. Whereas the tale is an unfolding, a development, the novella is a folding, an envelopment. Because the tale is an unfolding it brings positions into play. We could imagine the tale as something akin to a chess game where each piece occupies a determinate position in relation to other pieces on the board. Every move generates suspense, as the opposing player asks, "What's going to happen?" By contrast, the novella functions by way of "inverse suspense." Something has already happened and the bodies in the story take up certain postures with regard to it.

In order to illustrate this, let's look at Bobby Gentry's ballad "Ode to Billie Joe." The song's instrumentation is spare, composed of only a guitar and punctuated by violins and cellos at the end of each verse. The lyrics themselves are rich with allusion to what is not spoken. The song itself is set around a dinner table where the narrator's family delivers the most heartbreaking news in the same breath that they ask for the biscuits to be passed. The song begins at the end of a long day when the mother calls everyone in for dinner. As everyone arrives she notes offhand that earlier in the day she received news that Billie Joe committed suicide by jumping off a bridge. Each of the following verses centers on a family member commenting on Billie Joe, while at the same time continuing to eat, as if commenting on suicide were akin to talking about the weather. In the father's verse, he casually suggests that Billie's suicide is no doubt related to his lack of sense. The mother agrees and adds that

given that he comes from Choctaw Ridge there was never much hope for him. The narrator's brother recalls that he grew up with Billie Joe, and that he just saw him yesterday. This baffles him but he is not so upset that he can't ask for another piece of pie. The mother's verse adds an additional layer of mystery to the song that, no doubt, helped propel it to number one in 1967. After expressing confusion that the narrator isn't eating, she notes that Brother Taylor saw Billie Joe throwing something off the Tallahatchie Bridge with a girl who looked a lot like the narrator. As we'll see below, it's ultimately unimportant what is thrown off the bridge. What is important, though, is that there's an event here that sets the song in motion but remains unspoken. The final verse of the song takes place a year after Billie Joe's suicide. The narrator's father has died. Her brother has married and moved away, and her mother is lost in mourning. Meanwhile, the narrator spends her time dropping flowers into the river where Billie Joe died. In only 350 words the song is able to suggest such great depth and complexity that even a family dinner becomes fraught and cruel.

The song does a remarkable job weaving together the mundane interactions of a family around a dinner table with the question, "What happened?" Were the narrator and Billie Joe together on Choctaw Ridge? What were they doing? What did the girl and Billie Joe throw off the Tallahatchie Bridge? The song makes clear that the news of Billie Joe's death has affected the narrator greatly. She's not speaking or eating at dinner. The narrator doesn't take up a position. There's no suspense or concern with what will happen next. This isn't a chess game. The narrator, however, does assume a posture. When the mother speaks to the narrator, we can see her staring blankly at her food, head down, shoulders hunched. In the last verse the song skips a year. Life has continued, marriage and death. The mother is assuming a posture in relation to something else that's happened, but it's clear that the narrator continues to assume a posture in reaction to what happened on Choctaw Ridge. She picks flowers and drops them off the Tallahatchie Bridge.

If body posture is the content of this song, its expression is the question, "What happened?" The narrator doesn't take up the expected posture. The mother can tell by looking at her that something is wrong. She doesn't make the connection between the daughter's posture and the news of Billie Joe's death. Speculation has abounded concerning the "What happened?" of this song. Why did Billie Joe kill himself? Unrequited love? What did the narrator and Billie Joe throw off the bridge? Something innocuous, such as

sticks or rocks? Some memento such as rings? Something more sinister, such as a stillborn child? In the end, we're not even sure it was the narrator and Billie Joe who were seen by Brother Taylor. All we know is "something happened," and that something is driving the narrative here.

In the end, the song works whether we know what happened or not. This brings us to the form of the novella. As we saw in the "Geology of Morals," content and expression both have a form and a substance. The form codes both content and expression, while the substance is the variables that are territorialized on a stratum. The form of both content and expression for a novella is the secret. Or, to put it another way, the way in which the substance or variables of content and expression are coded takes the form of a secret. The narrator never speaks about her relation to Billie Joe. One possible reason for this need for secrecy is given in the father's casual dislike of Billie Joe. He "never had a lick of sense." The crucial point for Deleuze and Guattari is the way that both content and expression are formally organized in relation to secrecy. The secrecy codes postures. It folds bodies around that which must remain concealed and unspoken. The narrator tells the story, but she doesn't speak in the story. She doesn't respond to her mother's questions about appetite, or admit that it was she who Brother Taylor saw with Billie Joe. She doesn't rise to defend Billie Joe in the face of her father's dislike. A whole world is concealed in what the narrator doesn't say. What she doesn't say and the postures that her body assumes, slumped over at dinner, throwing flowers off the bridge, are coded by secrecy. The expression of this coded content is coded as the question "What happened?" that orients the narrative in relation to an event. Not an event as the past, but an event as the continual intrusion into the present. A year later the expression of this event still codes the narrator's actions and her silence.

How can we understand this song, though, in terms of the three kinds of lines that Deleuze and Guattari introduce here? As we've already seen, it's a song rich in implications, even though these are brought about by an extreme economy of words. There is a complex imbrication of lines here. There are the molar lines of rigid segmentarity: family, gender, and class. The familial roles are explicit: brother-sister, father-mother, father-daughter, mother-daughter. The gender roles are also explicit. The daughter picks cotton, while the brother bales hay. The father has been out plowing the fields, while the mother has been home cooking all day. Furthermore, all

of these roles are typical of rural life in the southern United States at the time the song was written.

The molecular line that runs through the song is the relation between the narrator and Billie Joe. The relationship is clearly one of great intensity, but its contours remain unclear. In terms of the concepts that we saw in both "Several Regimes of Signs" and "Faciality," we could say that the familial, molar relations are despotic and signifying, while the relation between the narrator and Billie Joe is one subjectification and deterritorialization, but as in *Tristan and Isolde* it was swallowed up by a black hole. The molar and molecular lines are intertwined with one another in the song. The brother continues down the molar line as he marries and starts his own family, while the narrator continues down the molecular line picking flowers and throwing them into the water.

The lines of flight that run the song are geographical, Choctaw Ridge and the Tallahatchie River. In some respects they are over-coded in the song. The mother overcodes Choctaw Ridge morally by saying, "seems like nothin' ever comes to no good up on Choctaw Ridge," while the Tallahatchie River is overcoded by the state with a bridge. Nevertheless both the ridge and the river form lines of flight. The river plays the largest role here, even though it remains unacknowledged for the most part. It is the flow that escapes both the molar and molecular lines of family, gender, and becoming. It first offers secrecy to whatever it is that the narrator and Billie Joe throw into it. Second, it offers oblivion to Billie Joe, who can no longer live with what happened. Finally, the river offers solace to the narrator as she watches the flowers float away and escape down the river.

Deleuze and Guattari offer the same kind of analysis of three novellas. They look for the lines that compose each novella. They write:

On the first [molar] line, there are many words and conversations, questions and answers, interminable explanations, precisions; the second [molecular line] is made of silences, allusions, and hasty innuendos inviting interpretation. But if the third line [of flight] flashes, if the line of flight is like a train in motion, it is because one jumps linearly on it, one can finally speak "literally" of anything at all, a blade of grass, a catastrophe or sensation, calmly accepting that which occurs when it is no longer possible for anything to stand for anything else. The three lines, however, continually intermingle. (TP 198)

As we've already seen in the case of "Ode to Billie Joe" this kind of analysis is not limited to novellas. In the next plateau, Deleuze

and Guattari will apply this kind of analysis to politics. Though they explicitly discuss three novellas by Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Pierrette Fleutiaux, it is J. Barbey d'Aurevilly's collection of novellas *Les Diabolique* that provides this plateau with its date. *Les Diabolique* was first published in 1874, and every story interweaves molar lines of class and explanation, molecular lines of silence and bodies, and lines of flight that lead away from both the molar and the molecular.

In the midst of discussion of the Fleutiaux novella, Deleuze and Guattari take up the three lines in terms of the "perceptual semiotics" that we have been discussing since "Rhizome." "It is also a perceptual affair, for perception always goes hand in hand with semiotics, practice, politics, theory. One sees, speaks and thinks on a given scale, and according to a given line that may or may not conjugate with the other's line, even if the other is still oneself" (TP 201). To ask, "What's going to happen?" is to expect an answer in terms of position, to see in terms of development, unfolding. This question allows one to perceive the molar line that runs through any assemblage, a line of classes, genders, persons, and morals. To ask, "What happened?" is to expect an answer in terms of posture, to see in terms of envelopment, folding. This question allows one to perceive the molecular line that runs through any assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari highlight the novella in this plateau because the molecular line dominates in the novella. While lines of flight and molar lines are not absent from the novella (or anything else), the foregrounding of the molecular line allows Deleuze and Guattari to pursue two kinds of segmentarity that they'll take up in the next plateau. The perspective from the line of flight, however, does not admit of a question. It does not expect answers in terms of rigid or supple segmentation. The line of flight creates the new. It draws maps. "We must invent our lines of flight, if we are able, and the only way we can invent them is by effectively drawing them, in our lives. Aren't lines of flight the most difficult of all? Certain groups or people have none and never will" (TP 202).

Deleuze and Guattari close with plateau with several caveats. First, the three lines do not correspond to the symbolic (molar), the imaginary (molecular), and the real (line of flight), regardless of whether one understands these terms according to Lacanian psychoanalysis or not. All three lines are real. Furthermore, the difference among the lines is not one of scale. Molar does not mean "large," any more than molecular means "small." Any of the lines can appear at any scale. There are large-scale molar organizations



(the state), and large-scale molecular operations (a viral video on YouTube). Lines of flight are not individual or even human (migrating caribou). The difference is not one of scale but one of segmentation. Molar and molecular lines are segmented differently, while lines of flight are not segmented at all. Second, all three types of lines are there from the beginning. One can begin from any type of line and discover the ways that the others combine with it. Third, no line is transcendent. There is a "mutual immanence" of the lines, and the possible combinations that they can enter into are nearly limitless. Finally, each line possesses its own specific dangers. As we saw in the discussion of the body without organs, there are no guarantees that one's body without organs won't be suicidal. Not every line of flight leads to happiness. By the same token, there are worse things than molar organization. Each line has a fascism specific to it. The task of schizoanalysis is not only to examine all three lines but to discover the dangers inherent in each kind of line.

#### NOTES

1. Aristotle, *Physics*, 221a1–5.
2. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 157ff.

## 1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity

Deleuze and Guattari first discuss segmentarity in “Several Regimes of Signs.” In that plateau they distinguish the relative deterritorializing line of subjectification from the absolute deterritorializing line of flight. As it turns out, it’s precisely the segmentation of the line of subjectification that relativizes its deterritorialization. The line of subjectification is segmented into “proceedings” or “processes.” Each point of segmentation marks a transformation of the subject. Thus, while a couple in love might escape the concentric layers of interpretation that organize a signifying regime, the couple might split up at some point or start a family. In either case a new subjectivity is created and a new segment or proceeding begins. This plateau complicates the notion of segmentarity by introducing multiple types: binary, circular, and linear. Furthermore, it uses these different types of segmentarity to rethink basic notions in ethnography in order to explode the facile distinction between “primitive” and “modern” societies. Every society is segmented. Every *thing* is segmented. The only issue for Deleuze and Guattari is the ratio among the types of segmentation. Ultimately, their goal is to give a new account of fascism.

Binary segmentation functions on the basis of a series of exclusive disjunctions. It is a flow chart that assigns us a discrete position in relation to other discrete positions. Are you male or female? Are you rich or poor? Are you an adult or a child? Are you straight or gay? The middle term is always excluded. There is always a price to be paid for deviance. Circular segmentation organizes us according to ever-larger circles of engagement. There is a private circle, a familial circle, a social circle, a community circle, a national circle,

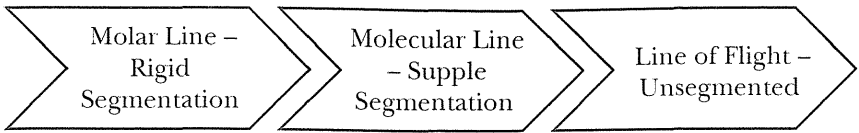
and a global circle. I belong to all of these, and yet they are distinct from one another. My loyalties can be divided among the segments. Different cultures may organize these circles differently. Linear segmentation is the type of segmentation that we saw in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the *passional line* of subjectivity. This type of segmentation describes the way in which our lives are divided into discrete episodes. Think of all the rites of entering and exiting that we engage in throughout our lives: first day of school, first day of high school, graduation ceremonies, first day of a new job, orientation sessions that describe what it means to belong to a specific group, religious rites of passage, New Year's Eve, retirement parties, getting a drivers license, voter registration. These points of segmentation are nearly endless and mark all the points of transition from one proceeding to another.

Not only are there different kinds of segmentation, but Deleuze and Guattari deny the traditional ethnographic distinction between segmentation and centralization. The distinction itself is nothing more than a binary segmentation between the primitive and the modern. What Deleuze and Guattari show, though, is that the division here is not between the segmented and the non-segmented but between two kinds of segmentation, *supple* (molecular) and *rigid* (molar). Primitive societies are organized along a *supple*, molecular line, while modern societies *rigidify* segmentarity. The distinction between *supple* and *rigid* forms of segmentarity allows Deleuze and Guattari to reframe binary, circular, and linear segmentarity. In the case of binary segmentarity they note that while primitive societies abound in binary distinctions (man/woman, high/low, etc.), the source of these distinctions is not itself binary. Take spouse selection, for example. The strictures of exogamy are not founded on the male/female binarism but require at least three groups: 1) those within the kinship group, which as a result are not appropriate spouses; 2) those outside the kinship group, which for reasons of alliance are *not* appropriate spouses; 3) those outside the kinship group, which for reasons of alliance *are* appropriate spouses. Thus, in a primitive society the binary distinctions do not come first, but are produced on the basis of the *supple* segmentarity of alliance.<sup>1</sup> In modern societies this relation is reversed and *rigid* segmentarity dominates. The state assemblage overcodes the segments such that the binary distinction is primary. Any third terms must be thought in relation to the more fundamental binarism. Thus, for example, the transgendered are thought on the basis of (and as deviant with regard to) a prior gender binarism.

By the same token circular segmentarity can be either supple or rigid. Both primitive and modern societies display circular segmentarity. What makes circular segmentarity supple or rigid is the degree to which the circles are concentric and the degree to which the segments resonate with the center. Concentricity and resonance are the hallmarks of rigid segmentarity. On the one hand, the rigid arborescence of the modern state is warded off by the multiple and overlapping supple segmentarity of the primitive society. This is illustrated by the animism of some primitive societies that diffuses power rather than concentrates it. The realms of different spirits and powers may overlap, may cooperate at times, and may conflict at other times. What does not happen, though, is a fusion through which a single spirit or power dominates. The diversity of spirits and powers actively prevents this. On the other hand, the concentric and resonating circular segmentarity of the modern state prohibits the rhizomatic connections that would blur the lines between the circles and set up nodes of rival power. The rigidity of the state-form lies in the fact that concentric circles continually reinforce the importance of the center. The center organizes the other segments hierarchically, and the other circles resonate with the center. The difference that Deleuze and Guattari point to here is the difference between the faciality machine that lies at the intersection of the despotic and passional regimes (rigid) and the presignifying regime (supple).

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of rigid and supple linear segmentarity returns us to some of the issues that were raised in the Introduction regarding geometry. As we saw, geometry has two competing conceptions of itself, axiomatic and problematic. The axiomatic conception is Euclidean and begins with discrete, rigid figures. The problematic conception is Archimedean and begins with the continuous, supple becoming of lines that never produces discrete figures. For Archimedes "there is 'roundness' but no circle, 'alignments' but no straight line, etc." (TP 212). The state-form privileges the Euclidean conception as it seeks to overcode its territory by drawing boundary lines. The state divides its domain into rigid segments. It builds walls to mark the boundary between inside and outside, civilized and barbarian. Colonization is the overcoding of supple linear segmentarity with rigid linear segmentarity. Private property is only conceivable on the basis of rigid segmentarity. We can understand the confusions that must have arisen in the wake of First Contact, as the colonists sought to impose rigid segmentarity on the land by buying it.

Chart 5



What conclusions can we draw here? We've already seen that the rigid (molar) and the supple (molecular) do not correspond to size. It is rather an issue of organization. Molar organization is more calcified; it describes the relations among discrete objects. Molecular organization is more fluid; it describes the relations among flows of intensities. These two types of organization are distinct but inseparable. Everything is both molar and molecular at the same time. What distinguishes things is the ratio of the molar to the molecular. The more molar something is, the more it resists change. The more molecular something is, the more it is open to change. That is, the more molecular something is, the greater the possibility that some of its lines will become lines of flight. Deleuze and Guattari thus place the three lines (and their concomitant segmentation) on a continuum (see Chart 5). There is no priority of line or segmentation. As we'll see there's also no moral judgment attached. Each line has its own benefits and dangers. Deleuze and Guattari are giving an account of two things here: 1) the stability and change inherent in all things; 2) the conditions of the new. Their claim is that the molecular line occupies the middle place between the molar and the line of flight because it can flip in either direction. That is, intensities sometimes cross a threshold and become extensities (molar) or they become completely deterritorialized and escape (line of flight). Schizoanalysis or pragmatics unfolds all three lines to see not only the promise but the danger in each.

It is at this point that Deleuze and Guattari turn to fascism. The primary outcome of their analysis of fascism is that it is distinct from totalitarianism, and that this distinctness arises precisely because of fascism's molecular composition. The obvious foil for their analysis here is Hannah Arendt, who argues that fascism is a species of totalitarianism that submits the state to the iron clad law of nature. Communism is structurally identical, but the law that the state is submitted to is the law of history.<sup>2</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast: "The concept of the totalitarian State applies only at the macropolitical level, to a rigid segmentarity and a particular mode of totalization and centralization. But fascism is inseparable from

a proliferation of molecular focuses in interaction, which skip from point to point before beginning to resonate together in the National Socialist State" (TP 214). It is this molecular aspect that makes fascism particularly insidious. Fascism as a political movement connects all the tiny fascisms of self, of race, of control and makes them resonate together.

The concept of "resonance" first arises in "The Postulates of Linguistics" where Deleuze and Guattari define it as one of the two forms of redundancy, the other being "frequency." "Frequency" concerns the redundancy of signs in a signifying regime, while "resonance" concerns the redundancy in the subjectivity of communication (TP 79). As we further saw in "Faciality," the white wall of the face machine is the signifying regime, and the black hole of the face machine is the postsignifying regime. Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari speak of resonance, they are concerned with the way that the black holes of subjectivity interact with one another. As we've seen, subjectivities can be individual, a couple, or a group. The potential for fascism arises when the black holes of several subjectivities begin to resonate with one another. The most straightforward way to think about resonance is to think about viral videos on YouTube. The video for "What does the fox say?" by Norwegian comedy duo Ylvis has been watched over 400 million times. It's a catchy song, but it had no music label behind it to promote it. It spread through other social media until it reached wide exposure through major media outlets. The song resonated through different subjectivities, sometimes as irony, sometimes as entertainment, sometimes as confusion. As a result, the song was able to connect various far-flung subjectivities, not by passing information but by communicating at the level of intensities.

The phenomenon of this song's popularity contains the potential for fascism but is not fascist. Deleuze and Guattari write that "every fascism is defined by a micro-black hole that stands on its own and communicates with others, before resonating in a great, generalized black hole" (TP 214). Fads do not generally tip over into fascism because they do not resonate in a generalized black hole. The generalized black hole that Deleuze and Guattari speak of here is a national subjectivity turned suicidal. As both the Russian and Allied forces closed in on Germany, Hitler ordered that everything be destroyed. If Germany could not win the war, it did not deserve to live. According to Albert Speer's account, Hitler ordered officers and party officials to ensure that the destruction was carried out.<sup>3</sup> We'll discuss this more fully below in the "Nomadology" plateau,

but Deleuze and Guattari's contention is that these resonating black holes become fascist "when a war machine is installed in each hole, in every niche" (TP 214).

Deleuze and Guattari are thus quite adamant that supple segmentarity is in itself not the remedy for rigid segmentarity. Molecular segmentarity is not inherently better than molar segmentarity and can, in fact, be much more dangerous. It is also not the case, as we've seen, that the molecular pertains to the realm of the individual and imaginary. The molecular is found on the level of desire, but desire is never individual. "Desire is never separable from complex assemblages . . . never an undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered setup rich in interactions . . ." (TP 215). Deleuze and Guattari are not reproducing the old dichotomy between society and the individual. In fact, they are overcoming it by arguing that both have rigid and supple segmentation and that both have lines of flight. The task of schizoanalysis is to uncover the multiple competing segmentations and draw their lines of flight. Furthermore, the fact that the lines are segmented differently does not preclude them from interacting with one another. As we've already seen, a fascist state necessarily has both molar and molecular components, and it's power is derived from its supple segmentarity.

Up to this point we've only discussed the molar and the molecular in their separation. It should be clear from everything we've seen, though, that these two types of segmentation are always found in some combination. Deleuze and Guattari propose that the ratio between the molar and the molecular can be either directly proportional or inversely proportional. In the case of direct proportionality, the more rigid a molar organization is, the more it molecularizes its elements. What they mean by this is that the more an organization controls every aspect of life, the more life fragments into obsessive concerns with petty fears. Here we can imagine the kind of office politics that arise in a highly regimented organization. Everyone ostensibly follows the rules, but that makes what is not governed by the rules take on such outsize importance. The movie *Office Space* is a veritable catalogue of such insecurities. Where is my cubicle in relation to the other cubicles? What kind of stapler am I allowed to use? Why doesn't our printer work? Why doesn't anyone notice how hard I'm working?

In the case of inverse proportionality, the molecular is at odds with the molar. The example that Deleuze and Guattari give here is from the Cold War. The world at the time had a great binary

molarization between East and West. The more balanced these two powers became, the more likely it was that some regional conflict would destabilize the molecular segments. Palestine, Korea, Afghanistan, and countless other regional conflicts threatened the balance of powers precisely because each side sought to overcode the conflict. This attempt at overcoding, though, caused a shift in the balance that destabilized it. When the molecular is at odds with the molar, it can be very difficult to understand what's happening. Deleuze and Guattari think that this was the case with the May 1968 riots in France. If one only thinks in macropolitical terms (class, race, gender) then one will miss micropolitical movements. These micropolitical movements are affective and not amenable to analysis on the basis of molar aggregates. It's the kind of thing one tries to grasp in phrases such as, "Things are different now"; "Times have changed"; "Values have changed." In the case of May 1968, the Left in France completely missed the boat because their analysis of class showed that the proletariat had not sufficiently achieved class-consciousness. People on the Right, like de Gaulle and Pompidou, could sense the change. Young people no longer had the same respect for their elders. Their values were different. A change was coming. It was the same with the French Revolution. Following Gabriel Tarde, Deleuze and Guattari say that "what one needs to know is which peasants, in which areas of the south of France, stopped greeting the local landowners" (TP 216). The molecular flow of courtesies that accompanied the molar segmentation of land, landowners, and peasants, began at some point to turn against the molar segmentation and interrupt it. It is on this level that the revolution began and spread.

At the border between the molar and molecular one finds a "power center." The power center is defined by the adaptations it makes between the flows. Here Deleuze and Guattari give the example of money. Money can be seen from either the molar or molecular perspective (perceptual semiotics). From the molar perspective money is segmented into denominations and can be used to purchase goods and services, which are themselves molar aggregates. Molecular money is the great, indivisible flow of finance capital that follows the sun all over the globe as each major market opens up. The power center that effects the conversion of molecular finance capital into molar money and vice versa is the bank. The bank is continuously negotiating between these two perspectives on money. The dominant trend over the last several decades has been to increase the flow of finance capital through financial



instruments, often at the expense of molar money. The most recent example of this occurred in the mortgage crisis of 2008, when a financial instrument (mortgage derivatives) decoupled financial value from the asset and allowed it to flow into the world financial market. The result was what Deleuze and Guattari would call a “cancerous body” but what popularly became known as the “housing bubble.” The solution was for the various world governments to pump molar money back into the system in the hopes of segmenting the flow and at the very least diversifying the financial capital. Thus, the power center is not absolute. It only maintains relative control over the boundary between the molar and molecular. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “something always escapes” (TP 217), but there’s never a guarantee that what escapes will be beneficial.

Deleuze and Guattari go on to argue that every power center has three “aspects or zones” (TP 226). The first zone is the zone of its power, what the power center actually has control over. This zone relates to the molar, rigid segments of a line. Thus, in the example of above, what the bank really has control over is the segmentation and distribution of money. The second zone is the “zone of indiscernibility.” In this zone the boundary between the molar and molecular becomes blurry. We can think about this in terms of a classic experiment in physics. The corpuscular theory of light supposes that light is made up of discrete particles called “photons,” but this theory doesn’t fully account for our experimental evidence. Given this theory, for example, we would expect shadows to always be sharply defined. We expect them to be sharply defined because what is casting the shadow completely blocks some of the photons and lets other pass. What we discover in controlled experiments is instead of two discrete bars of light, we get one dark bar with a fuzzy border in the center with the increasingly fuzzier bars gradually fading as they move toward the edge. This suggests that light is a wave rather than particles, since the light is distributed statistically, rather than discretely. Here, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, the light has both a molar (particle) side and a molecular (wave) side. “The molar segments are necessarily immersed in the molecular soup that nourishes them and makes their outlines waver” (TP 225). The zone of indiscernibility, then, is the relation between the molar and molecular for any given assemblage, which, as we’ve seen, may be either directly or inversely proportional to one another. The third zone of power centers is their impotence. If their power lies in converting the molecular into the molar, there is always something that escapes this conversion. It’s not always possible to understand

light as a particle. The wave, the flow, the molecular is not fully totalizable. If we return to the example of the mortgage crisis, it was precisely the banks' impotence with regard to the flow of financial capital that led to the collapse. Molar assets (real estate) were converted into molecular capital in the hopes of increasing the value of the molar assets. This actually worked for a while, but ultimately as more and more capital became unmoored from molar assets, the banks were no longer able to control it, and the market went into a suicidal collapse.

Segmentation is thus the molar appropriation of a molecular flow. The segment cannot fully dominate the flow. Something always escapes. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "segments (classes, for example) form at the conjunction of masses [packs, multiplicities] and deterritorialized flows, and that the most deterritorialized flow dominates the segment" (TP 226). Here they give a great example of what they have in mind. The US dollar is a segmentation of the global flow of capital. Of all the world's currencies, the US dollar is the most deterritorialized. What Deleuze and Guattari mean by this is that the US dollar has spread all over the world, not only as a unit of exchange, but as a standard by which to measure other currencies. It is also the world's reserve currency. That is, major countries keep a certain amount of US currency on reserve. This ensures not only the stability of their own currency, but of US currency as well. Here we see all three zones come together. The central banks segment the molecular flow of capital into currencies. The standard currency is the US dollar, which is precisely the currency most difficult to control. The central banks' point of control is also the point of their impotence. Deleuze and Guattari redescribe this relation among the molar, molecular, and the central power in terms of abstract machines and assemblages:

Segments, then, are themselves governed by an abstract machine. But what power centers govern are assemblages that effectuate that abstract machine, in other words, that continually adapt variations in mass and flow to the segments of the rigid line, as a function of a dominant segment and dominated segments. Much perverse invention can enter into the adaptations. (TP 226)

As we saw in our discussion of the "Geology of Morals," the abstract machine articulates, stratifies, into content and expression. These articulations (segments) are actualized by assemblages. The stratifications are never complete. Furthermore, there is something like a "genetic drift" inherent in the process of articulation. Mutations

get introduced into the process. Even segments, though resistant to becoming, are subject to it.

Deleuze and Guattari conclude this plateau by discussing the dangers associated with each of the lines: molar, molecular, and line of flight. They call the danger associated with the molar line “fear.” “Clarity” is the danger of the molecular line. “Power” concerns both the molar and the molecular, and “disgust” is the great danger of the line of flight. Why might fear be associated with the molar line? Let’s be honest: segments are safe; segments are certain. The molar line provides us with something solid that we can rely on. Molar lines have truth, universals, order. If we’re surrounded by a sea of chaos, why wouldn’t we cling to the first solid thing to come along? Furthermore, wouldn’t we be loathe to give up our little piece of flotsam no matter how storm-tossed? Sure we could abandon our certainty and swim away in a line of flight, but to what end? It’s possible we could find something new, but isn’t drowning even more likely? Fear keeps us attached to our molar lines, and sometimes rightly so.

Let’s say that we’re willing to abandon the certainties provided by the molar segments. We dive headlong into the molecular. Instead of discrete dimensions and sharp outlines, we find fractals splitting and dividing everywhere. The closer we look at these fractals the more we see (really see!) that everything is fractalized all the way down. Now we have achieved clarity, the danger associated with the molecular line. How is this dangerous? Isn’t this what Deleuze and Guattari have wanted us to see all along? Yes and no. They have certainly argued that thought has historically privileged the molar over the molecular, but they are not arguing that the molar is illusory. Neither the molar nor the molecular can be eliminated. Both are needed to account for the tendency of every assemblage toward stasis and change. The danger of clarity, then, comes in several forms. The first form is re-installing the certainties of the molar in all the crevices and black holes of the molecular. Microfascisms crop up everywhere. The molecular becomes just as blocked as the molar. Molecular organization replaces molar organization. Black holes resonate with one another. Another form that this danger takes is viral. Here there is no resonance among the black holes. “Instead of the great paranoid fear, we are trapped in a thousand little monomanias, self-evident truths, and clarities that gush from every black hole” (TP 228). The danger of clarity arises when we eschew the fear of losing certainty and embrace the molecular at the expense of the molar.

If the singular embrace of either the molar or the molecular entails a concomitant danger, then surely the answer is to embrace both the molar and molecular? No, since a danger lurks even here, the danger of power. "Power" is an ambiguous word in English and can mean "power to" and/or "power over." "Power to" has connotations of "ability," "capacity," or "potential." Thus, a bird has the power to fly, while I do not possess that capacity. "Power over" suggests "domination" or even "violence," particularly in the political sphere. Thus, when we say, "the politician gained power," we usually mean more than "the politician gained additional capacities." We usually mean that the politician gains some measure of power over a given constituency. Power over is a controlling power. The distinction between "power to" and "power over" is maintained in Spinoza's *Ethics*, where he seeks to increase our "power to" (*potentia*) and delimit our "power over" (*potestas*). Deleuze takes up this distinction in his writings on Spinoza by speaking about ways of affecting and being affected (*potentia*). It's even possible to make this kind of distinction in French, though it is not always rigorously observed. "*Puissance*" can be used to translate "power to," while "*pouvoir*" can be used to translate "power over." The third danger that concerns the molar and the molecular is "power over" (*pouvoir*). This kind of power, as we've seen, exists on both the molar and molecular lines, precisely because the power center (*centre de pouvoir*) straddles them both. This power is exceeded on every side by mutations and lines of flight that exceed it, and yet in its impotence it seeks to block the lines of flight in order to segment them. Or, barring that, it insinuates itself in the black holes of the molecular in order to make them resonate. The danger of power on the molar line is totalitarianism, and the danger of power on the molecular line is fascism.

The final danger, disgust, concerns the line of flight. Here Deleuze and Guattari admit that they may have given the wrong impression that all lines of flight are good and that the worst thing that can happen to a line of flight is that it gets recaptured, reterritorialized. On the contrary, they state that lines of flight "themselves emanate a strange despair, like an odor of death and immolation, a state of war from which one returns broken: they have their own dangers distinct from the ones previously discussed" (TP 229). There are lines of flight away from all forms of segmentation both supple and rigid, but there is no guarantee that a line of flight won't end in a suicidal collapse. It is telling at this point that they bring up the German Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist. On the one hand, they will go on to laud Kleist's depiction of the "war machine"

in his writings. On the other hand, they will continually remind us that Kleist ended his life in a murder-suicide pact. The line of flight can easily become a line of death. The reason that Deleuze and Guattari call this danger “disgust” is that following Nietzsche the great danger that faces humanity is disgust with life itself. We might become so enamored of our lines of flight and so disgusted with any form of segmentation that we gleefully follow the line of flight to our own death. This certainly seems to be Kleist’s attitude. He is practically giddy in his suicide note. Of course, not only individuals but nations can follow this path. Deleuze and Guattari follow Paul Virilio in claiming that the state in fascism is not totalitarian but suicidal.<sup>4</sup> In fascism the state installs a war machine in every black hole, but importantly a war machine that seeks only destruction, a war machine that only has war as its object.

It was this reversion of the line of flight into a line of destruction that already animated the molecular focuses of fascism, and made them interact in a war machine instead of resonating in a State apparatus. *A war machine that no longer had anything but war for its object and would rather annihilate its own servants than stop the destruction. All the dangers of the other lines pale by comparison. (TP 231, translation altered)*<sup>5</sup>

Suicide and fascism (the suicidal state) are lines of flight that fall prey to disgust. Through disgust they take the power of creation and turn it into the power of destruction.

In this plateau we learn several important things about the lines that are introduced in the “What Happened?” plateau. First, the lines are only separable in principle. In reality they always come mixed in a particular ratio. Second, the lines are ways of talking about tendencies toward stasis and change that we’ve discussed from the very beginning. Thus, the molar and molecular are the two sides of a perceptual semiotics. In precisely the same way that Deleuze and Guattari’s goal is not to divide the world into trees and rhizomes, their goal is not to divide the world into the molar and molecular. It’s always possible to see the molecular in the molar and vice versa. Third, the molar and molecular do not encompass all the possibilities. There is always something that escapes, the line of flight. It is here that Deleuze and Guattari are at their most subtle and most cautious. It simply will not do to valorize any one of these lines at the expense of the others. Every line has its value and its danger. Finally, in this plateau we see the way in which Deleuze and Guattari think through the issue of fascism in terms of lines and

segments. Fascism is distinct from totalitarianism, and it is distinct in the unique way that it takes up not the molar but the molecular and the lines of flight.

#### NOTES

1. The distinction between alliance and filiation is discussed at length in *Anti-Oedipus*. The basic point is that alliances between groups are negotiated and subject to change, or supple.
2. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 463.
3. Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, p. 440.
4. See Virilio, *Speed and Politics*.
5. The French for the italicised phrase reads, «*Une machine de guerre qui n'avait plus que la guerre pour objet*» (MP 283). The difficulty here lies with the “*plus*,” which is ambiguous. It seems clear from the context of the plateau, though, that the war machine becomes destructive precisely when it takes war as its object. Normally, as “Nomadology” makes clear, the war machine does not have war as its object and is a force for change or mutation. The current translation doesn't acknowledge this difference.

*1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible . . .*

Thinking “becoming” as such is remarkably difficult. The entire history of Western thought serves to obscure becoming, not by eliminating it but by subordinating it to being. This subordination of becoming to being is one of the primary forms that the discontinuity thesis takes. In response to this the task of a perceptual semiotics is to discover the knots of becoming tangled in the fabric of being, to discover the rhizome in the tree. With this in mind Deleuze and Guattari lead us through a series of scenes in which they discover and follow a line of becoming in what seems to be an unassailable point of being. There are fifteen such scenes in this plateau. Curiously, many of these are labeled “Memories.” The curiosity here is twofold. First, memories seem much more like being than becoming, and, second, no doubt because of the first curiosity, Deleuze and Guattari change their mind about these labels by the end of the plateau. They write, “Whenever we used the word ‘memories’ in the preceding pages, we were wrong to do so; we meant to say ‘becoming,’ we were saying becoming” (TP 294). Bearing this late course correction in mind, we can see that, not surprisingly, becoming is not one thing but itself has diverse modalities that will need to be explored. We’ve already seen that becoming is connected to lines of flight. We’ve also seen that lines of flight are connected to the molecular. In this plateau Deleuze and Guattari explore the numerous ways that becoming becomes. This becoming is contrasted to molar stabilities. Thus if one wants to create something new with regard to the human (a molar stability), then one must pursue a becoming-animal. As we’ll see, this becoming-animal has nothing to do with imitating an animal. Imitation merely reaffirms not only the

molar stability of what one is imitating but one's own molar stability as (in this case) human.

*MOVIEGOERS, NATURAL HISTORY, AND BERGSON*

This plateau begins with rats, and the movie *Willard*, which illustrates a becoming-rat. The main character Willard is a loner, trapped in an Oedipal nightmare with his mother. He escapes the confines of this molar stability by becoming-rat. He does not become-rat by resembling or imitating a rat. He becomes-rat by becoming part of a pack. Here Deleuze and Guattari refer to the notion of multiplicity that they developed in "One or Several Wolves." Freud keeps trying to reduce the number of wolves in the Wolf-Man's dream, because he doesn't understand that wolves come in packs. Freud keeps trying to convert the molecular pack into a molar individual, and as a result fails to understand the Wolf-Man's becomings. In Willard's case he's caught between joining the pack (becoming-rat) and returning to the molar security of job and family, while turning his favorite rat, Ben, into a pet. What Deleuze and Guattari illustrate here are the two tendencies for any assemblage toward stasis and change. What they will continue to explore in the plateau is the way in which the tendency toward change passes through a becoming-animal.

Before Deleuze and Guattari can pursue becoming-animal further, they take up traditional accounts of the animal. Natural history, for example, assumed that animals represented natural types and could not transform into a different species. Given the static nature of animal species the problem that natural history needed to solve was the way in which these discrete species related to one another. This problem differs significantly from evolution, which does not ask about the relation between two species, but how one species can produce another. Deleuze and Guattari argue that natural history conceives of the relation in two ways, series and structure. A series functions by setting up a sequence of resemblances: lions resemble tigers; tigers resemble leopards; leopards resemble jaguars, etc. All of these resemblances are governed by their conformity to some organizing principle, the genus *Panthera*, for example. This is the analogy of proportion. The second way of articulating the relationship between animals compares structural affinities. For example, a leg is to locomotion on land as a fin is to locomotion under water. This is the analogy of proportionality. Deleuze and Guattari are careful to note, though, that these two kinds of analogy haven't been abandoned even though natural



history has been replaced by evolution. Rather, series and structure have continued to be the dominant ways of thinking the molar. Sometimes series gains the upper hand. Other times structure gains the upper hand. What they both have in common is thinking the discrete, molar individual in a way that reinforces its molarity.

The next section, "Memories of a Bergsonian" explicitly rejects these two kinds of analogy. Or, at least, claim Deleuze and Guattari, series and structure don't tell the whole story. "We believe in the existence of very special *becomings-animal*." Neither series nor structure can account for passages between animals, especially not between humans and animals. A correspondence of relation is not a becoming, nor is it a resemblance. Furthermore, these *becomings* are not explained by a traditional account of evolution. Evolution accounts for *becomings* (at least in its beginnings) solely on the basis on filiation, that is, modification through descent. The kind of *becomings* that Deleuze and Guattari are interested in is *becomings* through alliance, the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon. What escapes the series and the structure? *Becomings*. *Becomings* are real, not fantasies. *Becoming* is the real itself, not what happens between two fixed terms. Just as Nietzsche refused to separate the lightning and the flash, the doer and the deed, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "*becoming* lacks a subject distinct from itself" (TP 238). They coin the term "*involution*" for this *becoming* by heterogeneous alliance.

### *SORCERERS AND THEOLOGAINS*

It is here that Deleuze and Guattari praise the current science of evolution, which doesn't treat genus or species but populations. A population, even a population of alleles, is never homogeneous but always heterogeneous and approached as a constantly shifting statistical aggregate. The next section "*Memories of a Sorcerer I*" takes up this very idea by noting that a "*becoming-animal* always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (TP 239). In order to clarify what they mean here, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish three kinds of animals, the individuated animal, the animal with characteristics, and the demonic animal. The individuated animal is the family pet. It is Oedipalized like every other member of the family. It enters into a parent-child relationship with its owners, and if there are already children in the family, they become older siblings to the pet. These "are the only kind of animals that psychoanalysis understands" (TP 240). The

animal with characteristics, the classified animal, is the state animal. This is the animal we place in series or structures. This is the animal that populates divine myths, characterized by strength, or courage, or cunning. The third kind of animal is the demonic animal, one capable of becoming, the pack. These are the animals we tell tales about, werewolves, vampires, rats, ants, bees. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit, though, that this is not a new taxonomy that would organize animals into three distinct types. Any animal can be understood in all three ways. As always, it is a perceptual semiotics. Deleuze and Guattari's task is to understand all animals as demonic, as a pack, as a becoming.

The issue that Deleuze and Guattari must now address is the way in which the pack gets populated. Where do packs come from? How do they grow? How do they spread? Here they return to the distinction that played such a large role in *Anti-Oedipus*, the distinction between filiation and alliance. Filiation is genealogical, arborescent. It is governed by "the unity of an ancestor" (TP 241). It's not clear, though, how alliance is sufficient to explain the population of a pack. Surely, packs of rats and wolves propagate by filiation. Aren't the members of packs related in some way? Just as we've seen in every other opposition proposed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's goal is not to divide the world into groups solely related by filiation and groups solely related by alliance. Alliance and filiation are two tendencies evinced by every assemblage. The question here, though, is one of becoming. Under what condition might we speak of becoming, of creation, of the new? Only under the condition of heterogeneous alliances. A pack that was related only filiatively would find every path of becoming blocked. In light of the need to think alliance, Deleuze and Guattari need a way to talk about it that is not genealogical, not hereditary. The way they propose to think alliance is through contagion. "Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes . . . Unnatural participations or nuptials are the true Nature spanning the kingdoms of nature" (TP 241). The wasp-orchid relation is a clear example of what they have in mind here, as is the intermingling of cat and baboon DNA via retroviruses. We can also think more broadly about this in the way that populations are allied with their environments. Alliances of this sort between plants and animals, animals and geography, are essential to the becoming of a population. Alliances of this sort are also precisely what make something like a werewolf thinkable. What happens when a wolf bites you? Do you become-wolf? When? Only when the moon is full?

Here in the tale of the werewolf we have a remarkable heterogeneous assemblage of wolf, human, and moon that creates a hybrid. This hybrid is not created by filiation, nor can it propagate itself by filiation. The pack grows through contagion. Recent interest in zombies also illustrates this same phenomenon.

In the second "Memories of a Sorcerer" Deleuze and Guattari complicate the principle of contagion and pack. To it they add the principle that "wherever there is a multiplicity, you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with that individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal" (TP 243). The wolf pack has its alpha-male. Ahab has Moby-Dick. Willard has Ben. Deleuze and Guattari call this exceptional individual "anomalous," which they note comes from a Greek noun that "designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization" (TP 244). They also admit that there is a contradiction here between the exceptional individual and the pack.<sup>1</sup> The contradiction that Deleuze and Guattari find here is the contradiction between border and the pack. The exceptional individual is the place where the pack opens to the outside, the place where the pack makes alliances with the heterogeneous. If we imagine a knife, for example, the same kind of contradiction will exist between the body of the blade and the edge of the blade. By necessity only the edge of the blade cuts. Only the edge of the blade penetrates into new territories and deterritorializes them. Dicing an onion deterritorializes it, but that deterritorialization happens at the cutting edge.

Importantly, though, this exceptional individual cannot be thought in terms of a pet or a species. Its individuality does not arise from its position in a familiar order nor from its classification in a taxonomy. Its individuality arises from its position as a bordering phenomenon. Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari say that "the anomalous is neither an individual nor a species," what they mean by "individual" here is the family pet, the first kind of animal that we discussed above. The pet and the species are not becomings; they resist becoming. It is only, then, through the third kind of animal, the demonic, that becoming arises. It arises here precisely because the demonic is this bordering phenomenon, this cutting edge of deterritorialization. "This is our hypothesis: a multiplicity [pack] is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension, but by the lines and dimensions that it encompasses in 'intension'" (TP 245). A pack is defined by its border, but this border must not be conceived spatially, extensively. This would be to turn the pack into a spatial

aggregate of discrete entities (which could then be conceived of as pets or species). Deleuze and Guattari want to think the pack affectively. They want to think the pack as a body (in Spinoza's sense) and ask what that body is capable of, to what degree of intensity it exercises its affects. At the limit of these affects, one finds the border. One finds the point at which increasing intensity transforms the pack into something else.

Here and throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari use Kleist's play *Penthesilea* as a touchstone. *Penthesilea* reimagines the confrontation between the Greek hero Achilles and the warrior-queen of the Amazons during the Trojan War. In the traditional telling of the tale Achilles kills Penthesilea in battle. In Kleist's version both Achilles and Penthesilea stand apart from their armies (packs) as borders, and it's the affective collision of these two cutting edges that drives the play. Ultimately, Penthesilea kills Achilles when she leads a pack of hunting dogs (entering into an uncanny becoming-dog herself) and dismembers him. On Deleuze and Guattari's reading the crucial thing to note about the play is that it is almost entirely concerned with affect. Penthesilea's becoming-dog does not turn her into a pet or a species. She is not the member of a family, nor the representative of a genus. Her becoming-dog is not achieved through imitation, but through channeling affect. Kleist writes of Penthesilea:

HIGH PRIESTESS:

She's in a frenzy now among her dogs,  
Her lips all flecked with foam, calling them sisters.  
Those howling, baying brutes, and like a Maenad,  
Dancing across the meadows with her bow,  
She's prodding them, the murder-breathing pack,  
Urging them on to catch the fairest game,  
She says, that ever ranged upon the earth.<sup>2</sup>

Even though she still carries a bow and leads the pack, the other Amazons recognize that Penthesilea has become something other than human:

HIGH PRIESTESS:

Go, women, fetch some ropes!

FIRST PRIESTESS:

Your Holiness!

HIGH PRIESTESS:

Take her and throw her to the ground! Bind her!

AN AMAZON:

Bind whom, Your Grace? The Queen?

HIGH PRIESTESS:

I mean that dog!

—There's no restraining her with human hands.<sup>3</sup>

It's crucial to note at this point that even though Penthesilea is recognized as a dog that recognition does not arise through resemblance. As we'll see more clearly below, becoming-animal does not occur through imitation. Penthesilea does not become-dog by barking herself. It's rather that calling the dogs "sisters" circulates the same affect as barking. Penthesilea becomes-dog by effectuating the same diagram as the pack, occupying the same problematic as the pack.

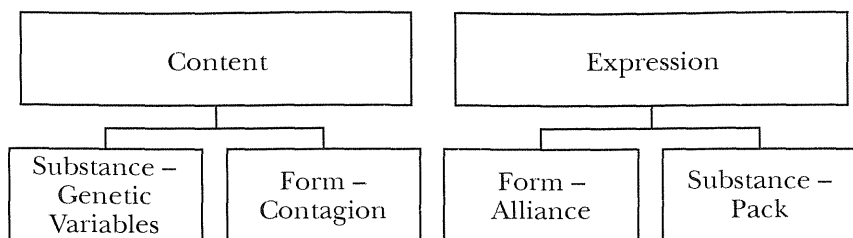
The sorcerer is another anomalous figure, and here we see why these sections are named this way. Deleuze and Guattari consider themselves sorcerers effecting these unnatural alliances, these contagions:

becoming-animal is an affair of sorcery because (1) it implies an initial relation of alliance with a demon; (2) the demon functions as the borderline of an animal pack, into which the human being passes or in which his or her becoming takes place, by contagion; (3) this becoming itself implies a second alliance, with another human group; (4) this new borderline between the two groups guides the contagion of animal and human being with the pack. (TP 247)

Deleuze and Guattari give numerous examples of this contagion. We have already looked at Willard and Ben the rat, as well as Penthesilea and Achilles. They also speak of Ahab's becoming-whale through the demonic Moby-Dick. The entirety of *A Thousand Plateaus* can also be seen as a contagion. The book teems with numerous packs of all kinds. Deleuze and Guattari, then, are not so much authors as they are sites of contagion, the points where we make contact with these packs. Deleuze and Guattari are the anomalous borderline phenomena that make becomings of all kinds possible. They counsel prudence with becomings. The contagions are not safe, and there are no guarantees of where the becomings might lead. It's the only way they know how to create something new, though.

Returning to the vocabulary of content and expression developed in "Geology of Morals," Deleuze and Guattari cast becoming in this way: "Alliance or the pact is the form of expression for

Chart 6



an infection or epidemic constituting the form of content” (TP 247). Chart 6 illustrates the resulting schema, which allows us to think the relation between stratification and becoming.<sup>4</sup> In the “Geology of Morals” we saw that a stratum always has two sides, one that faces toward increasing stratification and the other that faces toward decreasing stratification or becoming. Here Deleuze and Guattari are explaining the mechanism by which something stratified becomes destratified. It happens on the side of the stratum that faces toward destratification and it happens through contagion and alliance. This is how the pack becomes something else, and this is how one joins the pack, becomes-animal.

In the third and final “Memories of a Sorcerer,” Deleuze and Guattari take up becomings other than becomings-animal. The title of the plateau indicates other kinds of becomings, and they list several more here: becomings-child, becomings-woman, becomings-molecular. There are several reasons for this discussion of other becomings. First, they do not want us to attach sole importance to becomings-animal. Second, they want to emphasize that these becomings lie on a continuum, which can be illustrated using the visible light spectrum. Moving through each of the colors of the spectrum does not yield discrete points of being, but becomings, becomings-yellow or becomings-blue, for example. Here, Deleuze and Guattari claim that we can arrange becomings in terms of their distance from stratification. Becomings-woman and becomings-child lie closest to stratification (red and orange). Becomings-animal lie in the middle (green), while becomings-molecular and becomings-imperceptible lie farthest from stratification (indigo and violet). Third, even though we can distinguish, for example, becoming-woman from becoming-imperceptible, in the same way we can distinguish becoming-orange from becoming-blue, there is a way in which all becoming is a becoming-molecular. The reason for this is straightforward, as we’ve seen. The molar and molecular

are the two poles toward which all things tend, stasis and change, extensive and intensive. Becoming becomes through the intensive. Movement away from extension is a movement toward increasing intension.

Some critics of Deleuze and Guattari have taken issue with characterizing this initial tendency away from stasis as becoming-woman. They argue that it simply reinstates the age-old idea that women are inconstant changelings and not to be trusted (*La donna è mobile!*).<sup>5</sup> By the same token, similar things could be said about becoming-child or becoming-animal. Do these not simply reinforce basic dualisms such as adult/child and human/animal? Deleuze and Guattari's response here is that these dualisms are real and that they organize society. There is no question that the denigration of woman and the valorization of men has been a nearly constant feature of human society. Furthermore, this denigration has been codified in philosophy since its inception. Deleuze and Guattari would say that the male/female dualism is part of a hierarchical, despotic signifying regime, as are all molar dualisms. The question that Deleuze and Guattari pose, though, is not, How do we equalize this dualism? This strategy only reinforces the molar dualism even if the relation between the terms shifts. Rather, their question is, How do we create something new that is not bound up in these dualisms? How do we make a rhizome instead of a tree? Draw a map instead of make a tracing? Become instead of be? The answer to these questions, as we've seen, begins with perceptual semiotics. The goal is not to divide the world between trees and rhizomes but see that every tree is already a rhizome. A perceptual semiotics looks for intensities, lines of flight. It looks along the borders of things to see what escapes, to see where becoming is already happening. This plateau in particular is interested in the process of becoming itself, in what happens along these borders. Not surprisingly, given what we've seen, becoming itself is not binary but occurs along a continuum. The beginning of this process of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari call "becoming-woman." It seems that here they are taking the resources of a great molar binarism man/woman and showing what escapes it. They cannot name what escapes it "man." There is no "becoming-man," because "man" is the despotic signifier that organizes all other gender signifiers. They are explicit about this in "Faciality." At the same time, it is important to notice that Deleuze and Guattari do not call this intensive threshold "woman" either. "Woman" remains a molar and extensive term, as well, even though it is subordinated to "man" in a signifying regime.

In many respects the problem that Deleuze and Guattari are trying to solve is similar to Nietzsche's problem with regard to the future. Nietzsche sees very clearly the way in which words are organized and defined according to a "table of values" that hangs over every society. "Man," for example, is defined according to the "good and evil" table of values. The problem that this creates for Nietzsche is what to call that entity currently defined as "man" in the future when we are "beyond good and evil." Nietzsche proposes several names for our future selves, "the sovereign individual," "the one with the right to make promises," "the possessor of a sovereign will," but the name that really sticks out is "overman" (*Übermensch*). Nietzsche can't simply call the person of the future "man," because "man" is utterly determined by the values of good and evil. So, the one who is beyond good and evil is also beyond man. In the same way, Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the threshold of transformation that lies at the borders of the great molar binarisms such as male/female. They call this threshold "becoming-woman," but this becoming-woman is not to be thought on either of the models of analogy. Becoming-woman is not imitation (analogy of proportion), nor is it structural affinity (analogy of proportionality). Becoming-woman is above all the threshold from the extensive to the intensive. It is a perceptual semiotics.

Deleuze and Guattari's sorcery lies in this perceptual semiotics, which transforms being into becoming, the wolf into a pack, the thing into a multiplicity, the molar into the molecular. "This is not surprising because becoming and multiplicity are the same thing" (TP 249). Becoming and multiplicity are the same thing, because only multiplicities become. The same Wolf-Man confronts both Freud and Deleuze and Guattari. The crucial difference is that Freud can only see one wolf. Deleuze and Guattari see a pack, a multiplicity. Because they see a multiplicity (through the trick of perceptual semiotics), they also see becoming. As they note, even the Wolf-Man's packs are continually transforming themselves from wolves, to bees, to holes. Their Wolf-Man is not traced over by molar representations and thus static. Their Wolf-Man is molecular, intensive, so they draw a map, make a rhizome, make something new.

What some may find frustrating about Deleuze and Guattari's exhortations here is that there's no logical or predictable order to where a transformation might lead. Traditionally, to the degree that transformations were countenanced at all, they were guided by analogies of proportion and proportionality. Ultimately, transformations of this type were either illusory (proportion) or touched



only the accidental not the essential (proportionality). From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, though, the analogical limits of transformation preclude any real transformation at all. As they say, "Theology is very strict on the following point: there are no werewolves, human beings cannot become animal" (TP 252). We cannot deduce a priori where our becomings may lead. No one could predict the becoming-orchid of the wasp. The only possible solution from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective is to experiment. "Make a rhizome. But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment" (TP 251).

At the same time that Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to experiment, they also provide a criterion for the experimentation, which they articulate in terms of dimension. The twin dangers to be avoided in any experiment are immobility (the impossibility of further transformation) and suicidal collapse (complete dissolution and hence also the impossibility of further transformation). Recasting these dangers in terms of dimension is to pose the relation between dimension and change. Multiplicities, since they are not defined by extension, have intensity but not substance or subject. We broached this notion earlier in terms of topology. Our primary concern with topology above was the *continuous* transformation that an object can undergo (donut to coffee cup, the letter "A" to the letter "R") as opposed to the discontinuous transformation, which would involve tearing or cutting the object. Becoming is a continuous transformation. It is a continuous transformation because becomings are becomings of intensity, and intensity does not admit of division. Intensities do have dimension, though. A dimension is a degree of intensity. A swell on the ocean becomes a rolling breaker as it approaches the shore and the water shallows. The single intensity of the wave continuously transforms along its leading edge. The ocean is shot through not only with wave intensities, which capture the energy of the sun, wind, and gravity, but also intensities of temperature and current. All of these intensities circulate in the world's oceans. To see the ocean as nothing but these flows of intensity is to see it as a plane of consistency. From this perspective the waves are multiplicities moving across the plane of consistency. The waves are packs roaming across the desert of the ocean. "The plane of consistency is the intersection of all concrete forms [multiplicities]" (TP 251). The question of experimentation becomes whether a multiplicity can maintain its degree of intensity,

maintain its dimension, continue to transform without "bogging down, or veering into the void" (TP 251).

### *SPINOZA AND HAECCEITIES*

After the sections on sorcerers and theologians, Deleuze and Guattari turn to Spinoza. Spinoza is important because he gives them the tools to re-think what a thing is without resorting to "substantial or essential forms," that is, without resorting to the discontinuity thesis. Furthermore, a thing thought along Spinozist lines is the kind of thing that can enter into becomings, has lines of flight, whereas the thing conceived in terms of substantial or essential forms cannot become. Part One of Spinoza's *Ethics*, which famously argues that there is only one substance, leads him into a difficulty in Part Two. Traditionally, things are differentiated by their substances. The pen on my desk is different from the book on my desk because both are different substances. This means of differentiation is no longer available to Spinoza, so he must propose a new theory. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the theory is quite startling and radical. Spinoza argues that things differ from one another according to the ratio of motion and rest among their parts. Thus, the difference between the pen and the book on my desk lies in the way that their parts are composed. For example, the pages of the book are bound on one side and unbound on three sides. This means the pages move in a particular way in relation to each other. The order of pages is fixed, but both sides of the page are accessible. In contrast to this, the pen's ratio of motion and rest among its parts is completely different. It has a cap that snaps on, a clip, and it's filled with blue ink. The ink only flows when the cap is removed, and the cap helpfully fits on the opposite end of the pen. Spinoza's substance is populated with "things" such as this. Spinoza's substance is a univocal plane teeming with ratios of motion and rest that enter into compositions and decompositions. If I take the pen and make a note in the margins of the book, three such bodies (the pen, the book, and me) enter into a new composition, and when I put the pen down again, decompose. The ratios of motion and rest, the compositions and decompositions on a plane of consistency, Deleuze and Guattari call the thing's "longitude."

Longitude is an extensive and relational view of the thing. There is also an intensive and affective view of the thing, which Deleuze and Guattari call the thing's "latitude." Longitude and latitude, of course, generate a coordinate system, but notice how

far removed this is from the usual way of thinking about a thing. Traditionally a thing and its place are separable. A thing can be moved from place to place and still remain the same thing. On this reading of Spinoza, though, the clear implication is that a thing *is* its place. The further implication is that as the thing moves it changes. We can also note that the relation of longitude and latitude is a different way of thinking about the relation between the intensive and the extensive. Up to this point, we've spent most of our energies distinguishing between these two perspectives on things. As Deleuze and Guattari have warned from the beginning, the risk here is that the distinction will devolve into a dualism. The intensive and the extensive are always mutually implicated in one another, in the same way that rhizomes contain knots of arborescence and trees harbor rhizomatic offshoots. Up to this point we've allowed for this mutual implication by speaking in terms of a thing's tendencies toward both stasis and change. What Spinoza adds to this discussion is the new way that he's thinking about stasis. Stasis is no longer thought in terms of essence or substance but in terms of a ratio of motion and rest. This account of stasis makes it possible to articulate a thing's real becoming, rather than resorting to the discontinuity of essence and accidents, which can only account for illusory or local becoming. Thus, for Spinoza becoming is possible because stasis is amenable to change, extension is intertwined with intension.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the latitude or intensive coordinate of the thing returns them to a discussion of affect. "To every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness grouping together an infinity of parts, there corresponds a degree of power. To the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond intensities that affect it, augmenting or diminishing its power to act . . . Affects are becomings" (TP 256). Within this context we can augment our illustration of the book-pen-me assemblage. My combination with the book and pen augments my power, increases what I'm capable of. Without the book to stir ideas, I am less powerful. Without the pen to write down my ideas, my capabilities are diminished. My particular ratio of motion and rest is such that it can enter into certain combinations, which have a corresponding degree of power attached to them. Some combinations increase my power. Others decrease it. Most commonly my combinations increase my power in some respects and decrease it in others. For Spinoza, for the ethologist Jakob von Uexküll, and for Deleuze and Guattari, one understands a thing by understanding

what it's capable of, by counting its ways of affecting and being affected, by knowing its longitude and latitude.<sup>6</sup>

In order to see how this helps us with the notion of becoming, let's take up Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of Vladimir Slepian's short story "Fils de chien" ("Son of a Bitch"). The story concerns a man who wishes to become a dog, because his hunger exceeds human hunger and seems more appropriate to a dog. Notice already that we are in the realm of affect. The degree of intensity of Slepian's hunger does not correspond to his extensive ratio. The solution he proposes is to become-dog. Becoming-dog (as with all becomings) is an intensive process. This is why the becoming cannot occur through imitation or analogy, which are extensive relations. Rather, Slepian must compose himself such that the intensities that circulate through his body without organs are the same as those that circulate on a dog's body without organs. He begins this process by putting shoes on his hands. What we need to avoid this point is the tempting analogy that equates paws with feet, and thus Slepian reproduces the formal relation of the four-legged dog in himself by putting shoes on his hands. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the crucial moment of becoming occurs when Slepian is unable to get the last shoe tied with his hand and resorts to using his mouth. It is here that Slepian enters into a becoming-dog.

In order to see why this is case, let's look at the work of anthropologist and paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan. Leroi-Gourhan's work is cited throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly his *Gesture and Speech*, where he argues that the indispensable condition for language is upright posture.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this is simple. If an animal moves on all fours, then it cannot grasp with those appendages. It can only grasp with its mouth. An animal thus composed is restricted in the kinds of combinations it can make with its mouth. Such a mouth is for eating and grasping, not for talking. In order to deterritorialize the mouth for talking, the animal needs to be composed so that it no longer needs its mouth for grasping. So, in order to deterritorialize the mouth, the front-paws need to be deterritorialized. In order for the front-paws to be deterritorialized, the animal needs to be composed such that it walks upright, not on all fours. This upright posture that frees the hands for grasping and the mouth for talking, thus allows for a different ratio of motion and rest among the animal's extensive parts and a corresponding shift in the ways in which the animal affects and is affected.

Slepian's becoming-dog reverses the deterritorialization of

mouth and hand. He composes himself such that the hand can no longer be used for grasping. This means that the mouth has to be used for grasping. Thus, Slepian enters into a becoming-dog not through imitation or analogy, but by composing himself such that certain affects were able to circulate and others were not. If we take the coordinate system that Deleuze and Guattari propose here and plot the extensive longitude (mouth) and the intensive latitude (grasping), then Slepian's becoming-dog consists in moving toward other mouth-graspers (e.g., dogs) and away from non-mouth-graspers (e.g., humans). As we increase the number of affects, we can more precisely narrow the shared proximity between Slepian and a dog as the difference becomes increasingly indiscernible. At no point, however, does this becoming-dog require that Slepian change into an extensive (i.e., molar) dog. To understand becoming as a transformation from one extensive molar entity into another is to misunderstand becoming. All becoming is intensive. All becoming is molecular.

Deleuze and Guattari propose to call this "thing," this body defined solely by longitude and latitude, "haecceity." Here they continue their expansion of Spinoza's non-substantial, non-subjective account of the "thing" to the corollary issue of individuation. In the same way that prior accounts of the thing relied on substance or subject, so did accounts of the distinction among various things (*principium individuationis*). Haecceity introduces a temporal dimension to the discussion. Haecceities are events. As we saw in "What Happened?," the time of events is distinct from other forms of temporality. Drawing on Deleuze's work in *The Logic of Sense*, they reserve the name "Aion" for the time of haecceities and the name "Chronos" for the time of substances and subjects. Events do not have a specific duration. Events are not divisible. Events concern the continuous, whereas Chronos concerns divisible (and thus measurable), discontinuous time. Events are thus expressed in terms of the indefinite article (*a* moment, *a* season, *a* life). Events are the indefinite becoming of a haecceity. This becoming is expressed in the infinitive (to swim, to cut, to dance, to live). Becoming is infinitive precisely because it is boundless, unstratified, deterritorialized. Finally, events have proper names. Here Deleuze and Guattari give the example of a hurricane as the proper name of an event. Hurricanes are given names but they are neither substance nor subject. Their duration is indefinite. In 2012, for example, a hurricane combined with a winter storm and was named "Sandy." The storm system has long since dissipated, but many people are still

struggling to rebuild their lives in the storm's wake. Many have still not been able to return home. The event continues.

Deleuze and Guattari's conception here also allows us to think differently about paradoxes of individuation that plague accounts based on substances and subjects. The classic example of this paradox is the "ship of Theseus." In one version of the paradox a ship at sea continually replaces its parts as they become damaged. When the ship returns to port it contains no original parts, only replacement parts. Is it still the same ship? In another version, the original pieces are saved and put back together. Rival factions each claim to possess the "true" ship of Theseus, but which of the two ships is the "true" one? Similar paradoxes can be generated for sports teams. Is a team that replaces a large number of its players mid-season still the "same" team? The questions generated by these examples are predicated on a perceptual semiotics that fills the world with discrete entities (substances and subjects). Is it any wonder, then, that when faced with becoming, the result is paradoxical? The ship of Theseus example treats the ship as something distinct from the crew and the voyage, distinct from Athens and the ancient Mediterranean, when in fact, "it is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane [i.e., the plane of organization]" (TP 262). From the perspective of the plane of consistency, the relevant question is not the "true" ship, but what the ship can do. What affects do its relations allow to circulate? What relations of motion and rest does it enter into with the sea, with the wind, with the other islands? What are its lines of flight? What are its becomings? What is its longitude and latitude?

Before Theseus sets sail for Crete to fight the Minotaur, he promises his father, Aegeus, that if he's successful, upon his return to Athens he will change the sails from black to white. Theseus forgets to change sails on his return and his father, fearing the worst, casts himself into the sea. Traditionally, attributes such as color are thought to be accidental, not essential. Thus, the ship is the "same" regardless of the color of its sails. The story shows, however, that this is manifestly not the case. The ship may not be different in terms of substance or subject, but it is profoundly different in terms of the affects that it causes to circulate. A ship with black sails causes pain to circulate, while a ship with white sails causes joy to circulate. The white-sailed ship gets plotted in a different place from the

black-sailed ship, because their capabilities are so different. The haecceity of Theseus' voyage included a ship with black sails. The event of that voyage resonated throughout Greek history and continues to resonate today. To extract the ship from that haecceity is already to change it. A ship at port in Athens has become something other than the ship of the voyage. Not because the materials are no longer original, but because it can no longer affect and be affected in the same way. The Minotaur is dead. Aegeus is dead, and Theseus ends his life exiled from Athens.

### PLANS AND PLANES

The French word "*plan*" can be translated into English with the word "plan" or the word "plane." Translating "*plan*" as "plan" is helpful, because it has diagrammatic or organizational connotations, while translating it as "plane" is helpful because it has geometrical connotations. The difficulty arises, however, when Deleuze and Guattari want to distinguish two very different kinds of plans/planes. On the one hand, they want to speak of a plan/plane that is flat, immanent, diagrammatic, and consistent. On the other hand, they want to speak of another plan/plane that possesses a supplemental, transcendent dimension and is organized. It's almost as if "plane" works better with the former, and "plan" works better with the latter. That is, what Deleuze and Guattari call the "plane of consistency" is closer to what we naturally think of when we think of a plane in geometry, and, at the same time, "plane of organization" might be more clearly thought as a "plan of organization," since the word "plan" readily suggests "organization." By the same token "plane of consistency" seems already to be at odds with itself. This might be alleviated somewhat with the phrase "consistent plan." This, at least, might be fruitfully compared with "organized plan."

In the end, though, what Deleuze and Guattari are getting at with this distinction is becoming, the topic of the plateau as a whole. Subjects and substances do not become. They do not become precisely because they populate a plane of organization, they actualize an organized plan, a plan in which and by which they are organized. Only haecceities become. They become precisely because they populate a plane of consistency. They are not organized extensities but consistent intensities. They effectuate a consistent plan, a plan that makes connections not on the basis of imitation or analogy but on the basis of motion and rest. The orchid and the wasp is a consistency not an organization. The connection between Aegeus and

a black sail is a consistency not an organization. Relations of consistency are alogical, and asubjective. They cannot be predicted. They can only be discovered through experimentation.

It is tempting to think, though, that we are drifting back into an ontological dualism where we divide the world into fundamentally different kinds of things, those extensive subjects and substances that are organized by a transcendent plan and those intensive haecceities that consist immanently as becoming. In fact, what we have here is another instance of the continuity thesis. These two plans/planes are opposed not as different kinds of things but as opposed poles on a continuum. Every thing, every assemblage will have tendencies toward both of these poles at the same time. What is required for philosophy to create something new is a perceptual semiotics that sees things as haecceities, sees things in their tendency toward consistency, looks for lines of flight, for becomings.

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari caution us as they have throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* that while the necessary condition for creating something new is a shift in perceptual semiotics, this shift is not a sufficient condition.

But once again, so much caution is need to prevent the plane of consistency from becoming a pure plane of abolition or death, to prevent the involution from turning into a regression to the undifferentiated. Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages? (TP 270)

Not only will there always be tendencies toward stasis in every thing, but these tendencies themselves are a safeguard against total and violent deterritorialization. There is no guarantee that a becoming will increase the capacities of an assemblage. So, experiment, but experiment carefully. The cautionary example here is again Kleist. He had a lifeplan (*Lebensplan*), but it ended in the absolute abolition of a murder-suicide pact. Deleuze and Guattari go so far as to say that "it is impossible to be faithful to" the plane of consistency, a line of flight, becoming (TP 269). There are many ways we could discuss this infidelity. In the context of planes and plans, though, the issue is the ultimate inseparability of the two planes/plans. The reason they are inseparable is precisely because they are not things but tendencies. In every move toward becoming that an assemblage makes there is a countervailing tendency toward stratification. Conversely, every stratification is riddled with lines of flight seeking to escape stratification. Every assemblage is a complex combination



of these two tendencies. There are dangers with too closely identifying with either tendency, but these are dangers that must be risked in order to create something new.

### MOLECULES

In this section Deleuze and Guattari continue to build on the previous parts of the plateau. In particular, they build on the notion that “all becomings are already molecular” (TP 272). To this notion they add the concepts of “zone of proximity” and the virtues of becoming. Zone of proximity is a further attempt to explicate becoming. How exactly does becoming work? What becomes? How does it become? Imitation and analogy have already been explicitly eliminated as possible paths of becoming. Discussions of Spinoza and haecceities have shown us that becoming happens through intensities, though affects, but how exactly? Deleuze and Guattari answer these questions by invoking a zone of proximity. “Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes” (TP 272, emphasis in original). It is out of this closeness between the particles extracted and the becoming that a zone of proximity is established. “This principle of proximity or approximation is entirely particular and reintroduces no analogy whatsoever. It indicates as rigorously as possible a *zone of proximity* or *copresence* of a particle, the movement into which any particle that enters the zone is drawn” (TP 272–3, emphasis in original). To illustrate this, let’s return to Slepian’s becoming-dog. As we saw, Slepian’s becoming-dog was neither imitation nor analogy, but a becoming that produced a new ratio of motion and rest among his parts (mouth) and allowed certain affects or intensities to circulate (grasping). In terms of the zone of proximity, Deleuze and Guattari are claiming that Slepian extracts the particles (feet, shoes, mouth, grasping) that are in closest proximity, not to a molar dog, but to a becoming-dog, that is, a zone in which Slepian’s extracted particles enter into the same motion and affects as a dog’s. “A haecceity is inseparable from the fog and mist that depend on a molecular zone, a corpuscular space. Proximity is a notion, at once topological and quantal, that marks a belonging to the same molecule, independently of the subjects considered and the forms determined” (TP 273). As we saw in “Micropolitics and Segmentarity” Deleuze

and Guattari distinguish the supple segmentarity of the molecular from the rigid segmentarity of the molar. It is only at the molecular level of supple segmentarity that proximity becomes relevant. At the molar level, the rigid segmentarity that divides a line into discrete entities at the same time prevents the passage between segments. A supple segmentarity allows quanta or particles to pass through its permeable boundaries. The same thing can be said for the topological notion of proximity, which explores the transformations that are possible without cutting or tearing (rigidly segmenting) the object. A zone of proximity thus surrounds a haecceity as a permeable boundary, the place where intensities approach and transform into one another. Returning to Slepian again, we see that the particles that he detaches (feet, shoes, mouth, grasping) occupy the boundary around him, move from rigid to supple segmentarity, and thus are able to transform by taking on new relations of motion and rest.

The important thing about Slepian's transformation is that he does not imitate a molar dog. He combines with something else such that this new composition will allow canine affects to circulate on his plane of composition or body without organs. What Slepian combines with does not have to be related to a dog in any way. In fact, combining with items related to a dog is likely to short circuit the whole process, since this kind of combination is indicative of imitation rather than becoming. No, Slepian combines with shoes, but he combines with four shoes instead of two, and he combines his hands and shoes instead of just his feet. It's this shoe-hand combination that changes Slepian's posture. It changes the other kinds of combinations he's able to enter into and thus changes the affects that circulate. The affect of grasping now gets reterritorialized on the mouth. "Do not imitate a dog, but make your organism enter into composition with *something else* in such a way that the particles emitted from the aggregate thus composed will be canine as a function of the relation of movement and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they enter" (TP 274, emphasis in original).

In the end, though, what is the point of these becomings? Why should we prefer becoming, instead of simply being? What does Slepian gain in his becoming-dog? Wouldn't he be much better off with his hands free for grasping and his mouth free for talking? Deleuze and Guattari's response to these questions would be twofold. First, it's entirely possible that Slepian might be worse off in his becoming-dog. There are no guarantees with becoming. No one knows what a body can do until one experiments with it. Despite *prima facie* appearances, the outcome of a becoming cannot

be judged a priori. Second, Deleuze and Guattari do know that Slepian can only create something new through becoming. Being doesn't create the new. Being reproduces the same molar organizations over and over again. Slepian made himself into something new through a becoming-dog. Ultimately, Slepian's experiment founders on the tail. He can't seem to find a way to combine with something such that he enters into a zone of proximity with a wagging tail. Deleuze and Guattari's supposition is that here Slepian's thinking remains molar and analogical. He gets caught up in a signifying system that sees the tail and the penis as analogues of one another (TP 259). Insofar as Slepian remains caught up in this psychoanalytic signifying system, his becomings are blocked. His segments are rigidified and there can be no zone of indiscernibility, no circulation of affects, no becoming. Just because the experiment failed, though, does not mean that it is without value. Even in the face of failure, the experiment still creates something new. It shows Slepian a new way of combining with things that overcomes (however briefly) the rigid segments of human/animal and self/world. These becomings raise the possibility of future becomings, a virtuous circle.

It might seem strange to raise the notion of virtue at this point, but Deleuze and Guattari are explicit that becoming is a virtue (TP 280). Here, as is often the case, it is Spinoza's notion of virtue (as opposed to Aristotle's) that is driving their analysis. For Spinoza virtue is power, and again we must think of power here as capacity or ability, not domination.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the way in which one increases power or virtue for Spinoza is to enter into as many combinations as possible. The more one is capable of affecting and being affected the more power one has.

That which so disposes the human body that it can be affected in more ways, or which renders it capable of affecting external bodies in more ways, is advantageous to man, and proportionately more advantageous as the body is thereby rendered more capable of being affected in more ways and of affecting other bodies in more ways. On the other hand, that which renders the body less capable is harmful.<sup>9</sup>

Here in a nutshell we have both Spinoza's and Deleuze and Guattari's ethics. Becoming is a virtue because it renders us capable of affecting and being affected in more ways. At the same time, there are numerous obstacles to becoming. On the one hand, becoming may be blocked by molar organization and stratification. On the other hand, becoming may dissolve into oblivion and

annihilate itself. These are the extremes that Deleuze and Guattari are always cautioning us to avoid.

Deleuze and Guattari pursue this notion of virtue even further, though. Insofar as there are different kinds of molar organization and different kinds of stratification, they claim that there are different becomings related to each one. No doubt these could be multiplied indefinitely, but they focus on three here. As we saw in "Several Regimes of Signs" the three great strata that molarize our existence are the biological, the signifying, and the subjectification. The corresponding becomings are becoming-imperceptible, becoming-indiscernible, and becoming-impersonal. Chart 7a schematizes this relation. Setting the stratum in opposition to its becoming allows us to deepen our understanding of the zone of indiscernibility. As we saw in "Several Regimes of Signs" the signifying stratum organizes its signs hierarchically in concentric circles around a despotic signifier that organizes all of the other levels around it. A becoming in relation to that stratum is a becoming-indiscernible because the signs become detached from their stratum. These signs no longer refer to their central organizing point and are allowed to connect to other signs such that "meaning" is no longer the primary goal or outcome. In Slepian's case, for example, prior to his becoming-dog, the meaning of "dog" was organized by a whole set of molar dualisms such as human/animal and owner/pet. Slepian overcomes these dualisms not by imitating a dog, which would simply reinforce the molar dualisms, but by changing his posture. He detaches some signs from their hierarchical moorings (hand, mouth, grasping) and by changing his posture gives these signs a new consistency, an intensive consistency that constitutes a zone of indiscernibility between Slepian and a dog.

The biological stratum is the stratum of the organism. Traditionally, an organism has a function and a telos. It is discrete and rigidly segmented. The boundaries between the organism and the environment, and the organism and other organisms, are

**Chart 7a**

<b>Stratum</b>	<b>Becoming</b>
Biological	Imperceptible
Signifying	Indiscernible
Subjectification	Impersonal

impermeable. Deleuze and Guattari have already criticized this notion of the organism at length earlier in this plateau in their discussion of natural history, and in the “Geology of Morals” in their discussion of the debate between Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. What they add to their criticism here is the notion of a becoming-imperceptible that escapes this kind of stratification. The example they give is animal camouflage. Take a fish that survives by blending into its environment: “this fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions; but thus disorganized, disarticulated, it worlds with the lines of a rock, sand and plants, becoming imperceptible” (TP 280). The fish becomes-imperceptible precisely because the lines and shapes that run across its body do not add up to anything. The lines are disorganized. They are abstract (i.e., not discrete, but intensive). The fish doesn’t look like anything; it looks like everything. The boundaries between it and the environment become blurred, indistinct. Deleuze and Guattari say that the fish “*worlds with* the lines of a rock, sand and plants.” It is difficult to read this without also thinking about Heidegger’s claim that the “world worlds” in “On the Origin of the Work of Art.”<sup>10</sup> The topic is much too complex to pursue at length here, but it is worth noting that both Heidegger and Deleuze and Guattari are trying to think the relation between self and world without resorting to the dualistic ontology that supports such a distinction in the first place. In contrast to Heidegger, though, Deleuze and Guattari argue that all becomings on the organic stratum constitute a world, and they constitute a world by escaping the rigid segmentation of the organism. A world in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense is made of intensities that blur the boundaries between a fish and a rock. A world in this sense overcomes the dualism between interior and exterior. “The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior.”<sup>11</sup>

The stratum of subjectification, as we saw in “Several Regimes of Signs,” is the stratum on which subjects are formed as a betrayal of the signifying, despotic system. This betrayal is a deterritorialization, but it is a relative deterritorialization that continually segments itself and always risks being recaptured by the signifying system. The signifying and postsignifying systems combine into the white wall/black hole machine of faciality that dominates Western culture. In our discussion of faciality we saw that escaping faciality could not be a simple return to the primitive head but must involve something that goes beyond both the primitive head and the faciality of Christ to something Deleuze and Guattari call the “probe-head.” One

way to think of becoming in relation to the stratum of subjectification is in terms of the shift from faciality to a probe-head, which they call "becoming-impersonal." As we saw, faciality is bound up in the twin issues of identification and normalization and functions according to molar dualisms (human/animal, male/female, European/foreign) and deviances from those primary categories. To be a person means identifying with each of these categories. To be a good person means reducing the degree of deviation from these categories. Becoming in relation to faciality, however, cannot be a simple reversal of the categories. Such a reversal would simply reinforce the categories. For this reason it's crucial that becoming be molecular rather than molar. A molecular becoming in relation to persons would perforce be a becoming-impersonal.

In Slepian's case, for example, his transformation begins with the affect of hunger. He is hungry all the time. No person should be this hungry; therefore, I will become a dog. It is in precisely becoming-dog, though, that Slepian is no longer a person, no longer an "I." We don't need to posit an elaborate becoming such as Slepian's, though, in order to see a becoming-impersonal. It is a remarkably common occurrence. Becoming-impersonal happens in crowds. Crowds are shot through with intensities and are sensitive to the slightest provocation, particularly fear. Or, to use one of the hoariest clichés in sports, "there's no 'I' in team." This chestnut is used by coaches in every sport to motivate players to unselfish play. The fact is, though, that in the heat of play players are so focused on the ball that they're not thinking of themselves at all. The match is an event to be thought on the level of postures, intensities, and becomings, not on the level of positions, extensities, and subjects.

### *SECRETS AND LINES*

We first encountered the notion of the secret in our discussion of the novella. As we saw there, the novella is driven by the question "What happened?" and thus has the form of a secret. Deleuze and Guattari expand the notion of secret beyond the novella to relate it to the virtue of imperceptibility. "Only becomings are secrets; and the secret has a becoming" (TP 287). Thus, the secret is more than an inaccessible unknown. It is already a process; it is already an assemblage. In order to see the secret at work, Deleuze and Guattari turn to secret societies. The complexity of the secret manifests itself in the doubling inherent in both the secret and secret societies. Not only are there a series of initiatory rites that induct one into

the secret society, but there is a second, even more secret layer of enforcement that polices the boundaries of the secret society and ensures its operation and expansion. We see both layers clearly at work in the movie *Fight Club*. Here are the rules of Fight Club:

1st RULE: You do not talk about FIGHT CLUB.

2nd RULE: You DO NOT talk about FIGHT CLUB.

3rd RULE: If someone says “stop” or goes limp, taps out the fight is over.

4th RULE: Only two guys to a fight.

5th RULE: One fight at a time.

6th RULE: No shirts, no shoes.

7th RULE: Fights will go on as long as they have to.

8th RULE: If this is your first night at FIGHT CLUB, you HAVE to fight.

The first two rules concern the secrecy of the group, while the remaining rules and especially the eighth concern initiation into the group. From where do the rules originate, though? Who’s enforcing them? As the movie progresses, it becomes clear that some members of Fight Club are further initiated into an anti-capitalist, anarchist group called Project Mayhem. The putative leader of all of this is Tyler Durden. In the course of the movie, however, it becomes clear that Tyler suffers from dissociative identity disorder—one Tyler is fully aware of Project Mayhem’s plans, the other is not. The Tyler who is aware orders the other members of Project Mayhem to protect the secrecy of the society at all costs, even if it means killing him. By the end of the movie Project Mayhem has infiltrated every level of society through underground fight clubs and the service industries. Its ultimate goal is the destruction of consumer debt through the destruction of computer records that track both the debt and the credit scores related to them. “A secret society always acts in society as a war machine” (TP 287). That is, a secret society always acts as an agent of change in relation to the stasis of the state.

For Deleuze and Guattari the secret progresses through three stages of becoming. The first stage is the simple mysterious content, “What’s in the box?” “What’s in the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*?” “What did the narrator and Billie Joe throw off the Tallahatchie Bridge?” We also see this clearly in relation to secret societies. Our curiosity is piqued by seeing a windowless Mason’s lodge and wondering what goes on in there. Fight Club grows by rumor, by “secretion” as Deleuze and Guattari would say, as more and more men begin to show up to fight. The illustration that Deleuze and Guattari use is

Oedipus. This is the riddle of the Sphinx, the mysterious content that no one had been able to guess.

The second stage is the movement from the finite content of the secret to the infinite form of the secret. Here the secret morphs into that which structures everything and thus becomes infinite, the secret kernel around which everything is organized. Here Deleuze and Guattari have in mind the unconscious of psychoanalysis. Here the content is irrelevant. In fact, the content is nothing. "The news travels fast that the secret of men is nothing, in truth nothing at all" (TP 289). They also see the same development in the Oedipus cycle as the secret becomes the guilt around which Oedipus' life is organized. In *Fight Club* the infinite form of the secret comes out in the oft-quoted line, "You're the all singing, all dancing crap of the world." For psychoanalytic theorists such as Slavoj Žižek, reaching this point is the culmination of both analysis and theory. It's the punch line. The real (in Lacanian terms) is the nothing around which experience is organized. While Deleuze and Guattari do see this as part of the becoming of the secret, for them it is not the endpoint. The nothing of the secret can easily turn despotic and paranoid and thus stratify such a becoming into a signifying system, which is exactly what they think happens in psychoanalysis. The secret becomes creative in the third stage when it goes beyond the secret as infinite form and becomes a line of flight. Oedipus does this at Colonus. All is revealed. He's blind, and thus departs to his own burial and becomes imperceptible.

We couldn't see the man—he was gone—nowhere!  
And the king, alone,  
shielding his eyes,  
both hands spread out against his face as if—some  
terrible wonder flashed before his eyes and he,  
he could not bear to look.<sup>12</sup>

In *Fight Club* the secret becomes a line of flight as Project Mayhem succeeds in its objective to eliminate debt. Project Mayhem insinuates itself throughout society to the point that it's able to achieve the shift from a priori indebtedness to a priori innocence. Everyone now has a clean slate. Society itself can become.

Deleuze and Guattari continue to pursue the political implications of becoming in their discussion of memory and becoming. They contrast memories with blocks and points with lines. Both the memory/block opposition and the point/line opposition repeat the oppositions that we've seen throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*.



Furthermore, the same constraints apply to these oppositions. The oppositions are not between things but between tendencies. The issue as always is a perceptual semiotics, since every “thing” will evince both of these tendencies. The question is always one of creation. How must we see things if we wish to create something new? The political aspect arises as Deleuze and Guattari utilize a distinction among three terms: majority, minority, and minoritarian. They first introduced this distinction in “Several Postulates of Linguistics,” and their discussion here straightforwardly parallels that discussion (cf. TP 104ff). Both majority and minority are mirrors of one another. Becoming lies in becoming-minoritarian, and it’s for this reason that there can be no becoming-man. Man (especially European man) is the majority *par excellence*. Obviously, majority here cannot refer to numbers. European men make up only a tiny percentage of the world’s population. This is dwarfed even further when we compare it to animals and plants for example. Majority, then, refers to power—not the Spinozist “power to,” but the dominating “power over.” European men are the majority because they are politically dominant. As such, they necessarily create—as a corollary to their power over—a minority that is dominated. In this respect, majority and minority are segmented terms of a molar politics. The minoritarian is the molecular becoming that arises between the major and the minor. It is micropolitical. Becomings “therefore imply two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority” (TP 291). We can see this clearly in *Fight Club*. As the narrator of the film becomes increasingly disaffected with his job and the consumerist lifestyle it enables, he increasingly dissociates from himself. The dissociated personality that is generated by this disaffection ultimately blows up the narrator’s apartment so that he has no choice to withdraw from his privileged position. The dissociated personality, “Tyler Durden,” lives completely off-grid. He squats in a condemned house. He wears thriftstore clothing. He makes money by stealing the liposuctioned fat from clinics and turning it into soap. “There is an asymmetrical and indissociable block of becoming, a block of alliance” (TP 291). The two Tyler Durdens, the major and the minor, enter into a becoming-minoritarian. As the remainder of the movie makes clear, this is a political act, a micro-political act.

Deleuze and Guattari call the alliances generated by the two simultaneous movements of becoming-minoritarian “blocks.” We

have already discussed at length the way in which blocks of this type (such as the orchid and wasp) are rhizomatic alliances of intensity that overcome a perspective predicated on discrete entities. In this plateau, however, Deleuze and Guattari oppose these blocks to memory. "Becoming is an antimemory" (TP 294). The reason for this opposition is that "memories always have a reterritorializing function" (TP 294). That is, memories always ensure the subordination of variables of memory to an organized form. As we saw in our discussion of the Wolf-Man, his childhood dream was made to conform to the Oedipal story and thus reterritorialized. Contrast this childhood memory with a childhood block indicated by the common phrase, "I feel like a kid again." Notice that here the issue is not content. There is nothing to be reterritorialized. The issue is a circulation of affect. Whoever "feels like a kid again" has entered into a combination (a block of alliance) such that a zone of indiscernibility is entered and the affects that circulate are the same. Importantly the combination entered into here is not generated by memory. This is not nostalgia or imitation. Imitating a child, or trying to reproduce a childhood experience is the surest way not to enter into a becoming-child.

The same things that can be said of the opposition between memory and block can also be said of point and line. This is nothing other than the opposition between the discontinuous and the continuous. Points are discontinuous and discrete. They seek to trace everything onto a coordinate system. They seek to subordinate the continuous by forcing the line to trace a path from one point to another. From the perspective of the point, everything is a set of points. A line is simply a set of points marked with a beginning and an end. Deleuze and Guattari's project seeks to see things from a different perspective, the perspective of the continuous line. A line has no beginning and no end. It is always in the middle. It is not a set of points, but a movement that precludes the punctual. The line is the line of flight, that which cannot be organized, that which escapes every system. The line is the event, Nietzsche's labyrinth. It is also opposed to memory, which is a punctual system organized around the present. The line is the untimely.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the line leads ultimately to a discussion of the line in music and painting. The discussion of music in particular points ahead to the next section, "Becoming-music," as well as the next plateau, "Of the Refrain." On their reading, both painting and music are defined by the line. Painting deals with lines, but these lines are not to be confused with perspective. Perspective

memorializes lines, subordinates them to discrete points. We'll discuss this further in "The Smooth and the Striated" below. Music deals with lines of sounds. Lines of sounds are not to be confused with melody. The lines run through the music at variable speeds. "Speeds and slownesses inject themselves into musical form, sometimes impelling it to proliferation, linear microproliferations, and sometimes to extinction, sonorous abolition, involution, or both at once" (TP 296). Deleuze and Guattari see this notion best exemplified in the musical concept of the refrain (*ritournelle*). Though they will go on to complicate the concept significantly in the next plateau, here the refrain wanders across the musical form. It ignores the strict vertical and horizontal of the punctual system and creates a diagonal that passes by these points instead of connecting them. A refrain is a block of sound that becomes detached from the melody and instead of reinforcing the melody mutates it. The refrain is a musical line of flight.

It is important, though, to distinguish between the refrain as a musical concept and the child's refrain. The child's refrain would include a whole host of repetitive sounds that children make. Freud made one of these famous in his discussion of "Fort-Da." There are others, though, such as clapping games, chants that go with skipping rope, and even the "nanny-nanny-boo-boo" that children use to taunt one another. The child's refrain is territorial, and it sets boundaries that are neither political nor geographical. Music deterritorializes the child's refrain and combines it with other components so that it can enter into a becoming-child. There are other types of refrains that music takes up. Bird song is another territorial refrain that music deterritorializes so that the music can enter into a becoming-animal. The child's (or bird's, etc.) refrain is thus the content of music. This does not mean, however, that it is the origin of music. Rather, the refrain constitutes one of the variables that are expressed as music.

There is thus a perceptual semiotics that allows one to see becoming instead of being, lines instead of points, blocks instead of memories. Becoming itself is already complex, found on a continuum. Becoming posits porous boundaries that lie between assemblages, haecceities. One needs to be a sorcerer not a theologian to facilitate these crossings. The crossings between assemblages happen at the molecular level, not the molar level. The entire process is micropolitical. It concerns not the great molar categories human/animal, man/woman, adult/child but becomings-woman, becomings-child, and becomings-animal. These becomings insinuate themselves at

the interstices of the great molar dualisms. They cultivate lines of flight that exceed capture by a molar politics. Becoming is intensive and continuous, not extensive and discrete. Becoming has the temporality of the event, not the temporality of the present. Becomings are virtuous because they increase one's capacities, exceeding the organic, the signifying, and the strata of subjectification in a becoming-imperceptible, becoming-indiscernible, and becoming-impersonal. This is a perceptual semiotics that allows one to create the new.

## NOTES

1. And that "real contradictions are just for laughs" (TP 244, translation altered). An editorial error rendered the French (*mais que les contradictions réelles ne sont que pour rire*) as "real contradictions are not just for laughs" obscuring the meaning of the passage.
2. Kleist, *Penthesilea*, Scene 22.
3. Ibid.
4. It is important to note that the "genetic variables" referred to in the schema are not the genetic variables of biology but the variables that constitute groups and ideas.
5. Initial reactions were strong and often hostile. See, for example, Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. At the same time, however, there were feminist theorists who saw immediate value in Deleuze and Guattari's work. See, for example, Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*.
6. Von Uexküll, *A Foray in the Worlds of Animals and Humans*.
7. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*. See particularly Chapter 2, "Brain and Hand," and Chapter 8, "Gesture and Program."
8. Spinoza, *Ethics*, E4D8.
9. Spinoza, *Ethics*, E4P38.
10. Heidegger, "On the Origin of the Work of Art," p. 44.
11. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p. 125.
12. Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, p. 381.

*1837: Of the Refrain*

The eleventh plateau continues the discussion of the refrain with which Deleuze and Guattari concluded the previous plateau. While the discussion there focused primarily on the musical deployment of the refrain, here they wish to pursue a generalized account of the refrain. “In a general sense, *we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes* (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains)” (TP 323, emphasis in original). We can see already that the refrain is a complex of ideas, some of which have already been discussed, others of which are discussed at length here for the first time. Philosophically, the issue of the refrain responds to the longstanding problem of *consistency*. Deleuze and Guattari contend that assemblages achieve consistency through the refrain. This is a paradoxical claim, since as we’ve seen, the refrain is also “the most deterritorialized component, the deterritorializing vector” (TP 327). In the previous plateau this was called the “diagonal,” the line that does not connect two points but runs in the middle. In order to grasp the paradoxical nature of the claim here, let’s consider Plato’s theory of the forms as a solution to the problem of consistency. For Plato what makes all beautiful things consistent with one another is the form of the beautiful. That is, we recognize relative beauty because it participates in absolute beauty, which we recollect. On Plato’s model, it is the relatively beautiful things that are mobile and changeable. Physical objects may lose or gain their degree of beauty over time. In contrast to this, the form of beauty is immobile and changeless. Thus, that which determines consistency determines it precisely by its immutability. Not surprisingly,

this is the dominant way of thinking about consistency in Western thought. It is arborescent and depends on the discontinuity of that which makes consistent and that which is made consistent. Deleuze and Guattari's solution attempts to think consistency through the continuity of that which makes consistent and that which is made consistent.

Another way we might think about this problem of consistency is by means of set theory. Set theory also seeks to consistently group things, but as Bertrand Russell shows set theory produces its own set of paradoxes. These paradoxes arise when we begin to ask questions about whether the set is a member of itself. In the classic case of the regimental barber, who shaves all of those who do not shave themselves, it does not seem that he can consistently belong to the set of regimental barbers. Either he shaves himself and thus is not shaved by a regimental barber, or he is shaved by another regimental barber and thus fails in his duty as a regimental barber. The regimental barber occupies a paradoxical position with regard to the set that he supposedly defines. He both belongs and does not belong to it. Deleuze analyzes the status of paradoxes of this type at length in *The Logic of Sense*, where he embraced them as necessary for the production of meaning. In the same way in the context of *A Thousand Plateaus*, consistency is generated by the paradoxical element rather than thwarted by it.

In order to understand how the refrain generates consistency, though, we need to look more closely at the concept of milieu. A milieu is not a territory, though it can become a territory if it achieves consistency. We already make this distinction in a certain sense when we distinguish between territorial and non-territorial animals. The problem is that we only define "non-territorial" negatively. Milieu provides a positive term for the directionality of non-territorial animals. When this directionality becomes dimensional the animal is territorial. In order to illustrate this, let's look at the white-tailed deer. The white-tailed deer does not have a territory but it does have a milieu. This deer gets its name from that fact that it displays the white underside of its tail when fleeing danger. The deer's milieu is constituted by the direction given by the periodic repetition of this component (the white tail). Deleuze and Guattari call this periodic repetition "rhythm." The rhythm "codes" or gives shape to variables of the deer's life. "Thus the living thing has an exterior milieu of materials, an interior milieu of composing elements and composed substances, and intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and

action-perceptions" (TP 313). It is crucial to distinguish at this point between rhythm and meter. Rhythm differs from meter by virtue of the fact that rhythm continually produces difference. In the case of the fleeing deer, the periodic display transports the deer from one milieu to another, from an external milieu of danger to one of safety. Rhythm not only codes but at the same time transcodes, whereas meter only codes. We can see the same transcoding at work in the wasp and the orchid example that Deleuze and Guattari have used throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the terms they've introduced here, the wasp's milieu and the orchid's milieu are both transcoded by the other's.

Milieus are not territories; they are sub-territorial. That is, milieus when territorialized become components of a territory. "There is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive" (TP 315). The shift from milieu to territory is thus marked by two shifts from direction to dimension and from function to expression. We've already discussed the way in which milieus are directional in the case of the white-tailed deer. What would it mean, though, for that directionality to become dimensional? In the case of the white-tailed deer, it would mean that the display of the tail no longer simply defines a direction (away from danger), but defines a space. Furthermore, the tail becomes expressive (and not merely functional) when it is no longer tied to a type of action (flight), but "acquires a temporal constancy and a spatial range that make it a territorial, or rather territorializing, mark: a signature" (TP 315). In the case of the white-tailed deer, then, it would become territorial if it showed its white tail all the time, not just in times of danger.

The shift from milieu to territory also returns us to the issue of the refrain and consistency. As we saw above, issues of consistency are concerned with grouping disparate items in a single group. Not only does this generate paradoxes, but it is often the case that consistency is conceived in spatial terms. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a set that is not thought on the model of a container and its contents. Container/contents images quickly become concerned with a logic of interiority and exteriority. The spatial relation between interior and exterior results in a geographical conception of their relation. At the same time, the need to maintain the integrity of the border between interior and exterior results in a political conception of their relation. What sets Deleuze and Guattari's conception of consistency apart from traditional conceptions is that

its articulation in terms of the refrain does not result in a spatial account of consistency. Furthermore, and precisely because the account of consistency is not spatial, territory is not thought of as fundamentally geographical or political. Of course, there are geographical and political conceptions of territory. Deleuze and Guattari's point is that these conceptions presuppose the refrain rather than ground it.

A brief look at Kant is instructive here, since he so clearly thinks consistency and territory in geographical and political terms. As we've already seen, Kant's account of consistency follows from his denial of the continuity thesis. Consistency is provided by the way that an ontologically discontinuous form is applied to content. As a result, Kant's critical work can be seen as dealing with different aspects of the same border dispute. The concern of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, then, is ensuring that the categories of the understanding remain within the bounds of possible experience. That Kant thinks these bounds in geographical and political terms becomes explicit in the Preface to the A Edition where he likens the dispute to a battle between the forces of civilization and marauding nomads.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, at the end of the Analytic, Kant famously uses the image of an island surrounded by unnavigable, stormy seas.<sup>2</sup> In response to the Pantheism Controversy, Kant wrote an essay entitled "What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?" In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the issue is the practical deployment of reason as distinct from its theoretical deployment. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant is concerned with the distinction between determining judgment and reflective judgment. Finally, in both "The Conflict of the Faculties" and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* the issues of geographical and political territory are front and center.

How, then, does the refrain allow us to think consistency without resorting to a geographical and political conception of spatiality? Indeed, is it possible to think consistency without resorting to spatiality at all? Deleuze and Guattari respond to these questions with a series of vignettes at the beginning of the plateau. The first vignette concerns a child afraid of the dark. He sings to himself to "orient himself with his little song as best he can" (TP 311). There are two important points to note here. First, there is orientation, but it is not orientation with regard to a geographical or political boundary. The child does not orient himself with regard to a pre-existing set of boundaries, as in the Kantian schema. Rather the orientation takes place in spite of the boundless chaos that encroaches from every



direction and threatens to envelop him. Second, the orientation is sonorous not spatial. Lines are not drawn, there is only a rhythm that creates a “calming and stabilizing . . . center in the heart of chaos” (TP 311). This rhythm creates what above we referred to as a milieu. It has direction but not dimension.

The second vignette finds us at home. Home is not merely the “momentary determination of a center” but the organization of a space. Here we move from milieu to territory, from direction to dimension. Even at this point, though, Deleuze and Guattari continue to emphasize the sonorous component to this organization. A home is not primarily defined by its material components. That is, the walls of a house do not make it consistent. Rather, sound provides some of the consistency. There is a set of sounds that combine to give a home consistency. Sounds of cooking, talking, singing, YouTube videos playing on the computer, Lego bricks clicking and being shuffled. Furthermore, the home feels violated when it’s invaded by sounds from the neighborhood, car alarms, the thumping bass from passing cars, neighbors getting increasingly loud as they drink on a sunny afternoon.

The forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do. This involves an activity of selection, elimination and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged, to enable them to resist, or even to take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn. (TP 311)

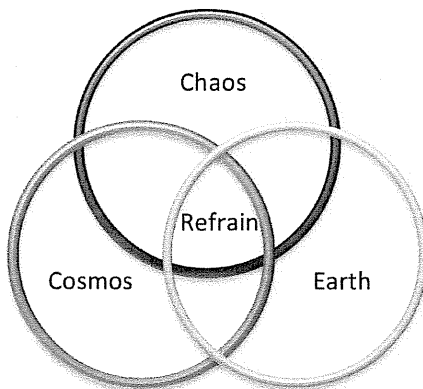
Going home is the territorialization of the stable center created by rhythm. The stable center is given dimension and consistency at home. Home is both an extraction from chaos and the preservation of what is extracted. In addition to calling this organized space a “territory” Deleuze and Guattari also refer to it as “earth” or the “natal.”

The third vignette concerns leaving home. The territory opens on to something new. Children grow up; they leave home. They take with them some of the sounds of home, but these sounds combine with new sounds. These new combinations create new rhythms, and new milieus are formed, which may become new territories. “One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines that mark the customary path of a child and graft themselves onto or begin to bud ‘lines of drift’ with different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sonorities” (TP 311–12). At this point the process begins all over again. Or,

rather, the process is continuous. Rhythm protects from chaos, a circle selects some aspects to create a territory. The territory opens on to the new, the future, what Deleuze and Guattari here call the "cosmic."

These three vignettes correspond to the three aspects of the refrain. The refrain is a territorial assemblage that is found at the intersection of chaotic, terrestrial, and cosmic forces. It is tempting to think, especially given the way that the vignettes are laid out, that the aspects of the refrain are moments in a progressive development. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit, though, that all three aspects are part of the refrain and usually appear simultaneously rather than successively. This idea becomes clearer if we think of this in relation to what we've already seen in *A Thousand Plateaus*. As we saw in "Geology of Morals" strata always have two sides or two tendencies. One side faces the plane of consistency and the other side faces the plane of organization. Or, all strata have a molecular and a molar side. That is, a side open to both intensity and extensity. The refrain has these tendencies as well. It is extracted out of chaos, but it simultaneously faces the territorial and extensive forces of earth and the deterritorializing and intensive forces of the cosmos. We can even understand the refrain within the basic framework of this book. A refrain, as an assemblage, will have two opposed tendencies, one toward stasis and one toward change. Earth and cosmos play the role of these two poles with regard to the refrain. A refrain, in these terms, is then a consistent (rhythmic) selection of chaos that tends toward both stability and the new (see Chart 7b). The consistency generated by the refrain, however, clearly does not

**Chart 7b**



presuppose a political or geographical conception of boundary. There's no sense that the territory marked by the refrain is either permanent or needs to be permanent. There's also no sense that the territory is hermetically sealed. All of the territories are laid out on a plane of consistency. Different territories might be organized around different refrains, but these different territories do not differ ontologically but sonorously, gesturally, according to differing speeds. Territories are open to one another not closed off from one another.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the refrain thus identifies three components of any assemblage. Later, as we'll see, I think there's a fourth aspect to refrains that takes it beyond assemblages. This is the cosmic component, which I call "extra-assemblage." The first is the infra-assemblage, which is sub-territorial, the components that go to make up an assemblage or territory. In this plateau, Deleuze and Guattari articulate the infra-assemblage in terms of rhythm and milieu. The deer's flight, which we discussed above, is an action that moves the deer from one milieu to another. In this case the deer moves from a milieu of watchful grazing (no white tail), through a milieu of fear (white tail), to a milieu of safety (no white tail). The passage through these milieus is a rhythm, in this case the rhythm of the white tail being shown and concealed. "Rhythm is located between milieus" (TP 313). There is no meter or cadence to the rhythm of the tail. It does not repeat predictably. Rhythm is an event, a haecceity, singular points at which direction changes.

The second component of the refrain is the infra-assemblage. Here we move to the territory proper. "The territory is in fact an act that affects milieus and rhythms, that 'territorializes' them. The territory is the product of a territorialization of milieus and rhythms" (TP 314). Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the difference between the milieu and the territory by looking at the difference between territorial and non-territorial animals. They reject theories in which the territory is primary and say, rather, that "territorialization is an act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitative" (TP 315). In non-territorial animals rhythms are functional not expressive. As we've seen in the example of the white-tailed deer, the white tail is functional. The display of the white tail only occurs to fulfill a specific function, such as alarm. A rhythm "becomes expressive . . . when it acquires temporal constancy and a spatial range that makes it a territorial, or rather territorializing, mark: a signature" (TP 315). The territorializing mark

can be sonorous, as in the case of bird song. It can be visual, as in the case of distinct markings on display all the time. The territorializing mark can even be olfactory, as in the case of specially scented urine and feces. The territorialization of rhythms and milieus converts them into expressive components of the territory. It is, of course, not the case that in this shift from function to expression the functional aspect is eliminated. The functional role remains; it is, however, subordinated to the territory.

Because territories form as a selection of the forces of chaos and at the same time as a way of keeping those forces at bay, they produce a relation between an interior and an exterior. This is not a politically or geographically determined interior and exterior. As we've already seen, the relation is the result of a becoming-expressive of rhythm. "*In effect, expressive qualities or matters of expression enter shifting relations with one another that 'express' the relation of the territory they draw to the interior milieu of impulses and exterior milieu of circumstances*" (TP 317, emphasis in original). The interactions among internal milieus within a territory constitute what Deleuze and Guattari call "territorial motifs." The relations that these internal milieus enter into with regard to external circumstances they call "territorial counterpoints." Territorial motifs and counterpoints generate two aspects of a territory. A territory is, on the one hand, the minimum "critical distance between two beings of the same species" (TP 319). This critical distance is expressed through marking(s). That is, the territory is an expression of marks, whether these marks take the form of particular colors on a male bird, or urine at strategic points throughout the territory. At the same time, and on the other hand, a territory is also "the coexistence of a maximum number of different species in the same milieu" (TP 320). This maximum differentiation is achieved through specialization. A bear and a bird may share the same milieu because in their markings they constitute very different territories. The bird's territory is marked sonorously, while the bear's territory is marked through scent and scratching tree trunks.

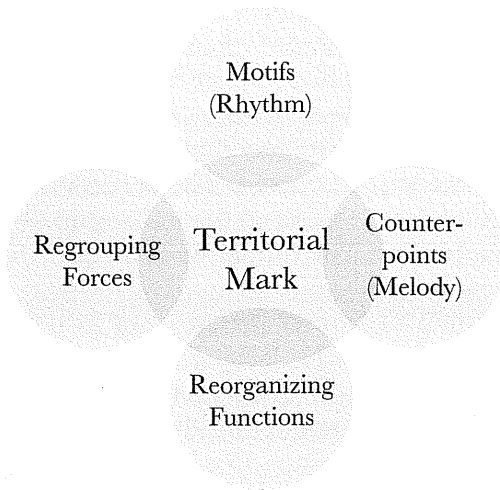
In addition to the two aspects of a territory, the minimum distance and maximum diversity that follow from territorial motifs and counterpoints, territory has two effects: "*a reorganization of functions and a regrouping of forces*" (TP 320, emphasis in original). "Reorganization of functions" is another way of talking about functions becoming expressive. What Deleuze and Guattari are highlighting here is the way in which the becoming expressive of functions does not mean that they cease to be functions, rather that

these functions are gathered (achieve consistency) such that they territorialize. As an example, we can follow Deleuze and Guattari in their discussion of specialized or professional refrains. A market is a milieu that is territorialized by professional refrains. Each seller shouts out what he or she is selling. These refrains mark a territory sonorously. These sonorous marks produce the two aspects of territory that we just discussed. The territory is defined by the minimum distance from rivals and the maximum diversity of professionals at the same time. The functions of the professionals are thus territorially reorganized.

The “regrouping of forces” “relates not to occupations but to rites and religions” (TP 321). What Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here takes us back to the second vignette. Home not only reorganizes functions (cooking in the kitchen, sleeping in the bedroom), but it also regroups forces. Home selects some forces out of chaos, bundles them together, and at the same time protects them from chaos. Home creates a division between the interiority of the hearth and the exteriority of the elements. Is it any wonder that we find religion ensconced in the home? Of course, we don’t only find religion in the home (and here Deleuze and Guattari verge on a general theory of religion). We find religion wherever “the territory groups all the forces of the different milieus together in a single sheaf constituted by the forces of the earth” (TP 321). Religion presupposes and ritualizes the “intense center” found at the heart of every territory. A ritual is nothing other than an attempt to channel forces. “There is always a place, a tree or grove, in the territory where all the forces come together in a hand-to-hand combat of energies. The earth is this close embrace” (TP 321). Furthermore, since this regrouping of forces is nothing other than a selection of forces from chaos, the intense center is paradoxically inside and outside the territory. It is inside the territory insofar as it is the consistency of these various forces. It is outside the territory insofar as it is the boundary between the interior and the exterior, between home and chaos.

The territorializing mark thus produces consistency in four simultaneous ways: 1) it develops motifs (rhythmic faces); 2) it develops counterpoints (melodic landscapes); 3) it reorganizes functions; and 4) it regroups forces. Chart 8 shows how we might schematize the relation. If we return to the example of sellers in a market we can see all of these at work at once. A seller marks himself through his clothes, voice, and wares as a silversmith. His voice expands to constitute his territory. His calls are a rhythm. Setting

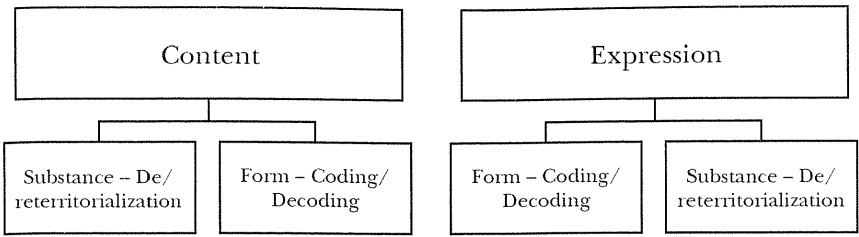
Chart 8



up and taking down his shop is a rhythm. The work he performs is a rhythm. A rival silversmith is greeted with an even louder call. The rival silversmith is a counterpoint to the rhythm. The rival silversmith is external to the silversmith's territory. This externality in relation to the silversmith's rhythm forms a melody, a landscape of expanding and contracting territories as the silversmith confronts his rival. At the same time, the silversmith will welcome the tailor or the grocer. Their territories overlap and constitute the territory of the market, which has its own motifs and counterpoints. As we've already seen, the silversmith has reorganized his functions so that they are expressive. He is "the" silversmith. The silversmith gathers and groups forces of fire, metal, and dexterity in order to create his wares. This is his earth, the forces he extracts from and protects from chaos. Regrouping these forces is accompanied with ritual. When must the fire for the crucible be lit? How hot must it be? How does one know when it's hot enough? How does one know when the metal is pure enough to work? How long must the metal cool before it can be worked? These questions are all answered through ritual. He also groups these forces such that their product can be sold. The market itself is a regrouping of forces, in this case economic forces. The analysis here is scalable, but we'll wait until the next plateau to discuss how the state fits in here.

At this point Deleuze and Guattari return to the issue of coding. As we saw in both the "Geology of Morals" and "Postulates of Linguistics," coding is a way of talking about the formal aspect of a

Chart 9



stratum (or “consistency” in the language of this plateau). Of course a stratum is always double-articulated into content and expression, which are themselves in variable relation with one another. If we look again at the chart from the previous plateaus we see that the processes of territorialization and coding are separated along the substance/form axis (see Chart 9). We can use this distinction to think about two separate issues: speciation and the innate/acquired dichotomy that usually informs behavioral discourses. One of the ways that speciation occurs is through reproductive isolation. That is, part of a species’ territory gets divided such that contact between two groups is diminished or prevented. In such a scenario a new species might develop. Notice, though, that speciation by reproductive isolation is a function of territorialization (as opposed to mutation, which would be a function of decoding).

Territorialization is precisely such a factor that lodges on the margins of the code of a single species and gives the separate representatives of that species the possibility of differentiating. It is because there is a disjunction between the territory and the code that the territory can indirectly induce new species. Wherever territoriality appears, it establishes an intraspecific *critical distance* between members of the same species; it is by virtue of its own disjunction in relation to *specific differences* that it becomes an oblique, indirect means of differentiation. (TP 322)

Territory and code are thus found on the margins of each other. In the case of territorial species one of the ways that they’re coded is genetically. That is, DNA is one of the milieus that is gathered in a territory. At the same time, the functions of those various milieus (e.g., hunting, mating, sound, and color) become expressive, which creates the minimum critical distance between same-sex members of the same species. In this intraspecies distance (rhythm and melody) arises the possibility of change. “It is less a question of evolution than of passage, bridges and tunnels” (TP 322).

Within this context we can also see how the innate/acquired dichotomy can be recast in terms of code and territory. From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, asking what is "innate" already presupposes too much. In particular, it presupposes an answer to the question of consistency, an arborescent answer. The innate/acquired dichotomy presupposes a rigid boundary between an organism and its environment, rather than supposing that an organism is a "selection of the exterior" and that the environment is a "projection of the interior."<sup>3</sup> The coding of a milieu (the innate) is inseparable from a movement of decoding, just as territorialization (the acquired) is inseparable from a movement of deterritorialization. Milieus pass into territories through decoding, and territories pass into other territories (or as we'll see, beyond them).

The infra-assemblage thus concerns milieus as components of a territory, functional rhythms. The infra-assemblage gathers these components as a consistent aggregate. Here the functional rhythms become expressive in two ways as motifs and counterpoints. Furthermore, with regard to forces an assemblage regroups and reorganizes them. Assemblages, however, are not found in a vacuum. They are always in relation to other assemblages. This is the level of the inter-assemblage. Of course, all of these levels are operative at once. Indeed, as we've seen, it's impossible to talk about one level without talking about the others. These inter-assemblage relations may be either intraspecies or interspecies. An example of an intraspecies inter-assemblage is courtship. A male stagemaker bird (*Scenopoetes dentirostris*) attracts a mate by cutting leaves with its toothed beak and displaying the pale underside of the leaves on the ground. Through the rhythm and melody of the leaf-cutting the male bird establishes a new territory adjacent to the old territory and at the same time induces a female bird to join him. Both the male and the female pass from one assemblage to another, from unattached birds to mated pair. Inter-assemblage relations can also move between species. The clearest example of this is parasitism, as when a cowbird lays its eggs in the nest of a mockingbird.

For Deleuze and Guattari the key to inter-assemblage relations is what they call a "machine." "A machine is like a set of cutting edges that insert themselves into the assemblage undergoing deterritorialization, in order to draw the variations and mutations [*pour en tracer les variations et mutations*]" (TP 333, translation altered). A machine thus opens up an assemblage to other assemblages. The leaves of the stagemaker bird are thus a courtship machine that opens on to a mating assemblage. The cowbird's egg in the mockingbird's nest



is a machine that opens the mockingbird mating assemblage onto a new interspecies assemblage. Food is a machine that allows bacteria to colonize the human gut and thus create a new interspecies assemblage.

It is also possible for a machine to open “beyond all assemblages” to the absolutely deterritorialized, the Cosmos. This is the fourth aspect of the refrain. Whereas infra- and inter-assemblage deterritorializations are relative deterritorializations (that is, they are immediately reterritorialized), cosmic deterritorializations are extra-assemblage deterritorializations (that is, they are not reterritorialized). With this possibility in mind we can understand the opening vignettes in their full complexity. The child’s song in the first vignette is the move from chaos to milieu. The second vignette is the move from milieu to territory that establishes an intense center that is both a selection and protection from chaos. The intense center of home, earth, the natal forms both the interior and the exterior of the territory. It is the deterritorializing edge. The deterritorializing edge is the opening that concerns the third vignette. As we’ve just seen, though, the opening is very complex. On the one hand, the opening makes two kinds of relative deterritorializations possible (infra- and inter-assemblage). On the other hand, the opening also makes absolute deterritorialization possible, a cosmic deterritorialization (extra-assemblage). As always, though, there is no guarantee that a deterritorialization will produce the new. It is always possible that “instead of opening up the deterritorialized assemblage onto something else, it may produce an effect of closure, as if the aggregate had fallen into and continues to spin in a kind of black hole. This is what happens under conditions of precocious or extremely sudden deterritorialization . . .” (TP 333–4). As Deleuze and Guattari have continually reiterated, deterritorialization is never risk free. Suicidal collapse is always a possibility.

The three vignettes are all aspects of the refrain. Thus, the interrelation between chaos, earth, and cosmos allows Deleuze and Guattari to classify refrains in four ways:

1) territorial refrains that seek, mark, assemble a territory; 2) territorialized function refrains that assume a special function in the assemblage . . . ; 3) the same, when they mark new assemblages, pass into new assemblages by means of deterritorialization-reterritorialization . . . ; 4) refrains that collect or gather forces . . . sometimes bring on a movement of absolute deterritorialization . . . They cease to be terrestrial becoming cosmic . . . (TP 326–7)

We've already seen this distinction between relative and absolute deterritorialization in "Several Regimes of Signs," where the issue was the formation of a subjectivity that escaped the despotic formation. What Deleuze and Guattari add to the discussion here is an explicit application of these ideas to the biological stratum, particularly birds. More importantly, though, they show how this account solves the problem of consistency in a seemingly unlikely way. What could be more transient, more inconsistent, than a child singing in the dark? Yet, Deleuze and Guattari argue that already at this point we have the rhythmic interplay between chaos and order out of which consistency might grow. They note that this is where ancient cosmogonies begin, as well. But, this is a very different view of consistency, a rhizomatic view of consistency, rather than an arborescent view of consistency. Consistency does not pre-exist any more than territories pre-exist. Consistency is also not dependent on presupposing a theory of natural kinds, which proposes to "carve nature at the joints." Consistency is the result of territorialization. It is not imposed externally as a conceptual scheme; it is the result of the self-organization of assemblages. Consistency is "the becoming-expressive of rhythm" (TP 316).

The rhizomatic view of consistency has several implications. The first is non-linearity. If consistency is not imposed arborescently, then consistency does not have a discontinuous origin. "There is no beginning from which a linear sequence would derive, but rather densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, showerings, like so many intercalary events" (TP 328). A machine (a leaf) is inserted (intercalary event) into an assemblage (a bird species), which opens the assemblage onto a new assemblage (courtship pair). The consistency achieved here is the consolidation of a great range of heterogeneous elements. It is also fragile and subject to mutation, a rhizome not a tree. The second implication of the rhizomatic view of consistency is that "there must be an arrangement of intervals, a distribution of inequalities, such that it is sometimes necessary to make a hole in order to consolidate" (TP 328). In order to think about this implication we can return to our previous discussion of intensities, particularly the egg. The egg white is composed of different zones of intensity, protein gradients that, under the right conditions, will convert to the discrete extensities of various body parts. In its intensive form, though, the egg is nothing other than a "distribution of inequalities" in this case of proteins. The third implication of the rhizomatic view of consistency is "a superposition of disparate rhythms, an articulation from within of

an interrhythmicity, with no imposition of meter or cadence" (TP 328–9). Think again, here, of the second vignette, home. Home is no longer a single song that holds chaos at bay; it is the overlapping of numerous different rhythms, singing, television, cooking, homework, etc. None of these rhythms conform to a cadence, though. They expand and contract throughout the day, and yet there is a *consistency* to these rhythms. They are consolidated as a single territory, but this territory has nothing to do with externally imposed form. This is the consistency of hylozoism not hyломorphism, a rhizomatic not an arborescent consistency.

Of course, this is not the first time we have seen the term "consistency." Prior to this plateau, though, it was always used in the phrase "plane of consistency." In our previous discussions we saw that the plane of consistency was opposed to the plane of organization, an opposition that paralleled the opposition between rhizome and tree. Furthermore, we saw that this opposition was an epistemological rather than an ontological distinction. That is, the two planes were tendencies toward which any assemblage might tend, the tendencies toward stasis and change. What Deleuze and Guattari propose in the wake of these two tendencies is a "perceptual semiotics" in which we rethink "things" in terms of the tendency toward change. Such a perceptual semiotics does not eliminate the tendency toward stasis but makes it a complex and temporary effect of the tendency toward change. There is no ontologically discontinuous form that might guarantee stasis. There is only the continual outworking of becoming itself. In this plateau the outworking of becoming has been articulated in the sonorous terms of the refrain, not because consistency is always sonorous, but because beginning with rhythm (as the coding of chaos), moving toward the gathering of rhythm around an intense center (territorialization/earth), and perhaps moving beyond the intense center on a new rhythm (absolute deterritorialization/cosmos), allows Deleuze and Guattari to think consistency independently of politics and geography and commensurate with the creation of the new. Their use of "consistency" in this plateau, then, is entirely in keeping with their use of "plane of consistency." They make this explicit when they refer to the "plane of consistency" in this plateau.

Thus it is not surprising that the distinction we were seeking was *not between assemblages and something else but between two limits of any possible assemblage*, in other words between the system of strata and the plane of consistency. We should not forget that the strata rigidify and are organized on the plane of consistency, and that the plane of consistency is at

work and is constructed in the strata, in both cases piece by piece, blow by blow, operation by operation. (TP 337, emphasis added)

This is perhaps the most succinct statement in *A Thousand Plateaus* of the basic thesis of this guide. Deleuze and Guattari do not see their task as one of sorting assemblages into “good” rhizomatic assemblages and “bad” arborescent assemblages. Rhizome and tree, consistency and organization, change and stasis—all of these oppositions are the two opposed limits of any assemblage. Perceptual semiotics consists in seeing the ways in which different assemblages construct and map out this opposition.

### *MUSIC AND THE REFRAIN*

In the previous plateau Deleuze and Guattari broached the notion of musicality in relation to the refrain. For the most part their discussion of musicality in this plateau has been focused on birdsong. There are occasional references to music, but they do not turn to fully orchestral music until near the end of the plateau. For convenience sake they divide the history of Western music into three basic stages—classical, romantic, and modern—and argue that these three stages (while not discrete) can be characterized by their respective relations to milieus, territory, and cosmos.

To put the stages in the terms we have been just discussing, the classical period is characterized by the coding and stratification of milieus. Beneath the formal constraints of the classical period, though, lies an engagement with chaos. “What the artist confronts in this way is chaos, the forces of chaos, the forces of a raw and untamed matter upon which Forms must be imposed to make substances, and Codes in order to make milieus” (TP 338). Even at this level of complexity and accomplishment, classicism is the attempt to stabilize chaos for a brief moment. It is the child’s refrain.

Romanticism in contrast to classicism is characterized by the process of territorialization. Its focus is the earth, home, even if home is inaccessible in the misty past or yet to be achieved in a utopian future. The artist is no longer charged with wresting order from chaos, a divine charge. Rather, the artist has the heroic charge to found, even in defiance of God. Faust and Prometheus come to mind. Deleuze and Guattari even mention here the relation between Protestantism and Catholicism. Protestantism is the founding of a territory in opposition to the milieus of Catholicism. In this context, Luther’s “Here I stand” at the Diet of Worms becomes a

heroic founding gesture.<sup>4</sup> Romanticism thus finds its focus in the heroic individual and his or her relation to a territory, but as a result “what [German] romanticism lacks most is a people” (TP 340). Musically, then, this generates a conflict between the singular voice of the hero and the instrumentation of the earth. But, German romanticism is not the only form that romanticism takes. In other forms (Slavic and Latin), “everything is put in terms of the theme of a people and the forces of a people” (TP 338). Musically, this generates the conflict between the earth and the people, and depending on one’s focus results in differing conceptions of orchestration. Deleuze and Guattari have Wagner (forces of earth) and Verdi (forces of a people) in mind here as examples of this opposition, but they also acknowledge that some composers, such as Berlioz, manage “to pass from one pole to another in [their] orchestration” (TP 342).

Modernism in contrast to both classicism and romanticism is characterized by an opening “onto the forces of the Cosmos” (TP 342). Deleuze and Guattari explain that the issue here is technique, not a gradual unfolding and progression, as in Hegel’s conception of absolute spirit. The technique of classicism is one of coding milieus. As such, this technique establishes a form/substance relation. This is the stratification of chaos in milieus. The technique of romanticism establishes a “continuous development of form and the continuous variation of matter” (TP 342). This is territorialization of milieus and the establishment of the earth as intense center. Modernism’s technique “is now a direct relation *material-forces*. A material is molecularized matter, which must accordingly ‘harness’ forces: these forces are necessarily forces of the Cosmos” (TP 342). The movement that Deleuze and Guattari are trying to capture here is the movement from the molar to the molecular, from the extensive to the intensive, the movement of absolute deterritorialization, where “the essential thing is no longer forms and matters, or themes, but forces, densities, intensities” (TP 343). In painting this means rendering nonvisual forces visible. In music it means making nonsonorous forces sonorous. In philosophy it means elaborating “a material of thought in order to capture forces that are not thinkable in themselves” (TP 342). All of these are examples of the cosmic refrain.

Let’s look briefly, then, at what Deleuze and Guattari identify as a cosmic refrain in philosophy, Nietzsche’s “eternal return.” They call it “a little ditty, a refrain, but [one] which captures the mute unthinkable forces of the Cosmos” (TP 342). The eternal

return appears first in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* and then in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which was composed around the same time. In *The Gay Science* the idea of the eternal return is posed as a thought experiment. The purpose of the thought experiment functions analogously to Kant's categorical imperative. That is, both are tests. What they are testing, though, is radically different. Whereas Kant's test is a way of seeing whether or not one's will is in conformity with reason, Nietzsche's test is a way of seeing whether or not one affirms life. Nietzsche's test works this way: Imagine that a demon comes to you and says that you will live this life over and over again in exactly the same way with no changes. Would you consider this a curse or a blessing? It is only insofar as you would consider this a blessing that you would affirm life. Before we look at this as a cosmic refrain, let's think about it as simply a refrain. As we've seen, the refrain is a way of accounting for consistency. In what way might we think of the eternal return as providing consistency? To begin with, the idea of the eternal return is reflective, it forces one to gather one's life together as a whole and ask if one has any regrets. Second, the whole that's gathered is a heterogeneous whole, warts and all. The test of the eternal return is not to see one's life as an unbroken string of unalloyed goods. The test is to gather the mundane and the sublime, the noble and the ignoble, to see if one can affirm all of this unreservedly. The willingness to live the exact same life repeatedly, eternally is the seal of one's affirmation. It confirms that life *as such* is a blessing, not simply the parts that seem the most beneficial. Third, there is a rhythm to this refrain that is not a cadence. Nietzsche begins the discussion this way, "What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you in your loneliest loneliness . . ." <sup>5</sup> The demon arrives unannounced and unlooked for. It arrives not regularly, but in concert with one's affective states. There is a rhythm here, an affective cycle, but there's no regularity to it.

Even if we grant that the eternal return is a refrain, though, in what sense is it a cosmic refrain? How does it "capture forces that are not thinkable in themselves"? How does it go beyond milieu and territory into absolute deterritorialization? The eternal return tries to think life as such. That is, life as a deterritorialized flow. The demon's description of what returns is a heterogeneous consistency: "pain . . . joy . . . this spider . . . this moonlight between the trees." <sup>6</sup> What we have here is a direct relation between material and forces that goes beyond the form-substance relations of milieu and the continuous variations of territory. Another way we might

see the absolutely deterritorialized nature of this refrain is to note that it speaks exclusively in terms of non-subjective affects. It speaks not only in terms of thoughts and sighs, but also of spiders and moonlight. According to the demon one is a "speck of dust" in an "eternal hourglass." The sand flows, life flows. The refrain of the eternal return puts us in contact with an outside, the destratified, deterritorialized Cosmos that is molecularized life.

By way of conclusion Deleuze and Guattari introduce one last image to help us think about the refrain and the problem of consistency: the glass harmonica. A glass harmonica is a rotating set of nested glasses that produce different tones when touched by moistened fingers. It creates an ethereal, otherworldly sound that was rumored to make people go mad. No doubt Deleuze and Guattari want to suggest all of these facets given their view of madness. They write:

So just what is a refrain? *Glass harmonica*: the refrain is a prism, a crystal of space-time. It acts upon that which surrounds it, sound or light, extracting from it various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations. The refrain also has a catalytic function: not only to increase the speed of the exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it, but also to assure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural affinity, and thereby to form organized masses. (TP 348, emphasis in original)

Notice that Deleuze and Guattari also play on the visual aspects of the glass harmonica. Not only does it produce sound, but it also refracts light. The refrain, then, produces the consistency of heterogeneous elements (glass, finger, water, sound). As we've seen, there are different refrains (milieu, terrestrial, and cosmic), and each produces a different kind of consistency.

Furthermore, what has remained implicit throughout this plateau but is made explicit here is the relation between the refrain and time. Time itself is a rhythm, but not a cadence. But, the time of a deer fleeing a predator is very different from the time of a revolution, and these times are different from the time of the eternal return. Deleuze and Guattari say it as directly and plainly as possible: "the refrain fabricates time . . . Time is not an a priori form; rather, the refrain is the a priori form of time, which in each case fabricates different times" (TP 349). Not only have they managed to rethink consistency without resorting to politics or geography, they also rethink time without making it the ground of being, as in Heidegger, or without reproducing the antinomy of space and

time. It all begins simply enough, a child singing in the dark. This is just enough rhythm to hold back chaos for a little while.

NOTES

1. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Aix.
2. Ibid., A235/B294.
3. Deleuze, *Spinoza's Practical Philosophy*, p. 125.
4. There is some debate about whether Luther actually said these words. The very fact, though, that they are so widely attributed to Luther, and are emblematic of his defiance of the Catholic authority, suggests that if Luther did not see himself as a romantic hero, he was subsequently made into one.
5. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §342.
6. Ibid.



1227: *Treatise on Nomadology*—  
*The War Machine*

In 1972 a few months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* and eight years before the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Guattari writes, “Gilles is working like a madman on his nomads.”<sup>1</sup> The two implications here are that Deleuze and Guattari began working on the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus* immediately after its completion, and that Deleuze’s starting point for that sequel was the war machine. Within this context it’s clear that the concerns of *Anti-Oedipus*, particularly the state and capitalism, are taken up from a new perspective, the perspective of the outside. To be precise, the “Nomadology” takes up the perspective of the outside of the state, and the next plateau, “Apparatus of Capture,” takes up the perspective of the outside of capitalism. As we’ve seen since the beginning of this guide, though, caution is needed to avoid turning Deleuze and Guattari’s claims about the war machine into moral claims. It is not the case that politically there are two kinds of objects, states and war machines, and that states are “bad” and war machines are “good.” No, the opposition here, as with all of the oppositions in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is the opposition between the two tendencies found in any assemblage. Of course, states and war machines have more or less clear historical exemplars that allow Deleuze and Guattari to clarify the nature of this opposition and to explicate these tendencies, but the purpose of the plateau is not to offer a field guide that would allow us to classify some things as states and others as war machines. There are only assemblages that combine these tendencies in a particular ratio.

The plateau itself is structured differently from the other plateaus. Surprisingly, it is organized around a series of axioms, problems, and propositions. There are three axioms, three problems,

and nine propositions. Propositions ten through fourteen are taken up in "Apparatus of Capture" but refer to the state not the war machine. The structure is surprising because it seems at odds with the critique of "royal science" that occurs here and elsewhere in the book. Perhaps it is a tribute to the structure of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Or, perhaps it is a play on their analysis of capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus*, where Deleuze and Guattari argue that while state forms operate on the discontinuous relation between alliance and filiation, capitalism collapses alliance and filiation and functions according to an axiomatic. At the end of "Apparatus of Capture" they write: "the deepest law of capitalism: it continually sets and then repels its own limits, but in so doing gives rise to numerous flows in all directions that escape its axiomatic" (TP 472). The war machine is one way of talking about the flows that escape the capitalist axiomatic, but what are the deepest laws of the war machine? How do they escape the capitalist axiomatic? In order to answer these questions, we'll first need to articulate the war machine's externality.

#### *THE EXTERNALITY OF THE WAR MACHINE*

The first axiom of the Nomadology is that the "war machine is exterior to the state apparatus" (TP 351). If the war machine is exterior to the state, what is the state? In order to answer this question, Deleuze and Guattari use a wide range of illustrations and draw on their previous analyses, particularly the "Geology of Morals." The state is a stratification. As such, it is articulated into content and expression. They refer to Georges Dumézil's work in Indo-European mythology to show that this double articulation manifests itself in the two heads of sovereignty: "the magician-king and the jurist-priest . . . They are the principal elements of a State apparatus that proceeds by a One-Two, distributes binary distinctions, and forms a milieu of interiority. It is a double articulation that makes the State apparatus into a *stratum*" (TP 351, emphasis in original). That is, the stratum of the state maintains its unity by dividing its order, keeping power between two heads. These two heads are the keepers of stasis. They promulgate the laws that ensure the smooth functioning of the state. Dumézil's chief example here is the way in which this order-keeping is divided between Mitra and Varuna in Indo-European mythology.<sup>2</sup> Following Dumézil, Deleuze and Guattari argue that sovereignty does not include war. The power to make war lies outside the interiority established by this sovereignty. The exteriority of the power of war is expressed mythologically in

the powers of a different god, in this case Indra. While there may be temporary conflicts between Mitra and Varuna, the defining conflict of this mythology is the conflict between Indra, the god of war, and the two-headed god of sovereignty.

Conflict, however, does not entail externality. Why could we not conceive of this conflict as an interior conflict within a state, rather than a conflict between the interiority of state sovereignty and its exterior? Deleuze and Guattari answer this question by looking at two different games: Chess and Go. "Chess is a game of State . . ." (TP 352). Go is a game of the war machine. Why? "Chess pieces are coded . . ." (TP 352). They are coded not only according to their allowable moves but also their shape. Pawns look like other pawns, but not like knights. Pawns always move in the same way, which is manifestly not like a knight. Despite the astronomical number of combinations these pieces can enter into, Chess is fundamentally static. In contrast to this, Go is played with flat stones that are indistinguishable from one another. The function of any given piece is completely determined by its external relation to the other pieces on the board, whereas internal relations determine the function of Chess pieces. Within this context we can see that what separates Go from Chess is a different conception of space. Go operates in a smooth space, whereas Chess operates in a striated space. We'll explore this distinction further in our discussion of "The Smooth and the Striated" plateau. For now we can note that this difference in space is one of the ways that we can distinguish between the interior of the state and its exterior. Indra is exterior to Mitra-Varuna. He is the breaker of walls. He makes striated space smooth. He is the betrayer and mischief-maker. He's playing a different game from Mitra and Varuna.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that we must follow this logic to its most extreme point. "It is not enough to affirm that the war machine is external to the apparatus. It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking" (TP 354). Two important points are at stake here. First, as a matter of clarifying what is at stake in the war machine's exteriority, we must attempt to think exteriority as such. That is, we must think exteriority as the abstract pole of a continuum that has interiority as its opposite pole. The difficulty here, and this is the second point, is that thought itself is already colonized as interiority. Interiority is the model for thought that we habitually fall into.

As a result, thinking pure exteriority becomes remarkably difficult. Later in this plateau Deleuze and Guattari will go on to argue in the same vein that the state is the image of thought. Because the state is the image of thought, the temptation is to give a merely negative account of the war machine, as simply the negation of everything the state is. The difficulty in thinking pure exteriority is to give a positive account of it.

In order to give a positive account of the war machine Deleuze and Guattari turn to the works of Heinrich von Kleist, where it is celebrated. We've already looked briefly at one of Kleist's plays, *Penthesilea*, in our discussion of becoming-animal. What sets Kleist's work apart is precisely his ability to write characters and conflict in terms of affective becomings. Reading Kleist there is a sense of breathlessness. This is created in part by the fact that his stories have no breaks, no sections or chapters. They simply flow continuously. In *Michael Kohlhaas*, Kleist tells the story of a sixteenth-century German horse dealer who is cheated out of two horses by a petty baron, the Junker von Tronka. Kohlhaas does his best to work within the legal system to get redress. At one point the baron agrees to give the horses back, but they have been worked very hard and are no longer a sufficient repayment for Kohlhaas' losses. At this point Kohlhaas sees that he can no longer work within the strictures of the state and becomes an outlaw. He gathers a small band of men around him and lays siege to the baron's castle, destroying it. The baron narrowly escapes, and Kohlhaas pursues, while his band of outlaws continues to grow. Fear begins to spread across the countryside as various forces try to bring Kohlhaas to heel but invariably fail as he outwits them at every turn. It is clear by this point in the story that Kohlhaas' war is no longer against a local baron but against the state itself, which refuses him justice. Kohlhaas is now a war machine that disturbs civil unity at every turn.

Kohlhaas' disturbance of the peace is so great that even the leader of the Protestant reformation, Martin Luther, weighs in. Luther writes a letter to Kohlhaas, which so disturbs him that he travels to Wittenberg in disguise to meet with him. Upon meeting him Luther exclaims, "Your breath is a pestilence, your presence perdition . . . Damnable, terrible man! . . . Who gave you the right—other than you yourself—to fall upon the Junker von Tronka and then, not finding him in his castle, to visit with fire and sword the whole community that is protecting him?"<sup>3</sup> Kohlhaas' reply turns on the notion of community. "The war I am waging on the community of humankind is an evil deed if I was not . . . expelled from

it.”<sup>4</sup> Luther is baffled by Kohlhaas’ thinking here. It is inconceivable that one be outside the state. “Expelled! . . . What madness seized your thinking? Who could have expelled you from the community of the state in which you lived? Indeed, has it ever been the case, since states existed, that any man, whoever he might be, has been expelled from one?”<sup>5</sup> For Luther, one necessarily belongs to the state. There is nothing outside the state. In Kleist’s story theology has also taken the state-form as the image of thought. The parallels with Kant are clear. The nomads disrupting the civil unity of state philosophy must be incorporated into the state. They cannot remain external.

The inability of the war machine to remain external in Kleist’s works (indeed in his life) raises the first of three problems in this plateau: “Is there a way of warding off the formation of a State apparatus (or its equivalents in a group)?” (TP 356). Answering this question takes up the next two propositions, which also still concern the exteriority of the war machine. The first of these propositions concerns evidence for the exteriority of the war machine drawn from ethnology. In particular (and following Pierre Clastres) Deleuze and Guattari argue that both the state and the war machine are originary, neither derives from the other. The originarity of the state is not new to *A Thousand Plateaus*. It appears already in *Anti-Oedipus* in their discussion of the *Urstaat*. That is, even pre-state societies were aware that the state was a possible way to organize society and put safeguards in place to avoid this. They raise the same issue in a different context in “Micropolitics and Segmentarity.” So, what is at issue here is not the originarity of the state but the originarity of war. Here they follow Clastres in “identifying war in primitive societies as the surest mechanism directed against the formation of the State: war maintains the dispersal and segmentarity of groups” (TP 357). Thus, the originarity of the state is inseparable from the originarity of war.<sup>6</sup> The existence of the state as interiority necessarily implies the exteriority of the war machine.

It is in terms not of independence, but of coexistence and competition in a perpetual field of interaction, that we must conceive of interiority and exteriority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity . . . The same field circumscribes its interiority in States, but describes its exteriority in what escapes States or stands against States. (TP 360–1)

It would be a mistake, though, to assume that the articulation of the poles of interiority and exteriority imply that there is only one kind

of state or one kind of war machine. We've already seen different state formations in "Several Regimes of Signs," and here Deleuze and Guattari indicate that the "outside appears simultaneously in two directions" (TP 360). In the first direction lie "huge worldwide machines." Under this rubric we find a whole host of global entities that traverse the interiority of multiple states simultaneously. The internet as a whole is a clear example of a machine of this type, but so are religious movements such as Christianity and Islam, and multinational corporations. In "Apparatus of Capture" we'll see that Deleuze and Guattari call these types of formations "ecumenical" or "international." In the second direction lie "local mechanisms of bands, margins, minorities, which continue to affirm the rights of segmentary societies in opposition to the organs of State power" (TP 360). Exteriorities of this type would include everything from the kids who smoked behind the bike shed at school to the Occupy movement to the Tea Party movement in the US. The exteriority of the war machine is not any less complex for occupying a smooth space.

Deleuze and Guattari take up exteriority and smooth space in relation to the history of science in the next proposition, which further corroborates the exteriority of the war machine. Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the history of science parallels their understandings of art and philosophy in that in each case they're looking for alternate lines of development, lines not explored in the dominant tradition. In philosophy this means following a path from Lucretius through Scotus, Spinoza, and Nietzsche to Bergson. It also means rereading philosophers in the dominant tradition with an eye toward those points at which they're not quite consistent with themselves. For example, Deleuze in his early *Kant's Critical Philosophy* brilliantly exploits the role of reflective judgment in relation to determining judgment to argue for the priority of reflective judgment in opposition to Kant's stated aims. The result is a much more affective and Spinozist Kant. The method, as we've repeatedly indicated, is a perceptual semiotics, a way of seeing otherwise. This perceptual semiotics is at play in Deleuze and Guattari's examination of the history of science. Following Michel Serres, they trace the existence of an "eccentric science." Eccentric science does not follow the typical path of service to the state ("royal science") but instead maps out a path exterior to the state. This is "nomad" or "minor" science.

Deleuze and Guattari lay out four characteristics of nomad science. All of these are opposed to the corresponding characteristics

in royal science. For example, nomad science uses a “hydraulic model, rather than . . . a theory of solids treating fluids as a special case” (TP 361). Treating reality as a set of flows rather than a series of discrete solids results in a very different account of reality. This is nothing other than the difference between continuity and discontinuity. A theory of solids immediately raises the problem of transcendent form. A hydraulic model, in contrast, sees solids as a special instance of flow, a temporary coagulation. Solids do not pre-exist, they have a genesis. This brings us to the second characteristic of nomad science. It is a model of “becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant” (TP 361). Whereas royal science seeks purity and stability—indeed, it seeks stability through purity—nomad science is messy. It begins with assemblages, which are always heterogeneous, always becoming. The third characteristic of nomad science hinges on the type of space that it projects. A concept of flows requires a concept of smooth, topographical space. As we saw above in the “Geology of Morals,” topographical space is the space of transformation, a space that describes the deformations that an object can undergo and still be the same object (a donut and coffee cup, for example). The rigid, striated space required by royal science forecloses on the possibility of transformation. Its lines never meet. They always remain parallel. The final characteristic of nomad science is that it is “problematic, rather than theorematic” (TP 362). We can again refer here to the difference between Archimedean (problematic) and Euclidean (theorematic) geometries. For Euclid reality is seen as a series of discrete, solid figures that do not quite live up to the pure accounts of their essential nature that he outlines in the *Elements*. For Archimedes there is no transcendent standard that measures reality. Rather, each figure is an event, a set of transformations or affections. The task of nomad science is not to identify the discrete figure, but map out its ways of affecting and being affected. That is, problematic geometry constructs “figures using a straightedge and compass,” while theorematic geometry deduces figures from first principles.<sup>7</sup> There is no guarantee or necessity that these constructed figures conform in any way to the first principles of a theorematic geometry. The constructed figures are a set of affections, a problematic. They are a war machine operating in smooth space exterior to the striated space of theorematic geometry.

The relation between nomad science and royal science has a long and complicated history. For the most part it is the story of the state appropriating nomad science for its own ends (in exactly the

same way that the state appropriates the war machine and converts it into a military) and legitimating that use through the methodologies of royal science. Using Anne Querrien's work, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this "tension-limit" between royal and nomad science. The first illustration is the building of Gothic cathedrals in the twelfth century. Two construction techniques were available: squaring and templates. Squaring is the Archimedean method. It uses a straightedge and compass to decide which stones are cut and how they're cut. This method can be used to lay out a Gothic arch in a fairly straightforward way. Divide the width of the arch by five and take four-fifths of the length as the radius. The two curves will meet at a point above the center forming an arch. This operation can accommodate itself to the materials at hand and be easily taught to new apprentices. It requires no knowledge of Euclidean principles whatsoever. It only requires experimenting with what's at hand.

In contrast to this, "royal, or State, science only tolerates and appropriates stone cutting by means of *templates* (the opposite of squaring), under conditions that restore the primacy of the fixed model of form, mathematical figures, and measurement" (TP 365). This is the shift from problematic to theorematic. Under this model the conditions for the arch must be laid out first as the intersecting arc of two circles. Once this relation has been established the arch is infinitely repeatable because it is the function of a static relation between discrete solids. Such an equation can also be controlled by the state. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that one of the reasons that the state banned the masonry guilds was to limit the spread of this nomad science.

In the end, Deleuze and Guattari argue that nomad sciences and royal sciences need one another. Or, to put this in terms we are already familiar with, scientific practice is itself an assemblage that has nomadic and royal tendencies. The tendency historically has been to overlook or even suppress the nomadic tendencies at least until they can be accounted for theorematically. "Due to all their procedures, the ambulant [nomad] sciences quickly overstep the possibility of calculation; they inhabit that 'more' that exceeds the space of reproduction and soon run into problems that are insurmountable from that point of view; they eventually resolve those problems by means of real-life operations" (TP 374). The nomadic tendency in science continually exceeds the methodological bounds set by the royal tendency. This nomadic tendency describes an exteriority to both the state and royal science, which is the epistemological expression of the interiority of the state.



Within this context it's difficult to see how Deleuze and Guattari solve the first problem that they pose: "Is there a way of warding off the formation of a State apparatus?" Given their discussion of the last two propositions, the answer seems to be, "No." Proposition two argues that the state has always been. Proposition three argues that nomad science needs the state in the form of royal science so that the knowledge gleaned from nomad science can be extracted from its embeddedness in real-life operations and made autonomous. But maybe we are thinking about this all wrong. Maybe the "problems" posed here are not to be thought in the usual sense as obstacles in need of overcoming. Perhaps we are to think "problem" here in precisely the sense of the nomad sciences. Thought in this way, the state (and royal science) is not a problem to be overcome, but a problematic, a horizon that indicates the limits of thought. In Kant, for example, God, soul, and world are problematic objects. That is, they are not problems that we can overcome and be done with. They are objects that both cannot be thought (theoretically) but must be thought (practically). They are limits that regulate thought itself. For Deleuze and Guattari the state is a problematic object in this same sense. The state can't be eliminated but it must be thought. Thinking the state, though, requires thinking what escapes it, its outside. The war machine is problematic in the same way as the state, which is why they are to be thought as the abstract poles of a continuum. However, as we'll see in the next section, thought itself has the state and not the war machine as its image of thought.

"Image of thought" is not original to *A Thousand Plateaus*. It appears in Deleuze's earlier works *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, and it is also taken up again in *What is Philosophy?* In every case the image of thought refers to the pre-philosophical conditions of thought, which it borrows from common sense and good sense (what everybody knows). *Difference and Repetition* argues that in the dominant image of thought "thought has an affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true. It is *in terms of* this image that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think."<sup>8</sup> As the previous section shows, the assumption of the affinity between thought and truth is taken up by royal science. At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari go on to argue in *A Thousand Plateaus* that the image of thought is the state-form. In relation to this image of thought they pose a problem and a proposition. "Is there a way to extricate thought from the State model?" is the problem, and "The

exteriority of the war machine is attested to, finally, by noology" is the proposition (TP 374). "Noology," the term they coin here, "is precisely the study of images of thought, and their historicity" (TP 376). In order to show that thought has taken the state-form as its image they return to the two-headed figure of sovereignty, Mitra and Varuna, and show that thought itself is divided in exactly the same way. On the one hand, thought is its own self-founding gesture, "the *imperium* of true thinking" (TP 374). On the other hand, thought is the free relation of those who think, "a republic of free spirits" (TP 375). These are the twin heads formalized in the two questions that cannot be asked without reference to one another: 1) What is thinking? 2) Who thinks?

Deleuze and Guattari are quick to point out that the relation between thought and the state-form "is not simply a metaphor . . . It is the necessary condition for the constitution of thought as a principle, or as a form of interiority, as a stratum" (TP 375). The parallels between the two arise as a function of stratification itself. In order for thought to organize itself it undergoes a process of double articulation into content and expression. Content and expression can be understood here as the relation between thinking and who thinks. We can also see this double articulation in Plato in the complex interrelation between *mythos* and *logos*, or the relation in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* between religion and philosophy, as having identical content but differing forms. As a result of this convergence of the state-form and the image of thought, each becomes mutually reinforcing to the other. Deleuze and Guattari write:

It is easy to see what thought gains from this: a gravity it would never have on its own, a center that makes everything, including the State, appear to exist by its own efficacy or on its own sanction. But the State gains just as much. Indeed, by developing in thought in this way the State-form gains something essential: a whole consensus. Only thought is capable of inventing the fiction of a State that is universal by right, of elevating the State to the level of de jure universality. (TP 375)

Thought's connection to the state thus legitimizes thought. The order and organization of thought is bolstered by being the same as the order and organization of the state. At the same time, thought for its part consecrates the state-form by arguing that it is not historically contingent but necessary.

Thought itself appears, then, as something foreordained, what everybody already knows. Of course, we thinkers know what it means to think. What could be more natural, more obvious? Except that

the smooth functioning of thought is sometimes interrupted by “counterthoughts, which are violent in their acts and discontinuous in their appearance, and whose existence is mobile in history” (TP 376). Counterthoughts are the exterior of a thought defined by the interiority of its image. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kleist are examples of counterthinkers who disturb the placid equanimity of thought. Deleuze and Guattari return to Kleist at precisely the point that they’re differentiating the statist thought of Kant from the war machine. Given what we’ve seen of Deleuze’s earliest interpretations of Kant, it’s no surprise that they focus on the notion of *Gemüt* in Kleist, particularly his short essay “On the Gradual Production of Thoughts whilst Speaking.”<sup>9</sup> *Gemüt* is a difficult word to translate, and would normally be translated as “mind,” “soul,” “heart,” or “disposition.” The problem with translating the word in this way is the unavoidable connotations of interiority that Deleuze and Guattari are trying to avoid. In this context it’s clear that the better translation is “affect,” insofar as it suggests a connection between the speaker and an exteriority that produces something new. What Kleist argues in the essay is that speech is not controlled by the interiority of the concept, and can only produce new thoughts when it is under pressure from external forces. He proposes the following method for producing new ideas: “I put in a few unarticulated sounds, dwell lengthily on the conjunctions, perhaps make use of apposition where it is not necessary, and have recourse to other tricks which will spin out of my speech, all to gain time for the fabrication of my idea in the workshop of the mind [*Vernunft*].”<sup>10</sup> The reference to *Vernunft* (reason) here is crucial, since it plainly reverses the Kantian project. For Kant reason is a tribunal that dispenses determining judgments that keep concepts within their appointed boundaries. For Kleist reason is a workshop that creates ideas under the pressure of having to speak. Here we are not too far from Deleuze’s contention in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* that the determining judgments of reason presuppose a free play of the faculties.

Even in this essay about the relation between speaking and new ideas Kleist uses metaphors of war. The kind of war Kleist refers to, though, is fundamentally different from Kant’s use of military images. While Kant uses images of war in support of the state and its unity, Kleist uses images of war that suggest the externality of the war machine.

And in this process nothing helps me more than if my sister makes a move suggesting she wishes to interrupt; for such an attempt from

outside to wrest speech from its grasp still further excites my already hard-worked mind and, *like a general* when circumstances press, its powers are raised a further *degree*.<sup>11</sup>

Notice that the general's task here is not to restore order but to increase intensity on the basis of external circumstances. This shift to the register of intensity is reinforced later in the essay and also in martial terms when he writes, "And in general if two men have the same clarity of thought the *faster* speaker will always have an advantage since he brings, so to speak, more *forces* to the battle than his opponent."<sup>12</sup> For Kleist the clarity of thought is not a sufficient guarantee of success. Thought must be opened to an outside. Opening to an outside does not result in the determination of the outside by thought. Rather, external intensities draw transversal lines between the well-ordered points of thought, which fashions new thoughts that "with a convulsive movement, take fire, seize a chance to speak and bring something incomprehensible into the world."<sup>13</sup>

This production of new thoughts by engaging with the external through speech returns us to *Gemüt* or affect. Affects are impersonal, non-subjective, and non-signifying. They are not the possession of a subjective interiority or thought. Affects are external to every interiority and in fact are the conditions for the possibility of interiority. What Kleist provides in this essay is a method for mobilizing *Gemüt* in order to open thought to its outside. He makes this explicit when he writes, "For it is not *we* who know things but pre-eminently a certain *condition* of ours which knows."<sup>14</sup> Knowledge is not a property for Kleist as it is for Kant. Knowledge is also not guaranteed by a transcendental unity of apperception. Knowledge is external to the subject and located in affect. Learning something new is not a matter of securing one's boundaries and subjecting every entrant to the tribunal of reason. Bringing something incomprehensible into the world must risk opening thought to the outside:

A thought grappling with exterior forces instead of being gathered up in an interior form, operating by relays instead of forming an image; an event-thought, a haecceity, instead of a subject-thought, a problem-thought instead of an essence-thought or theorem; a thought that appeals to a people instead of taking itself for a government ministry. (TP 378)

Thought thus takes the two-headed state-form as its image. Thinkers such as Nietzsche and Kleist bring a counterthought to bear on this image. The counterthought is affective, and it arises between the two "universals" that anchor thought, "the Whole

as the final ground of being or all-encompassing horizon, and the Subject as the principle that converts being into being-for-us. *Imperium* and republic” (TP 379). In response to these universals a counterthought poses a smooth space and a race. “A tribe in the desert instead of a universal subject within the horizon of all-encompassing Being” (TP 379). A race is not a subject; it is a multiplicity, a pack traversed by affects. A smooth space is horizonless, unstriated, a place of speeds not movement. The image of thought arrests thought, makes it represent, and always makes it represent the same. Thought always escapes the strictures of representation; it is a becoming, a becoming-race of subject and a becoming-smooth of space.

### NOMADS AND THE WAR MACHINE

Now that Deleuze and Guattari have established the exteriority of the war machine, they move next to a discussion of nomads and their relation to the war machine. Nomads invented the war machine. From the nomads’ invention we can deduce three further aspects of the war machine: 1) “a spatiogeographic aspect,” 2) “an arithmetic or algebraic aspect,” and 3) “an affective aspect” (TP 380). These three aspects correspond with the next three propositions (5–8) in this plateau. One way that we might think about these three aspects as a whole is in the distinction between nomads and migrants. It is easy to confuse the two, since they seem to be doing the same thing (moving from place to place), but Deleuze and Guattari show through these aspects that such a description turns nomads into migrants. Nomads inhabit space differently from migrants; they relate to number differently from migrants; and finally a nomadic assemblage is different from a migratory assemblage in that its ways of affecting and being affected are different. A nomadic assemblage affects and is affected through the weapons of a war machine. A migratory assemblage is not. Or, to put the matter starkly, “the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself” (TP 381).

As we’ve progressed through *A Thousand Plateaus* the distinction between smooth space and striated space has come into increasingly sharp focus. It is deployed here in the distinction between nomads and migrants. Nomads inhabit a smooth space, while migrants inhabit a striated space. This initially seems like a strange claim, since their activities seem so similar. A migrant moves from one point to another, the homeland to the new land. In contrast

to this, the nomad follows a trajectory. A trajectory runs between points, not from one point to another. On a trajectory points are relays not places to remain. A nomad's path may be customary but it differs from a road. A road "*parcel[s] out a closed space to people,*" but a trajectory "*distributes people (or animals) in an open space*" (TP 380, emphasis in original). We can think about the claim here in terms of the difference that we saw between Chess and Go above. In chess the space is closed, rigid. This closed space is always divided the same way and the position of the pieces is determined before the game begins. In Go the space is open. The position of the pieces is not predetermined, and there is no distinction among the pieces. In Go not only does the Queen not begin by occupying her "color," there is no Queen. Deleuze and Guattari take this insight about the way that nomads occupy space to the seemingly counter-intuitive claim that nomads don't move. Here they're following the historian Arthur Toynbee, but that doesn't make the claim any less counter-intuitive. How can they claim that nomads don't move, when movement seems to be their defining characteristic? In order to answer this question Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between speed and movement. "Movement is extensive; speed is intensive" (TP 381). Nomads have speed but they do not have movement. Movement requires extensive space, because movement requires starting from one point and arriving at another. This can only be case if the space is already divided, striated. Speed does not require a divided, striated space. It is an indivisible intensity and requires a smooth space. We implicitly use this distinction when we talk about thought. We readily speak about our thoughts being fast or slow, but we never talk about our thoughts moving anywhere. Our thoughts always stay in the same "place" regardless of how fast they are. Nomads are composed of speeds and slownesses, not movements. They occupy a smooth space intensively. Thus they occupy it with speed not movement. They do not move. As with thought, they are capable of springing up anywhere.

Another way we might think about the difference between migrants and nomads is in terms of deterritorialization. Migrants certainly deterritorialize but only to reterritorialize again. This is because the migrant thinks of territory as property, that is, in a geographical and political sense. Property assumes the parceling out of a closed space. As we saw in the refrain plateau, though, this is not the only way to think about territory. Territory can be conceived in sonorous terms, as arising out of a rhythm. Thinking of territory as property would be to convert the rhythm into a cadence, but this is

not a requirement. On the contrary, one can think of a territory not only in sonorous terms, but also as opening up to other territories. One can even follow a rhythm beyond territories altogether. This is the cosmic refrain. It is a line of flight, a trajectory of absolute deterritorialization. In contrast to the nomad's absolute deterritorialization, the migrant pursues a relative deterritorialization.

In response to the externality of the war machine invented by the nomads, the state's response is uniform: "to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space" (TP 385). That is, the state never ceases to regulate flows. It not only regulates the flows of money, commerce, and people, it also uses smooth space in the service of striated space. On the use of smooth space in the service of striated space, the clearest example might be the government regulation of communication frequencies. Broadcasting a signal requires a license that can only be provided by the government. Attempts to broadcast without a license are called "pirate broadcasts," as if a frequency could be stolen.

Deleuze and Guattari caution as they conclude this proposition that being a war machine does not guarantee a revolution. There is no pure war machine any more than there is a pure state. All assemblages are mixed:

We say this as a reminder that smooth space and the form of exteriority do not have an irresistible revolutionary calling but change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment (for example, the way in which total war, and even guerilla warfare, borrow one another's methods). (TP 387)

Recent philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek and Peter Hallward have criticized Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the war machine and its relation to smooth space by noting that the Israeli army has developed a new strategy in urban warfare that smoothes striated space by blowing holes through the walls in hostile environments.<sup>15</sup> Even if we grant that this is, in fact, smoothing striated space (and not striating it differently), it's difficult to see how a critique of Deleuze and Guattari follows from this. It would only be a critique if one took *A Thousand Plateaus* to be a moral book rather than an ethical one. One would have to suppose that Deleuze and Guattari were arguing that smooth is better than striated, or that good always follows from a smooth space. In short, one would have to overlook the numerous cautions throughout the book including the one quoted above and

most blatantly the last line of the final plateau: "Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (TP 500).

In proposition six Deleuze and Guattari take up the way in which number is transformed in relation to nomads. The operative distinction here is between the numbering number and the numbered number. The numbering number is the *arithmetical* aspect of the war machine. The numbered number is the *geometric* aspect of the state. Once again the issue here is two ways of occupying space. The state occupies space by striating it. That is, it closes space off and distributes it as property. In this respect space is numbered, organized geometrically, and only then can people (or things) occupy it. The chessboard provides the perfect image here. Not only does it represent war, but it represents a very particular kind of war, a war between two states on a grid of stratified space. The grid has a horizontal and vertical organization that allows each square to be uniquely identified. Each square becomes a property to be controlled. Typically, the winner is one who is able to control the most property with the fewest pieces. In Go the strategy is to occupy space, but it is not a numbered space. The starting points are not set. There is a grid but its points are not uniquely identifiable. The importance of space on the board is a function of adding pieces to the board, which themselves may shift in function and importance throughout the match. Smooth space "is occupied without being counted" (TP 389). Numbering number thus refers to "autonomous arithmetic organization" independent of space, whereas numbered number makes arithmetic organization dependent on space.

The numbering number has two characteristics. It is always complex, and it is always doubled in the form of a special body. The complexity that Deleuze and Guattari have in mind here arises from the fact that the "arithmetic base unit is therefore a unit of assemblage, for example, man-horse-bow, 1 X 1 X 1, according to the formula that carried the Scythians to triumph" (TP 391). A unit of the numbering number is never simply the man of war. The man of war is always already combined with technologies that increase his power, a sword or a bow, or combined with technologies that allow him to combine with other men of war, such as the shield in a phalanx. Technologies even allow men of war to be combined with animals. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the stirrup, for example, in increasing a cavalry's power.

Nomads organize themselves numerically. The numbering number takes complex assemblages as its units and groups them into tens, hundreds, thousands, etc. This process of selection and



organization into groups also at the same time doubles this selection process and constitutes “a special numerical body” (TP 391). For evidence of this Deleuze and Guattari draw on the book of *Numbers* in the Hebrew Bible. Here Moses is organizing the recently liberated Jews by taking a census and constituting an army, which is to be arrayed around the tabernacle. The Levites are exempted from this census, though. The Levites are not to be members of the army but constitute a priesthood. As a group consecrated to priestly service, the Levites redeem and stand in for all the first-born of Israel. To the degree that the number of first-born exceeds the Levites, a tax is levied.<sup>16</sup> The secret body is, of course, not unique to nomads, but its invention is. The state uses secret bodies to reinforce its stratifications. State military apparatuses select out special bodies from the rank and file. The US Army has its Delta Force (know simply as “The Unit”), and the US Navy has its SEALs. We also saw a similar process occurring in the movie *Fight Club* in our discussion of the “Becoming-Intense . . .” plateau. Deleuze and Guattari’s point is that this selection of special bodies happens as a result of numerical organization. The key distinction in this regard is whether numerical organization is autonomous (the numbering number) or subordinated to the state apparatus (the numbered number).

Proposition seven concerns the “affects” of nomad existence. Deleuze and Guattari’s claim is that the weapons of a war machine are the affects of nomad existence. There are two related distinctions implicit in this proposition. The first distinction is between weapon and tool. The second distinction is between affect and feeling. The weapon/tool distinction is the subject of a long-running debate in anthropology, because the distinction itself is thought to be ambiguous. Deleuze and Guattari quote Leroi-Gourhan, who writes, “For ages on end agricultural implements and weapons of war must have remained identical” (TP 395). Deleuze and Guattari are convinced, however, that they can articulate five intrinsic differences between tools and weapons. They locate these differences in five points of view: 1) direction, 2) vector, 3) model, 4) expression, and 5) tonality (TP 402). Each of these points of view names a set of oppositions that explicate the distinction between tools and weapons. These oppositions can be schematized as shown in Chart 10. There are numerous ways we can describe what Deleuze and Guattari have in mind with the first point of view. Both weapon and tool act at a distance, but the tool acts at a distance in order to achieve or reinstate some kind of equilibrium. The hoe prepares the soil. Weapons are ballistic, projective. They move

Chart 10

Point of View	Weapon	Tool
Direction	Projection	Introjection
Vector	Speed	Gravity
Model	Free-action	Work
Tonality	Affect	Feeling
Expression	Jewelry	Signs

outwardly. Tools act centripetally; weapons act centrifugally. From the point of view of vector, the weapon/tool distinction reproduces the speed/movement distinction. Weapons have a speed, while tools have movement. That is, weapons capture and redirect intensities, while tools capture and redirect extensities. This insight (along with the work of Paul Virilio) allows Deleuze and Guattari to rethink the relation between war and hunting. It is easy to assume that war is nothing but the hunting instinct turned against other humans instead of animals. Instead of the hunter/prey model, they propose the breeder/bred model. In the breeder/bred model the goal is to conserve and redirect animal forces. In the hunter/prey model the goal is to destroy animal forces through slaughter. In breeding the breeder actually captures the forces of the *hunted* animal, which are then directed outward in a vector of speed. This is the becoming-animal of the war machine.

The objection that arises here is that surely, in the sense just outlined, speed is as much a property of the tool as of a weapon. If the issue is the capturing and redirecting of forces, both tools and weapons do this. In response to this objection Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between free-action and work. Both are "motor causes," but they both occupy different kinds of space. Work occupies an extensive space with obstacles and resistance along with movement between points. Free-action occupies an intensive space. The weapon has a speed whether it is "moving" or not. Deleuze and Guattari caution, though, that ultimately the distinction between work and free-action, and indeed the distinction between weapon and tool, cannot be made in a vacuum. These are determined relations that presuppose an assemblage. "It is the machine that is primary in relation to the technical element . . . but the social or collective machine, the machinic assemblage that determines what is a

technical element at a given moment . . .” (TP 398). Thus, the distinction between weapon and tool, between free-action and work, is at bottom a distinction between different kinds of assemblage. The same technical element may be taken up in one assemblage as a tool and in another as a weapon.

Assemblages can also be distinguished according to the type of desire that they assemble: feelings or affects. This is the point of view of tonality. An assemblage that has the technical elements of work and tool as components assembles feelings. An assemblage that has the technical elements of free-action and weapon as components assembles affects. Not only do different assemblages assemble different technical aspects, they assemble desire differently. “Affect is the active discharge of emotion, the counterattack, whereas feeling is an always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion. Affects are projectiles just like weapons; feelings are introceptive like tools” (TP 400). For Deleuze and Guattari one way of articulating the difference between affects and feelings is in terms of their differing regimes of signs. As we saw in our previous discussion of regimes of signs, the postsignifying regime was characterized by its passionate flight in betrayal of the despotic, signifying regime. The flight itself coalesces around a subject, which is oriented toward a black hole. The signifying regime is the regime of feelings; the subject that concerns Deleuze and Guattari here is the “worker.” In contrast to this, the war machine is a countersignifying regime. It remains external to the state, which is found at the intersection between the despotic and passionate regimes. The countersignifying regime does not produce tools and feelings; it produces weapons and affects.

If we pursue this relation between regimes of signs further, we come to the final point of view that distinguishes tools and weapons, namely, expression. From the point of view of expression tools are correlated with signs, while weapons are correlated with jewelry. The tool-sign connection is not surprising given the way that it is bound up with the state apparatus, especially work. Work requires record-keeping, writing. Work assumes a property (that is, a striated space) to be worked and a bureaucracy that tracks work, not only for the purpose of monumental works but also for taxation. “For there to be work, there must be a capture of activity by the State apparatus, and a semiotization of activity by writing” (TP 401). In contrast to the close connection among the tool, writing, and the state, the weapon is closely allied with nomads and jewelry. The connection with jewelry will be especially important as we discuss metallurgy

below. For now, though, Deleuze and Guattari are keen to point out that jewelry and decoration in general are not to be thought of as a stunted or incipient language. To do so simply reinforces the idea that nomads are a stunted or incipient state, a retarded developmental form. "Metalworking, jewelry making, ornamentation, even decoration, do not form a writing, even though they have a power of abstraction that is in every way equal to that of writing. But this power is assembled differently" (TP 401). The war machine and the state have different substances and forms of expression. The state captures activity and then organizes the activity through writing. The war machine is mobile. It has a speed not a movement. Jewelry is the expression of this speed.

### *METALLURGY*

The connection between the war machine and jewelry precipitates a discussion of metallurgy. Articulating the importance of metallurgy involves the last problem and axiom of the plateau. The problem that Deleuze and Guattari pose is deceptively simple: Where do the nomads get their weapons? If we pursue an answer in terms of the state/war machine dichotomy, though, we quickly run into difficulties. The first difficulty is the archaeological prejudice against nomads. The working assumption is that nomads are technologically deficient. They don't invent; they steal. This assumption automatically answers the question in favor of the state. In response to this difficulty Deleuze and Guattari argue for nomads getting their due. Even in the case of the saber, "where the facts already speak sufficiently in favor of an imperial [Chinese] origin," it seems that this still doesn't explain how the nomads got the weapons. The nomads would already need to have sufficient technological prowess to take advantage of anything taken from the state (TP 405). No, the story must be more complicated than nomad thievery.

Deleuze and Guattari complicate the story, and this is the second difficulty, by arguing that the simple opposition between the state and the war machine is a false dichotomy. That is, it is impossible to say definitively that technological advances such as carbon steel are the property of either the state or the war machine. The better way to think about metallurgy is as a deterritorializing edge. We saw examples of this in our discussion of becoming in the figure of the sorcerer, that point of contact between the pack and the outside. In the case of metallurgy, it is a technology that is found both in the state and among nomads, but not as a property. The

state may capture metallurgical technology from time to time and even provide resources for its support, but the smiths, who possess the technological knowledge and shape (and sometimes mine) the metals to be shaped, are in the state but not of it. The smiths follow the metal, the seams of which form a line of flight outside the state. Thus, the question of whether metallurgy is the property of the state or the war machine is badly posed. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari articulate their claim in the eighth proposition in this way: “Metallurgy in itself constitutes a flow necessarily confluent with nomadism” (TP 404). Itinerant metallurgists are themselves nomadic, and, as a result, sometimes their technology gets taken up by the state. Sometimes their technology gets taken up by the war machine. Sometimes their technology (as in the case of the saber) gets taken up by the war machine with the state as an intermediary.

Even supposing that Deleuze and Guattari’s account is correct, it doesn’t explain the importance of metallurgy. At this point all we know is that it helps account for jewelry, but there is something deeper going on here. At bottom, metal, its mining, its refining, and its shaping are indicative of the critique of hylomorphism that we’ve been pursuing throughout this book. To make the connection between metal and hylomorphism Deleuze and Guattari draw (as they have often done throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*) on the work of Gilbert Simondon. Metal and metallurgy are emblematic of a flow that produces its own variable form, which we have called “hylozoism.” Deleuze and Guattari call this flow the “machinic phylum.” The machinic phylum is “matter in movement, in flux, in variation, matter as a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression” (TP 409). The “artisan” is one who follows the flow. Artisans are by definition itinerant. Importantly, though, following does not require movement. A woodworker follows the grain of the wood without going anywhere. At the same time, there might be great journeys required to find the exact right wood for a given project. In the case of metallurgists these great journeys may be underground. In short, the artisan thinks of matter as intensive rather than extensive. Matter is continuous not discontinuous. This comes to the fore most clearly in the case of metal. “Metallurgy is the consciousness or thought of the matter-flow, and metal the correlate of this consciousness . . . Metal is neither a thing nor an organism, but a *body* without organs” (TP 411). Both “thing” and “organism” indicate an extensive, discrete account of matter. That is, there is no matter that is not already formed in some way. As we’ve seen, the body without organs is a way of thinking about matter that is

un-formed, matter that flows. Metallurgy deals with matter in this sense. It is "minor science in person" (TP 411). Of course, Deleuze and Guattari argue that all matter can be seen in this way. This is the task of perceptual semiotics, of schizoanalysis. Their point is that metallurgy historically demonstrates this perspective.

Because metallurgy is a deterritorializing edge it arises at the interstices of the state and the war machine. We have already seen how metallurgy communicates with both by following the matter-flow that traverses assemblages of all kinds. By way of concluding their discussion of metallurgy, Deleuze and Guattari ask if there is a kind of space commensurate with metallurgy. They answer that "holey space" is the kind of space commensurate with metallurgy. "Holey space" is the space created by mining. It is a space created by engaging directly with the "subsoil" rather than the smooth space of the nomads or the striated space of the state. Metallurgists mine. They follow the metallic line and shape it into ingots. The metallic flow continues in ingot form as the ingots are melted, shaped, melted again and reshaped. In this way holey space communicates with both the smooth space of the nomads and the striated space of the state. The nature of this communication, though, is asymmetrical. Holey space "is always *connected* to nomad space, whereas it *conjugates* with [striated] space" (TP 415). Deleuze and Guattari first posited the distinction between connection and conjugation in *Anti-Oedipus*. In that book the terms distinguished different syntheses of desire. In this plateau and the next, the distinction between connection and conjugation maps onto the rhizomatic/arborescent distinction. Connections are rhizomatic. They connect to an outside. Conjugations are arborescent. All conjugations are subordinated to hierarchical relations.

Deleuze and Guattari summarize the relation between metallurgy and the war machine in their third axiom: "The nomad war machine is the form of expression, of which itinerant metallurgy is the correlative form of content" (TP 415). We can schematize the claim of this axiom by returning to the chart we first developed above in the discussion of the "Geology of Morals" (see Chart 11). The content that is expressed here is substantially the metallic line followed by the itinerant metallurgists. Formally, metallurgy makes ingots out of this metallic line, which can be traded and shaped. The expression of this content is formally the war machine. That is, the ingots are shaped into weapons instead of tools. Concomitant with this formal expression is the substantial expression of a smooth space. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not make this explicit, the

Chart 11

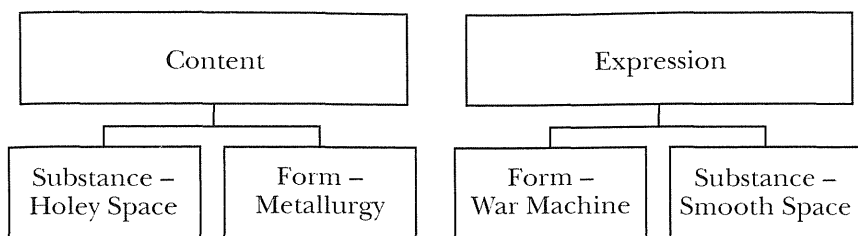
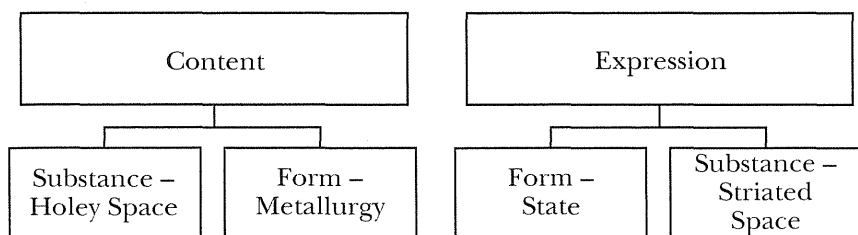


Chart 12



same content can be expressed differently, if it is captured (conjugated) by the state. In this case (see Chart 12), the formal expression of the metallic line in ingot form is the state and its substance is striated space. Here the ingots are formed into tools, not weapons. Or, if there are weapons formed, they are subordinated to a military chain of command. Here we can see more clearly what Deleuze and Guattari are claiming about the saber. Even if we suppose that it has a state origin, as such it is a particular expression of content. Regardless of how the saber passes to the nomads, the same content is expressed differently. It is no longer conjugated as a segment of striated space. Rather, the saber is now connected to smooth space, and thus undergoes deformations as it connects the nomads to an outside.

#### *CLAUSEWITZ AND THE WAR MACHINE*

Having said so much about the war machine, it would be strange if Deleuze and Guattari didn't compare their findings to Carl von Clausewitz's definitive book *On War* (1832). In particular, since this plateau is about the relation between the war machine and the state, Clausewitz's most famous dictum, that "war is the continuation of politics by other means," seems particularly germane to

their argument. In the last proposition of the plateau Deleuze and Guattari settle accounts with Clausewitz. In order to do this they are faced with three questions:

1. "Is battle the 'object' of war?"
2. "Is war the 'object' of the war machine?"
3. "Is the war machine the 'object' of the state?" (TP 416)

The summary answers to two of these questions are given in the ninth proposition: "War does not necessarily have the battle as its object, and more important, the war machine does not necessarily have war as its object, although war and the battle may be its necessary result (under certain conditions)" (TP 416). As the scare quotes around "object" make clear, Deleuze and Guattari intend to problematize the notion of "object" here. In the case of the relation between war and battle, they propose that war can have both battle and non-battle as its object. Sometimes war is threatened precisely so that battle may be avoided.

With regard to the relation between war and the war machine, they propose three commensurate takes on "object": Aristotelian, Kantian, and Derridean. In Aristotelian terms, Deleuze and Guattari see "object" not as a necessary or sufficient condition but as that which accompanies an action. This is the relation, for example, between happiness and pleasure for Aristotle. Happiness is not the pursuit of pleasure, but it does accompany it.<sup>17</sup> With Kant Deleuze and Guattari argue that "object" here means "necessary but 'synthetic'" (TP 417). This, of course, is exactly the way that Kant describes the foundations of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Knowledge for Kant presupposes synthetic a priori principles. That is, necessary principles which nevertheless add something beyond what is contained in the subject.<sup>18</sup> Finally, in Derridean terms the "supplement" refers to the undecidable relation between two binary terms. In the case of speech and writing, for example, the history of philosophy in general (and Rousseau in particular) holds that writing is a supplement to speech. The intended meaning is that speech grasps being in its plenitude, and that writing is therefore an unnecessary addition. As Derrida deftly points out, though, "supplement" also means to fill up what is incomplete. This is why we call vitamins "supplements."<sup>19</sup> It is in these three commensurate accounts of "object" that Deleuze and Guattari take war to be the object of the war machine.

The relation between the war machine and the state is more complex. The opening propositions of this plateau argue that the



war machine is external to the state. This distinction, however, applies to the war machine and the state insofar as they are opposed tendencies on a continuum. Historically speaking, though, the state has sought to limit the predations of the war machine by appropriating it. We'll further explore the mechanism by which the state appropriates the war machine in the next chapter. For now, we can say that the state appropriates the war machine through territoriality, work, and taxes. These are the state's three apparatuses of capture. The important point that Deleuze and Guattari want to make here is that it is only when the state appropriates the war machine that the war machine takes war as its necessary *and* analytic object.

Within the context of the state appropriation of the war machine Deleuze and Guattari are able to address Clausewitz directly. According to Clausewitz "war" has three distinct senses: 1) the idea of war; 2) real wars; 3) total war. For Clausewitz the idea of war is nothing other than the idea of the elimination of the enemy. For Deleuze and Guattari, however, the idea of war is nothing other than the war machine itself. Importantly, though, it is the pure idea of the war machine as external to the state, not the historical *de facto* mixes into which nomads and states enter. Real wars (supplementarily) arise first in the conflict between nomads and the state, but once the war machine has been captured by the state, the state uses the war machine (now subordinated to its political aims through a hierarchical military apparatus) to engage in war as a necessary, analytic object. These real wars can range from limited engagement to total war. In a total war all the resources of the state are mobilized to annihilate the enemy. Deleuze and Guattari make two important points with regard to total war. The first point is the ineluctable connection between total war and capitalism. Total war requires massive investment in both people and equipment in order to accomplish its aims. This kind of mobilization requires an unfettered capitalism that at first seems subordinate to the state but soon outstrips it. The second point is that once the state shifts to total war it is no longer clear whether the state is in charge of the war or the war is in charge of the state. Deleuze and Guattari note Clausewitz's vacillation on this point. Their contention is that as the state approaches total war, at the very same time it approaches the idea of war. That is, in total war the state becomes the war machine. The state goes beyond itself and smoothes striated space.

The war machine that arises from the state in total war has two figures. The first figure is fascist. As Deleuze and Guattari argued in

"Micropolitics and Segmentarity," fascism is a suicidal war machine. The second figure is the current figure of the worldwide security state, where "total war itself is surpassed, toward a form of peace more terrifying still" (TP 421). Following Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari's referent here is no doubt the nuclear détente of the Cold War. However, we can easily see how this applies to the indeterminate and interminable wars against drugs and terror. Only when the state becomes adapted to the war machine in total war is it possible to reverse Clausewitz's dictum and say "politics is the continuation of war by other means."<sup>20</sup>

By way of conclusion to this plateau, Deleuze and Guattari return to the twin overriding themes of caution and experimentation. A war machine's power can be choked out of existence by the state. A war machine's power can also be ramified and unleashed by the state. A war machine can be killed by organization, and it can also kill in a suicidal and annihilating gesture. The existence of a war machine guarantees nothing. We must also not put too much faith in the nomads. They invented the war machine but they are not the sole source of the war machine. Anything can be a war machine—an internet community, an artistic movement, or a scientific movement. The only criterion for being a war machine is that it creates something new, that it connects rather than conjugates, that it opens striated space onto smooth space, that it creates a line of flight. As long as it does this, it embodies a war machine. Any war machine is fragile, though. It can easily be appropriated by the state or fall into a black hole. The key for Deleuze and Guattari is to keep experimenting.

## NOTES

1. Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, p. 397.
2. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representatives of Sovereignty*.
3. Kleist, *Selected Writings*, p. 236.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 236–7.
6. While Clastres' fundamental insight, namely that primitive societies ward off the state, remains correct, the mechanism he proposes has come under scrutiny. More recent work, such as Christopher Boehm's *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame*, argues that egalitarian relations in hunter-gatherer societies were maintained through mechanisms of social selection. Thus, inter-tribal war did not ward off the state so much as ridicule, ostracism, exile, and execution.

For the purposes of Deleuze and Guattari's argument here it is sufficient to note that non-hierarchical societies can only maintain themselves to the degree that they can dissipate hierarchical structures. As we'll see, these societies that refuse the state-form are "war machines" whether they take war as their object or not. For a further analysis of the state in *A Thousand Plateaus*, see Sibertin-Blanc, *Politique et État chez Deleuze et Guattari*.

7. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 291.
8. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 131.
9. Kleist, *Selected Writings*, pp. 405–9.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
11. *Ibid.*, my emphasis.
12. *Ibid.*, my emphasis.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 408, emphasis in original.
15. See, for example, Žižek, "Introduction," in Mao Zedong, *On Practice and Contradiction*, pp. 26–7.
16. Numbers 3:40–51.
17. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10.
18. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B10–18.
19. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 141ff.
20. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 43.

*7000 BC: Apparatus of Capture*

The “Apparatus of Capture” continues with the same organizational style as the “Nomadology.” In fact, the propositions are numbered continuously throughout both plateaus. The “Apparatus of Capture” covers propositions ten through fourteen. The analysis in this plateau deepens and complicates the picture drawn in the previous plateau. Whereas the “Nomadology” focuses almost exclusively on the relation between the state and the war machine, this plateau introduces complicating factors such as urban centers and capitalism. In doing so it draws on the explanatory power of previous plateaus, particularly “Several Regimes of Signs” and “Faciality.” In short, Deleuze and Guattari analyze the relations among what they call “social formations.” In this respect their touchstone is Marx. Crucially, however, they distinguish themselves from Marx by arguing that social formations are not defined by modes of production but by “machinic processes” (TP 435). Machinic processes are those complex processes of assemblages that tend toward both stratification and destratification, toward organization and consistency, toward stasis and change. As an overview of the plateau, Chart 13 schematizes the different social formations along with their defining machinic processes.

In proposition ten, Deleuze and Guattari return to Dumézil’s theses regarding state sovereignty. As we saw in our discussion of the “Nomadology,” state sovereignty is always split between two poles: the magician-emperor and the jurist-king, Varuna and Mitra. We also saw that this alliance constitutes the interiority of the state. The war machine is exterior to this alliance and must be appropriated in order to be wielded by the state. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari

Chart 13

<b>Social Formation</b>	<b>Machinic Process</b>
Primitive Societies	Mechanisms of Prevention-Anticipation
State Societies	Apparatuses of Capture
Urban Societies	Instruments of Polarization
Nomadic Societies	War Machines
International/Ecumenical Organizations	Encompassment of Heterogeneous Social Formations

are driven back to their conviction that the state-form is originary and that the war machine can only play a secondary role in the development of the state-form.

This conviction leads Deleuze and Guattari to a critique of an evolutionary account of social formations in proposition eleven. Not only do primitive societies not precede the state, they do not develop into the state. Furthermore, the “‘urban revolution’ and the ‘state revolution’ may coincide but do not meld” (TP 432). What Deleuze and Guattari are proposing, then, is that all of the social formations arise simultaneously and do not evolve out of one another. Each is in principle distinct, and the differing machinic processes ensure this distinctness. Of course, history is messy, and societies are complex. These distinctions in principle are always mixes in fact. What Deleuze and Guattari are proposing here is an ethology of societies. The key to ethology is to define things by what they are capable of. These capabilities will always be exercised to a certain degree. A given society, on this model, will thus have five axes of capability (machinic processes) that are exercised to a certain degree. There is, of course, no guarantee that these capabilities will not be at odds with one another. That is, in a given society the machinic processes that define the state-form might be at odds with the machinic process of the urban-form. Furthermore, in some societies a machinic process may only exist as a limit to be warded off. Thus what defines a primitive society is not that it has never come into contact with the other social formations, but that it both anticipates and prevents these other formations by warding off their mechanisms. In response to the question of proposition eleven, Which comes first?, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the

question is badly posed and presupposes an evolutionary schema where none exists.

While previous plateaus have discussed some of these social formations, we need to spend some time looking at urban centers as distinct social formations. Deleuze and Guattari note that both towns and states share some commonalities, namely, the formation of a central power. Indeed, it can be difficult to separate the differences between the two given that a town can be the outgrowth of a state temple-palace complex, as in the case of ancient Egypt. This is the capital as town. It is also the case that the town can draw state power to itself by virtue of its own power. This is the case in the Greek city-states. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue (following Vernant) that the origins of philosophy can be located in precisely this difference in the configuration of machinic processes in Greek society compared to the more state dominated configuration of Asian societies.

In order to articulate the difference between these two kinds of central powers we can say, in a preliminary way, that what sets them apart is differing thresholds of consistency. As we saw in our discussion of the refrain, the question of consistency is the question of how things hold together. What holds a town together is different from what holds a state together. Furthermore, this consistency is achieved. There is a limit that must be reached, for example, for a group of villages to coalesce into a town, or for a village to undergo a sustained expansion in population and territory. The town's threshold of consistency is the network, while the state's threshold of consistency is intraconsistency. For Deleuze and Guattari the "town is the correlate of the road. The town exists only as a function of circulation and circuits . . . It effects a polarization of matter, inert, living, or human; it causes the phylum, the flow, to pass through specific places along horizontal lines. It is a phenomenon of *trans-consistency*, a *network*, because it is fundamentally in contact with other towns" (TP 432). A town becomes a town when it achieves the horizontal consistency of a network that organizes flows and organizes them through polarization. What Deleuze and Guattari have in mind by "polarization" here is that the flows are given directionality by the network. In a commercial center, for example, raw materials may arrive from the sea, be transformed into salable goods, and depart by land. Or, commercial goods may be imported via the Silk Road and dispersed via merchants throughout Western Europe. A town's importance as a network node may, of course, wax and wane with demand for different materials as well as shifts in technology.

The discovery of a sea route to Asia greatly increased the importance of towns such as Amsterdam and London, while decreasing the power of Venice, which was connected to Asia by land routes. As nodes of a network, towns are always in the middle of a horizontal system that “has egalitarian pretensions” (TP 432). This is distinct from the state, which presides over a vertical, hierarchical system. Recalling terms from both “Postulates of Linguistics” and “Several Regimes of Signs” the intraconsistency of the state makes its “points *resonate* together,” while the town’s transconsistency “imposes a frequency” on its incoming and outgoing flows (TP 432–3).

While primitive societies persist by anticipating and preventing both the town-threshold and the state-threshold, proposition twelve articulates the apparatus by which the state captures primitive societies. Crucial to this discussion is the distinction between “limit” and “threshold.” The “limit” is an idea that every social formation has of the last exchange it can engage in and still remain itself. The “threshold,” though, is the exchange that converts the social formation into something different. Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this distinction brilliantly in their discussion of the “last word” in a couple’s argument. When a couple argues, each goes into the argument with an idea of the “last word.” This is the limit beyond which each dares not go. Furthermore, each knows that going beyond that limit will irreparably change the relationship, even dissolve it. Limit words here might be “your mother” for one and “ex-boyfriend” for the other. Threshold words might be “break-up” or “just friends.” In each case the limit functions as the penultimate case, while the threshold functions as the ultimate case.

Within the context of limits and thresholds, Deleuze and Guattari show the conditions under which the state captures, that is, how it moves other social formations beyond their limit so that they cross a threshold and become something else, namely a stratified component of the state. The apparatus of capture functions on three fronts simultaneously. With regard to primitive societies, it converts territory to land; it captures activity and converts it into work; and, finally, it replaces exchange with money. Concomitant with these apparatuses of capture is the notion of stock. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the constitution of a stock, stockpiling, only arises once the threshold of exchange has been passed. That is, stockpiling does not arise in primitive societies; it only arises after a primitive society has been captured and morphs into a different assemblage. These two assemblages, the exchange and stock assemblages, are distinguished at several points, which can be summarized in table

Chart 14

<b>Exchange Assemblage</b>	<b>Stock Assemblage</b>
Temporal	Spatial
Code	Overcoding
Territory	Land
Activity	Work
Exchange	Money/Taxation
Serial	Simultaneous
Itinerant	Sedentary
Anticipation-Prevention Mechanism	Apparatus of Capture
Law of Demand	Law of Supply

form (see Chart 14). As we saw in the “Nomadology” the property arises when the earth is taken as an object. Taking the earth as an object overcodes it. In the “Geology of Morals” one of the ways that Deleuze and Guattari talk about overcoding is in terms of translation. We can see translation at work here in the overcoding of territory in property to be “land.” Being land in this context means that different properties are comparable to one another, and they are comparable precisely in terms of the rent that they’ll support. This overcoding of territory simultaneously produces a land-stock for a state, which replaces the coded territories that are occupied temporally and serially. Additionally, comparing properties requires a state bureaucracy, which in turn requires taxation for the maintenance of the bureaucracy. Taxation precipitates the need for money. Under these conditions the exchange assemblage cannot subsist. These conditions mark the threshold of conversion to a new assemblage. These conditions are precisely what primitive societies are simultaneously trying to anticipate and prevent. Land, work, and taxation are the three components of the apparatus of capture. The apparatus of capture is the state.

While Deleuze and Guattari are committed to the originality of the social forms they examine here, they also recognize that as these forms interact with one another they are undergoing constant mutation. Furthermore, there is also internal development since overcoding is never total. Overcoding always frees “a large quantity of decoded flows that escape from it” (TP 448). In proposition



thirteen they pursue the mutation of the state, particularly by comparing Asian state formations with European state formations. They also give an account of the rise of capitalism as an ecumenical social formation in relation to the European context.

The principle of evolution that gives rise to different kinds of states is that overcoding necessarily gives rise to flows that escape it. The image that immediately comes to mind here is squeezing clay. Squeezing a lump of clay in one's hand stratifies it. That is, the clay conforms to the palm of one's hand. The harder one squeezes, though, the more likely it is that clay will begin to extrude through one's fingers. The extruding clay is an escaping flow. With this image in mind, let's think about the archaic, imperial state. By way of the apparatus of capture the archaic, imperial state converts primitive societies into sedentary peasants that are tied to the land. Within this context the state overcodes all of the pre-existing codes such that they are now all oriented in relation to the face of the despot. This is the shift from an exchange assemblage to a stock assemblage. It is also a shift from a presignifying regime of signs to a signifying regime of signs. As we've seen, the signifying regime of signs is characterized by a hierarchical organization in which all signs refer directly or indirectly to the despot, who functions as a transcendental signifier in the regime. Deleuze and Guattari's claim is that the very fact of this overcoding necessarily creates flows that escape the overcoding. This can be most clearly seen in the requirements for large-scale public works, such as walls and aqueducts, namely "a flow of independent labor" and money generated through a system of taxation (TP 449). Despite the state's best attempts to overcode both the labor and money through bureaucracy, some always escapes. These escaping flows form the basis of a system of private property that grows up alongside the state but is not fully under the state's control. Here Deleuze and Guattari find Ferenc Tökei's suggestion that the source of this independent labor is freed slaves worthy of serious consideration.<sup>1</sup> It elegantly answers the question, "Are there people who are constituted in the overcoding empire, but constituted as necessarily excluded and decoded?" (TP 449). Both the peasants and the bureaucrats are constituted in the overcoding empire but they are constituted as necessarily included and coded. It is precisely at this point that we see that the apparatus of capture, which converts territory to land, activity to work, and exchange to money, at the same time creates flows of money, labor, and property that escape the overcoding state.

For the most part these flows are continually recaptured by

the archaic, imperial state. Or, better, the archaic, imperial state remains such only to the degree that it is able to recapture these flows and stratify them in relation to a central point. These same flows of money, labor, and property take a different shape in Europe, though. Following the archaeologist V. Gordon Childe, Deleuze and Guattari argue that at the dawn of European civilization states were able to take advantage of the stockpiling of Asian and African states through trade without having to engage in stockpiling themselves. Without the need for stockpiling the states that arise around the Aegean can deal directly in flows rather than overcoding them. "In short, the same flows that are overcoded in the Orient tend to become decoded in Europe . . . It is as if two solutions were found for the same problem" (TP 451).<sup>2</sup> The overcoded metallurgist or merchant who finds himself restricted to a single caste or bound to a particular imperial family in the Orient, finds in Europe a market which of necessity transcends the limits of any one state. The early European states were not self-sufficient (because they didn't stockpile), so they were forced to trade with other states.

Concomitant with the decoded flows of property, money, and labor in Europe is a shift in the conception of property itself. In contrast to the archaic, imperial state in which the state holds a monopoly on all property, in which all property is communal and public, in the new state-forms of Europe the lack of state overcoding creates the possibility that these flows might be privately owned. In brief, the decoded flows create the possibility of private property. "Even slavery changes; it no longer defines the public availability of the communal worker but rather private property as applied to individual workers" (TP 451). The law itself changes, as well. It no longer has the task of overcoding flows but rather that of "organizing conjunctions of decoded flows as such" (TP 451). Deleuze and Guattari think through this shift from overcoding flows to organizing conjunctions of decoded flows in terms of regimes of signs. This is the shift from a signifying regime to a postsignifying regime, from a despotic to a passional regime, from imperial signifier to "processes of subjectification" (TP 451). It is only within a context of subjectification that something like private property becomes thinkable, and it becomes thinkable precisely in relation to flows that escape the overcoding of the state. This simultaneously institutes a new regime of signs and a new state-form.

Once Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the archaic, imperial state from European states they can move to the question of the origins of capitalism. The rise of capitalism is a vexing problem

for historians and political economists alike. Why does it arise in Europe? Why not China? Why does it arise in industrial Europe? Why not the Roman Empire? It seems like the pieces have been in place many times and in many places throughout history, but the threshold is first crossed in modern Europe. The reason the threshold is crossed in modern Europe first is that the conditions that must obtain for the threshold to be crossed are first crossed here. The rise of capitalism requires the conjugation of “the flow of unqualified wealth” with “the flow of unqualified labor” (TP 453). On this account, capitalism cannot arise in the archaic, imperial state because that state-form overcodes all the flows. Furthermore, even in ancient and medieval Europe where decoded flows of labor and wealth existed, these flows were always qualified by the “feudal organization of the countryside,” in which labor was tied to the land through serfdom, and by the “corporative organization of the towns” which qualified both labor and wealth through the guild system (TP 453). To have both labor and wealth be unqualified is the same as “saying that capitalism forms with a *general axiomatic of decoded flows*” (TP 453).

In order to understand the claim that Deleuze and Guattari are making, we need to clarify the distinction between “code” and “axiomatic” that’s operative here. They use the same distinction in *Anti-Oedipus* in their discussion of the rise of capitalism. In that text the axiomatic of capitalism equilibrates the two distinct lines of code, alliance and filiation. The analysis here presupposes a more diverse set of social forms along with more detailed analyses of stratification and signification. Additionally, the task of *A Thousand Plateaus* is not the delimitation of Oedipus as the image of thought, but the creation of a perceptual semiotics, which allows assemblages to be seen such that the new can be created. Bearing this in mind, Deleuze and Guattari say:

If it is true that we are not using the word axiomatic as a simple metaphor, we must review what distinguishes an axiomatic from all manner of codes, overcodings, and recodings: the axiomatic deals directly with purely functional elements and relations whose nature is not specified, and which are immediately realized in highly varied domains simultaneously; codes, on the other hand, are relative to those domains and express specific relations between qualified elements that cannot be subsumed by a higher formal unity (overcoding) except by transcendence and in an indirect fashion. The *immanent axiomatic* finds in the domains it moves through so many models, termed *models of realization*. (TP 454)

Codes conjoin. They conjoin people to territory and activity. They conjoin people to food and appropriate partners for marriage. At the same time that codes conjoin, they also disjoin. Every conjunction is a disjunction, regardless of whether it's what to eat or who to marry. Deleuze and Guattari's claim here is that these codes are always local and specific. In contrast to this capitalism as an axiomatic is also a process of conjunction, but its conjunctions are global and general rather than local and specific. Capitalism does not recode or overcode already coded flows; it conjoins decoded and deterritorialized flows. Capitalism is an axiom of equivalency in that it conjoins flows as comparable. The flow of wheat or timber is comparable to a certain amount of gold or silver. It does not matter where the wheat is grown or where the gold is mined. They are both comparable flows. Of course, these flows do arise out of particular territories, and, for this reason, capitalism treats these territories as "models of realization." The abstract, deterritorialized flow is not separable from its particular realizations, but capitalism follows the flow through all of these realizations to conjoin them.

Capitalism can extract these flows and conjoin them in multiple models of realization. This is why Deleuze and Guattari class it as an "international/ecumenical social form," which has "encompassment of heterogeneous social formations" as its defining machinic process. It is important to note that capitalism is not the only member of this class. Religions, NGOs, and multinational corporations can all fall under this heading. It is also important to note that none of the members of any class will belong exclusively to that group. Assemblages are always mixtures. The model of realization for capitalism that most interests Deleuze and Guattari here is the state. From the perspective of capitalism states are no longer "transcendent paradigms of an overcoding but immanent models of realization for an axiomatic of decoded flows" (TP 455). That is, from the perspective of capitalism, states are merely immanent components of a deterritorializing machine that extracts and conjoins decoded flows.

The problem this raises for Deleuze and Guattari is the degree to which modern state-forms are shaped in regard to capitalism. On the one hand, they note that there must be some level of "isomorphy" between a given state and capitalism; otherwise, there could not be a model of realization in the first place. On the other hand, the very generality and globality of the capitalist axiomatic, the fact that it conjoins deterritorialized flows, means that it can extract these flows from a very wide range of models, even "heteromorphic" ones. The conclusion they draw here is that the isomorphy between

modern states and capitalism does not entail that all modern states are therefore fundamentally identical. Furthermore, and as a result, it is possible to produce a taxonomy of different kinds of states provided that at the same time one does a “metaeconomics” that takes into account the degree of isomorphy with regard to the capitalist axiomatic. Within these constraints Deleuze and Guattari propose the following taxonomy:

We may distinguish three major forms [of the state]: (1) imperial archaic States, which are paradigms and constitute a machine of enslavement by overcoding already-coded flows (these States have little diversity, due to a certain formal immutability that applies to all of them); (2) extremely diverse States—evolved empires, autonomous cities, feudal systems, monarchies—which proceed instead by subjectification and subjection, and constitute qualified or topical conjunctions of decoded flows; (3) the modern nation-States, which take decoding even further and are models of realization for an axiomatic or a general conjugation of flows (these States combine social subjection and the new machinic enslavement, and their very diversity is a function of isomorphy, of the eventual heteromorphy or polymorphy of the models in relation to the axiomatic). (TP 459)

We can think about this taxonomy in terms of regimes of signs. The signifying regime corresponds to the imperial, archaic state, and to what Deleuze and Guattari here call “machinic enslavement.” In this context everything and everyone is part of the machine. The state has a monopoly on all things including human life. As we’ve seen, though, this kind of overcoding that subordinates everything to the hierarchical, transcendent state frees decoded flows, which lead to the possibility of property and more fundamentally the constitution of a subject. This process of subjectification characterizes the second kind of state and corresponds to the postsignifying regime of signs. This process of subjectification delimits machinic enslavement insofar as it carves out a space that is not monopolized by the state. With the simultaneous rise of both capitalism and the nation-state, however, we see a new kind of machinic enslavement. The increasing decoding of flows allows the shift from property to private property, which itself is an increasing subjectification. At precisely the same moment, though, the increasingly decoded flows become subjected to the capitalist axiomatic. That is, a citizen of the state, who possesses himself by right, becomes machinically enslaved, not to a despotic state but to capitalism through the necessary participation in consumer culture. Thus, the ecumenical capitalist social formation, which takes the nation-state as a model

of realization, repeats the machinic enslavement of the archaic, imperial state but does so by way of an axiomatic of decoded flows rather than through overcoding.

In the final proposition of the plateau Deleuze and Guattari pursue further the contemporary role of axiomatics. They reiterate their insistence that the axiomatic nature of capitalism, and by extension politics (since contemporary politics cannot be thought except through the relation between the state and capitalism), is not metaphorical but literal. Thus, they briefly discuss axioms in general before proceeding to the capitalist axiomatic. In general axioms are starting points, places from which theorizing can begin. They are starting points precisely because they are taken to be self-evident and intuitive. It is often the case that axioms are taken as principles from which further propositions may be deduced, as we saw in the case of Euclidean geometry and royal science in general. However, axioms can also be the starting points for experimentation, the beginning of an immanent process that seeks only consistency. These are the kind of axioms one might find in Archimedean geometry and minor science in general. Most importantly, in this second sense, axioms are not settled once and for all; they are continually created and generated in response to the current situation. It is this second sense of axiom that Deleuze and Guattari are most drawn to, as we saw in their use of axioms in the "Nomadology." It is also in this second sense that politics and capitalism are axiomatic.

Deleuze and Guattari propose a summary of the "givens" (*données*) that are currently informing the creation of axioms in capitalism. They articulate seven such givens:

1. Addition, subtraction (TP 461)
2. Saturation (TP 463)
3. Models, Isomorphy (TP 464)
4. Power (*Puissance*) (TP 466)
5. The included middle (TP 468)
6. Minorities (TP 469)
7. Undecidable propositions (TP 471).

Given the way that they conceive of axioms here it goes without saying that different situations may generate different axioms. For the moment, though, they are willing to claim that the generation of axioms in capitalism is governed by two opposed tendencies, one toward the addition of new axioms and one toward the reduction of axioms. Furthermore, these tendencies seem to be correlated with certain state-forms. The creation of new axioms is associated

with capitalist and social democratic states, while the reduction of axioms is associated with totalitarian states. We see the same political correlation at work in "saturation." Insofar as capitalism functions by conjoining decoded flows it is continually confronted with and surpasses its own limits. Totalitarian states continually confront the limits of capitalism as they seek to reduce the number of axioms, while social democratic states continually exceed the limits of capitalism as they foster the creation of more axioms.

The next given takes account of the geopolitical context of capitalism, which functions on three axes simultaneously. The first axis is the spectrum of states with regard to their relation to capitalism. In essence this functions as a continuum between the tendencies of adding axioms and reducing axioms. The second axis is an East-West axis. This is a historical axis that marks the fundamental divide that Deleuze and Guattari have argued for in the distinction between the archaic, imperial states of Asia and the European states that arise on the fringes of those state-forms on the basis of decoded flows of land, labor, and money. The third axis is the North-South axis that takes the First and Third Worlds as its poles. This is an economic axis that is both predicated on and replaces the colonial axis. Capitalism decodes the flows on all of these axes and conjoins them differently depending on which part of which axis is its model of realization. In this way it is able to conjoin the isomorphic and heteromorphic flows on the first two axes as well as the polymorphic flows of the third axis.

The fourth given of our current situation returns us to our discussion of Clausewitz from the previous chapter. Here Deleuze and Guattari reiterate the explicit connection between the war machine and capitalism. As we saw above, the claim is that when the state appropriates the war machine, the war machine takes war as its object. When war expands from limited war to total war, the state becomes enslaved to and thus a component of the war machine. The shift to total war, however, is also a massive economic undertaking, which requires the coupling of decoded flows of land, labor, and money. At this point capitalism and the war machine become indistinguishable. In the context of the Cold War Deleuze and Guattari saw this as both capitalism and the war machine taking peace as its object, which required the never-ending stockpiling of weapons. This goal in turn involved not only the vast resources of nation-states but the cooperation of numerous multinational corporations. Here the state is enslaved to the war machine and capitalism, or capitalism as a war machine, in an interminable war for peace.

The remaining three givens revolve around notions of center and periphery. In the first place, capitalism cannot constitute a worldwide economy without at the same time establishing a center. That center is unquestionably in the North and it has been migrating West for the past several centuries. Of course, a center cannot be established without at the same time establishing both a periphery and a majority/minority distinction. While traditionally the establishment of a periphery has functioned geographically along a North-South axis, the rise of outsourcing to take advantage of labor flows in other countries has created internal peripheries, internal "souths," especially in urban areas built on manufacturing jobs, which are now largely given over to automation and service sector jobs. As Deleuze and Guattari have argued in the "Micropolitics and Segmentarity" and "Faciality" plateaus, the majority/minority distinction is not a function of numbers, it is a function of relations. People of Northern European descent comprise only 12 percent of the world's population but control a vast majority of its resources. As "Faciality" argues, the face of the "White Man" is the standard by which all others are judged. This is what constitutes the "White Man" as the majority, regardless of the actual numbers.

The possibility of changing and delimiting the capitalist axiomatic lies within the capitalist axiomatic itself. This possibility, though, is not the hope that capitalism can save us. No, the possibility lies in the very nature of assemblages, even ecumenical assemblages such as capitalism. All assemblages have tendencies toward both stasis and change, although, in the case of capitalism, it might make more sense to talk about a tendency toward consistency rather than stasis. Certainly, capitalism functions by confronting and surpassing its own limits, but this does not make capitalism all encompassing. Even with a flexible axiomatic and the ability to generate new axioms as the need arises, there are still flows that escape axiomatization. The flows that escape axiomatization are lines of flight that, if followed, may lead to something new. The lines of flight make possible "revolutionary connections in opposition to the conjugations of the axiomatic" (TP 473). As always, there are no guarantees. We can only experiment with the possibilities.

## NOTES

1. Tôkei, "Les conditions de la propriété foncière dans la Chine de l'époque Tcheou."
2. Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization*.



*1440: The Smooth and the Striated*

In the final plateau Deleuze and Guattari focus on space. The distinction between smooth and striated space has been operative throughout most of *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially in the “Geology of Morals” and “Nomadology.” Here, however, it is the primary emphasis, while other concepts developed in other plateaus play a supporting role. In order to explicate this distinction between kinds of space Deleuze and Guattari use a series of models in order to illuminate different aspects of the distinction. Not surprisingly the models range widely across numerous fields of knowledge from textiles to mathematics, and they point out that the models aren’t exhaustive. The six models that they do examine are 1) the technological, 2) the musical, 3) the maritime, 4) the mathematical, 5) the physical, and 6) the aesthetic. In their discussion of these models it becomes clear that Deleuze and Guattari are less interested in the pure difference between the smooth and the striated than they are the interaction between the two kinds of space. How does smooth space become striated? How does striated space become smooth? These are not symmetrical operations and their mixtures and tendencies produce different kinds of assemblages. In the end, the discussion in this plateau confirms the idea that the smooth and the striated are two tendencies toward which every assemblage tends, and that any given assemblage is a ratio of these tendencies.

*THE TECHNOLOGICAL MODEL*

Discussion of the first model begins with the distinction between fabric and felt. A fabric, insofar as it is woven, is a striated space. The

weaving itself is dependent on stable vertical striations and variable horizontal striations, warp and woof. The process of weaving necessarily delimits the fabric being produced. The length can be infinite but the width is fixed. Fabric is defined by a closed space.

In contrast to fabric, felt is a smooth space. It is not smooth because it is homogeneous. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is striated space that is homogeneous. Striations homogenize by making everything subject to the same rule, the same coding. Felt entangles the heterogeneous. It is an aggregate not a weave, and because it is not a weave a felt is not limited in length or width. More can always be added, exactly the same as the schizophrenic's table in *Anti-Oedipus*.<sup>1</sup> It is amorphous not homogeneous. Felt is a nomad invention out of which they make clothing, shelter, and armor and which connects them to the smooth space of the desert.

Once Deleuze and Guattari have explicated the extremes of the model, they turn to its deformations. How does smooth space become striated and striated smooth in the technological model? To answer this question they invoke two more illustrations: embroidery and patchwork. Both are mixtures of smooth and striated space. However, in embroidery striated space dominates, while in patchwork smooth space dominates. The reason that striated space dominates in embroidery is that everything is subordinated to a central pattern. In a patchwork, even though there may be patterns of enormous complexity, space is composed entirely differently. Patches of differing materials and patterns are successively added to one another forming a heterogeneous and amorphous space that Deleuze and Guattari call smooth. As we'll see below in the mathematical model, this is also the conception they have of Riemannian space. In the case of a patchwork, though, we have the stitching together of striated fabrics into a smooth space. Thus, the striations become local rather than global.

### *THE MUSICAL MODEL*

This model is closely connected with the discussion of music in "Of the Refrain," which we explored above. What Deleuze and Guattari make explicit here is the connection between music and the two kinds of space. Here they rely on the work of Pierre Boulez and identify smooth space with rhythm and striated space with harmony and melody. It is important to remember that rhythm is not cadence or tempo. It has direction not dimension. It is a milieu not a territory. We discussed this above in the difference

between non-territorial and territorial animals. A non-territorial animal, such as a deer, has rhythmic elements, the display/concealment of its white tail, but these rhythmic elements do not rise to the level of a tempo. The white tail is not displayed regularly, only when danger is sensed. By the same token, “Boulez says that in a smooth space-time one occupies without counting, whereas in a striated space-time one counts in order to occupy” (TP 477). Several threads come together at this point. Deleuze and Guattari are clearly referring to the distinction between the numbering number and the numbered number that distinguishes the war machine from the state. Furthermore, they are also talking about the different roles that tempo can play in music, striated or smooth. When Daniel Barenboim arrived in Chicago to replace Georg Solti as the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, there was initially much consternation among the musicians concerning the role of tempo. Barenboim did not believe, as Solti did, that tempo should be determined first. Rather, he believed that tempo should be the result of playing. “Singers, especially those who have not worked with me regularly, often come to me and ask what tempo I am going to take. I answer that I cannot tell until I have heard them sing . . .”<sup>2</sup> Barenboim even asks Boulez why he often varies speed when conducting his own compositions. To which Boulez replies, “When I compose, I cook with water. When I conduct, I cook with fire.”<sup>3</sup> For Boulez as for Barenboim, the difference is one of intensity. Both are leaving the music open to the possibility of continuous variation. If harmony and melody are the vertical and horizontal of a musical fabric, then rhythm draws a diagonal that traverses both and opens it onto something new. Rhythm makes a patchwork out of harmony and melody.

### *THE MARITIME MODEL*

Deleuze and Guattari begin their discussion of this model by laying out a series of distinctions between smooth and striated space, which ultimately allows them to address “the very special problem of the sea” (TP 479). As Chart 15 makes clear, what is at stake here is precisely what has been at stake throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, namely, a perceptual semiotics. The task has never been to divide the world into two mutually exclusive sets but to show that everything is already a mixture of two opposed tendencies whether they’re articulated in spatial, temporal, musical, political, or mathematical terms. “In each instance, then, the simple opposition

Chart 15

Smooth	Striated
Point subordinated to line/trajectory	Line subordinated to point
Nomad dwelling subordinated to journey	Journey subordinated to sedentary dwelling
Line is a vector, direction, trajectory	Line is dimensional, metric
Space constructed by local operators	Space constructed by universal operators
Filled by events or haecceities	Filled by things
Affects	Properties
Haptic perception	Optical perception
Intensive	Extensive
Body without Organs	Organism

'smooth-striated' gives rise to far more difficult complications, alternations, and superpositions" (TP 481). Furthermore, the goal of this articulation is not only to account for the new but also to actively create it with all the risk that entails.

For Deleuze and Guattari the sea is a special problem because great swaths of human history are marked by the confrontation between the smooth space of the sea and its increasing striation through navigation. "It is as if the sea were not only the archetype of all smooth spaces but the first to undergo a gradual striation gridding it in one place, then another, on this side and that" (TP 479–80). This striation begins with early attempts at navigation and progresses through crude maps that mark distances between ports (*portolanos*), and finally the solution to the longitude problem in the eighteenth century that striated the sea in a coordinate system. Both states and cities were active in striating the sea. The city pursued its commercial interests through striation, and the state furthered its political interests. According to Deleuze and Guattari, though, it is the state that is able to carry this striation to completion. The state furthermore takes the striation of the sea as its model for the striation of other smooth spaces such as the desert, air, and space. The space race, spurred by the launching of Sputnik, is thus not only a race to striate space first, but a political battle over who controls striated space and the technologies of striation. As a result,

military budgets are increased to foster the development of these technologies.

A remarkable thing happens at the point of total striation, though. Through the axiomatics of capitalism, which conjoins decoded flows, smooth space is reimparted to the sea. As Virilio points out, this is the case with the role of submarines, which escape the striating net of sonar that blankets the ocean. We could even say that high altitude spy planes, “stealth” bombers, and more recently the use of unmanned drones have done the same thing for the air. “The sea, then the air and the stratosphere, become smooth spaces again, but, in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely” (TP 480). This is an instance of the process by which the state striates space by overcoding the war machine but then becomes subject itself to the war machine under conditions of total war. This condition is facilitated and extended by the close connection between capitalism and the state. At this level capitalism itself is a war machine that smoothes space and takes up striated spaces as its components. “All of this serves as a reminder that the smooth itself can be drawn and occupied by diabolical powers of *organization*; value judgments aside, this demonstrates above all that there exist two nonsymmetrical movements, one of which striates the smooth, and one of which reimparts smooth space on the basis of the striated” (TP 480). Thus, even though we can distinguish smooth and striated space in principle, they are only found in de facto mixtures. Furthermore, these mixtures are always undergoing multiple processes of deformation and mutation by which the smooth becomes striated and the striated becomes smooth.

Deleuze and Guattari wrap up their discussion of this model by acknowledging the complicated intertwinings of smooth and striated space and concluding that what is really at stake are two kinds of voyage, smooth and striated. The difference between these two kinds of voyage is the difference between intensity and extensity. To voyage smoothly is to voyage intensively. This is why Toynbee can say that nomads do not move; they voyage in place, intensively. We can certainly voyage intensively in thought. Books, movies, and music can lead us through a series of intensities without going anywhere, but Deleuze and Guattari are adamant that this is not simply a mode of thought. We do not want to fall into a Heideggerian (or even Sartrean) notion of authenticity here. Even something as simple as a rollercoaster can illustrate this intensive voyage in place. We do not ride a rollercoaster to move from point A to point B. In this

sense, the rollercoaster doesn't move at all. It starts and ends in the same place. We ride a rollercoaster in order to traverse a series of intensive states, anticipation, fear, speed, exhilaration, etc. We ride a rollercoaster solely for the journey, but a journey that doesn't go anywhere. Yet, at the same time it is a journey that creates a certain kind of space, a non-metric, directional, intensive space, a smooth space. "Voyaging smoothly is a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that. It is not a question of returning to preastronomical navigation, nor to the ancient nomads. The confrontation between the smooth and the striated, the passages, alternations and superpositions, are under way today, running in the most varied directions" (TP 482). It is possible to voyage smoothly anywhere, because smooth space is everywhere tangled up with striated space. It is not a question of ontologically untangling them; it is a question of perceptual semiotics.

#### *THE MATHEMATICAL MODEL*

Alain Badiou has argued that the decisive event in not only mathematics but thought itself is Georg Cantor's discovery of transfinite numbers. For Badiou, Cantor's discovery makes possible the identification of ontology and mathematics and furthermore makes possible a new theory of the event in which the event cannot be accounted for within the state of the situation.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to Badiou, Deleuze and Guattari argue here that (at least in relation to space) the "decisive event" is Bernhard Riemann's transformation of the predicate "multiple" into the substantive "multiplicity." This transformation is decisive for two reasons. First, it is the "end of dialectics." What Deleuze and Guattari mean by this is that things are no longer defined by a dialectic of the one and the many. Multiplicities precede and obviate the need for such a dialectic. There is thus no longer a one that divides itself into a many, or a many that recollects itself into a one. There are only multiplicities that have tendencies toward stasis and change. Second, dialectics is replaced with typology and topology. By "typology," Deleuze and Guattari have in mind the basic questions they have asked all along, Which one? What is it capable of? These are the questions that replace the "What is it?" of dialectics. The result of asking these questions is a typology, that is, a way of grouping multiplicities according to what they can do. As we've seen, "topology" is the set of continuous deformations that an object can undergo and still remain itself. The examples of this that we used above are the continuous deformations that would

Chart 16

Multiplicities	
Nonmetric	Metric
Qualitative	Extensive
Continuous	Discrete
Acentered	Centered
Rhizomatic	Arborescent
Flat	Numerical
Distance	Magnitude
Frequencies	Breaks
Directional	Dimensional
Packs	Masses
Smooth	Striated
Minor science	Major science
Numbering number	Numbered number

transform the letter “A” into the letter “R” and the shift from a donut to a coffee cup. Such transformations do not happen dialectically through the positing of contradictory positions, but through gradual mutation.

On the basis of Riemann’s discovery (and particularly Bergson’s adaptation of it), Deleuze and Guattari propose a typology of two basic kinds of multiplicity, metric and nonmetric. At this level the typology simply repeats the two basic tendencies of all assemblages toward stasis and change. Ultimately, the goal for such a typology would be the production of a taxonomy of different kinds of assemblages such as we saw in “Apparatus of Capture” with different social formations. Above all, however, it is important to keep in mind that the more granular one’s typology becomes the more the results will reflect a ratio of the metric and the nonmetric. Just as we saw in the maritime model above, the opposition between metric and nonmetric generates a series of oppositions that reproduce the same fundamental distinction (see Chart 16). We have seen instances of these oppositions in every plateau. What Deleuze and Guattari add here is a discussion of fractals in order to further illustrate their

point. "Is it possible to give a very general mathematical definition of smooth space? Benoit Mandelbrot's 'fractals' seem to be on that path. Fractals are aggregates whose number of dimensions is fractional rather than whole, or else whole with continuous variation in direction" (TP 486). Fractals thus reside somewhere between a line and a surface, greater than one dimension but less than two dimensions. Or, they reside between a surface and a volume, greater than two dimensions but less than three dimensions. If we look at a Mandelbrot set, for example, we can see that it is composed of a finite space bounded by an infinite line. The line that bounds the space has a dimension greater than one but less than two. The line itself is created by a simple, recursive formula ( $z_{n+1} = z_n^2 + c$ ), but it is infinitely complex, as a close-up of any section of the line shows. This complexity means that the line exceeds one dimension but remains less than two, much like von Koch's curve, which consists of a line continuously broken into thirds. What fractals allow Deleuze and Guattari to do ultimately is distinguish between smooth and striated space. Smooth space has fractional dimensions, while striated space has whole dimensions. Or, in the way we saw this articulated in "Of the Refrain," smooth space has direction while striated space has dimension. Finally, the mathematical model shows that smooth space "is constituted by an accumulation of proximities, and each accumulation defines a *zone of indiscernibility* proper to 'becoming'" (TP 488). We last encountered "zone of indiscernibility" in our discussion of becoming from the "Becoming-Intense . . ." plateau. As we saw in the example of the color spectrum, the entire spectrum is nothing but a series of becomings. The colors are not discrete but bleed into one another forming zones of indiscernibility between red and orange, for example. In the case of fractals, we discover zones of indiscernibility between discrete dimensions. Each iteration of the von Koch curve defines a smooth space between one and two dimensions. Fractal geometry is a minor science that arises between dimensions in precisely the same way that the war machine arises between the two poles of sovereignty and creates something new.

### *THE PHYSICAL MODEL*

Deleuze and Guattari's first task in the discussion of the physical model is to further clarify why smooth space is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. It is clear from the previous models that they think of smooth space as a patchwork, as Riemannian. This,



however, conflicts with other images of smooth space, such as the desert and the sea. It is difficult not to think of the desert as homogeneous. After all, isn't it all sand? Isn't the ocean all water? For Deleuze and Guattari, though, the heterogeneity of smooth space does not occur at the level of substance or form. Indeed, to begin at this level already presupposes striation. Rather, the heterogeneity of smooth space occurs at the level of flow. A smooth space is traversed simultaneously by multiple heterogeneous flows. Furthermore, and before one might object that "flow" simply reasserts homogeneity at another level, recall that for Deleuze and Guattari flows themselves are composed of differences. What makes the desert a smooth space are the heterogeneous flows that traverse it unrestrictedly. In contrast striation homogenizes by restricting flows, by articulating them into content and expression. Striation sorts and segregates. Systems that sort by caste, race, or economic class ensure the homogenization of each strata by channeling unrestricted flows. Thus we can say that a smooth space is heterogeneous because it is composed of intensive differences and a striated space is homogeneous because it converts intensive differences into extensive wholes.

The next task of this model is to unfold the relation between "work" as a problem in physics and as a problem of the state. The operative distinction here is between "work" and "free-action," which we encountered in "Apparatus of Capture." As we saw, "work" is only thinkable within the context of stockpiling and property instituted by a state apparatus of capture. What Deleuze and Guattari add in this model is a brief look at the intersection of the concept of "work" in physics with "work" in a political and economic context. This connection becomes straightforward if we return to the difference between Euclidean and Archimedean geometry. As we've seen at several points, Euclidean geometry is a geometry of solids. That is, it functions by dealing with ideal, discrete objects in an ideal, homogeneous space. Euclidean geometry presupposes a striated space in which parallel lines never meet. This account of space, though, is nothing other than the apparatus of capture realized geometrically. Euclidean geometry is royal science, the science of the state. Within the context of state science "work" is defined as "a force-displacement relation in a certain direction" (TP 489). For example, moving a box from point A to point B constitutes work. Furthermore, it is irrelevant how this box is moved. The same amount of work is done whether one uses a ramp, stairs, a pulley, or a wagon. What makes "work" work, then, is the movement of discrete objects in metric space. Within this context even a fluid can be

the object of work provided that the fluid is first divided into a series of discrete volumes. This is tantamount, however, to turning a fluid into a solid. The shift, then, from fluids to discrete solids makes possible the definition of work in the physical sense, and it also makes possible the measurement of work with regard to another metric, an economic metric. The geometry of work thus makes possible an economy of work in which various directional force-displacements become comparable to one another and as such remunerable. Work becomes "labor-power."

As Deleuze and Guattari insist, though, the striation of smooth space is not where the story ends. On the one hand, there are always points at which smooth space escapes striated space. This is simply the nature of any assemblage thought spatially, in its tendency toward change. On the other hand, there is also the possibility that a striated space can become smooth again. This is precisely what we see with regard to work. Before work is captured by the state it is not work at all but free-action. The capture and conversion of free-action requires stockpiling and surplus, such that the goal of work is to produce surplus. Working to produce surplus is the source of what Marx called "alienated labor." Global capitalism, though, doesn't function on the basis of producing surplus labor. In fact, according to Deleuze and Guattari it doesn't function on labor at all. This is the shift from what is commonly called a "manufacturing economy" to a "service" or "information economy." For Deleuze and Guattari this is the shift from a striated space of national economies to the smooth space of global capitalism. Global capitalism does not function on surplus labor but on surplus value. Surplus value, though, can be created by anyone and is not the product of labor but of consumption. In global capitalism everyone's task is to consume, to keep capital circulating. Anyone can do this at anytime. Watching TV, surfing the internet, looking at billboards. All of our waking activity is inundated by consumption whether we're working or not. Global capitalism thus reconstitutes a smooth space without boundary of which we are all component parts.

### *THE AESTHETIC MODEL: NOMAD ART*

The final model is organized around three distinctions: between close-range and long-distance vision, between haptic and optical space, and between abstract and concrete lines. Deleuze and Guattari have referred to "haptic" in previous plateaus but only discuss it at length here. Haptic is another way of talking about the

relation to smooth space, while optical is a way of talking about a relation to striated space. Thus, while “haptic” would generally have connotations of “tactile,” Deleuze and Guattari do not want simply to oppose two senses but rather to talk about the way all of the senses can engage space differently—a perceptual semiotics.

In this discussion they draw heavily on Wilhelm Worringer’s concept of the “Gothic line,” which Deleuze also returns to in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Worringer’s primary concern is to clearly distinguish the art of Northern Europe from the art of Southern Europe.<sup>5</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, Worringer’s Gothic line allows them to distinguish between an abstract line and a discrete line, or between a line of flight and a segmented line. We can illustrate this distinction by looking at two examples. The first example is Masolino’s “St. Peter Healing a Cripple and the Raising of Tabitha” (1425). The perspective employed here striates the space. It creates a series of segmented lines that begin at the margins of the painting and all converge on a single point. The arrangement of space within the picture is subordinated to the point of perspective.

The second example is Simone Martini’s “The Miracle of the Child Falling from the Balcony” (1328). In this painting there is a remarkable compression of both space and time: the child is depicted both falling from the balcony and as safe and sound just to the right of the falling child. Even more remarkable is the way that the monk Agostino Novello comes swooping in from the upper left side of the painting. The fringes of his robes are blurred with speed. The lines in this painting are not subordinated to a central point of perspective; they flow. The line of the monk’s flight extends beyond the frame of the painting. The child plummets downward and watches the fall at the same time. Affects of horror and fear circulate between mother and child, while at the same time affects of concern and gratefulness surround the saved child. Whatever striations there are in this painting are traversed by the smooth space of affect and flowing action. This painting is haptic because even the “seeing” that’s done here is the local seeing of smooth space. There is no horizon that organizes the whole. There are a series of local motions that are pieced together as a patchwork.

For Deleuze and Guattari Gothic art is the continuation of the nomadic jewelry that we discussed in “Nomadology” and “Apparatus of Capture.” Furthermore, this same “abstract line” is taken up in modern art. Crucially, though, modern art does not paint a haptic space because it is “abstract” in the sense that it eschews figural

representation. Rather, modern art paints a haptic space because it is abstract in the sense that it is opposed to the discrete. Modern art paints a smooth space not a striated space.

### CONCLUSION

As we've seen throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* the dominant trend in thought has been to efface as far as possible all of the terms associated with change on the continuum between stasis and change, such as "smooth space." Within the context of this plateau Deleuze and Guattari argue that the process by which smooth space is effaced has two stages. In the first stage smooth space is treated as an encompassing element. Here, following Vernant's analysis along with Deleuze and Guattari, we can see this stage operative in Anaximander's articulation of the *apeiron*.<sup>6</sup> Anaximander argued that the formed must have its origins in the unformed, that the bounded must have its origins in the boundless. Here he seems to repeat the older cosmogonies that order must arise out of chaos. For Deleuze and Guattari, though, Anaximander's move here is nothing other than a separation of smooth space (*apeiron*) from striated space (*peiron*).

The second stage of effacing smooth space is to expel it from striated space. That is, striated space must be shown to be self-subsistent, not dependent on smooth space. Or at the very least smooth space must be shown to be derivative from striated space. It is at this point that we have the origins of the discontinuity thesis. Smooth and striated space are posited as ontologically different in kind and are related to one another analogically as form and content. When this happens, thought itself is identified with the formal component. Content becomes the unintelligible material substrate. This distinction is at its starkest in Plato but remains the dominant tendency of thought in his wake.

Having articulated the process by which smooth space is effaced, Deleuze and Guattari counsel caution. There is no romanticism of smooth spaces. The goal is not to replace striated spaces with smooth spaces. "Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (TP 500). We've seen over and over again that smooth spaces and the lines of flight that compose them can easily fall into suicidal collapse. In the case of capitalism smooth space can actually further the ends of the state. What then is the goal? To experiment. To create something new. While creation and experimentation can only happen through smooth space, it does not follow that all

experiments, all creations, will increase power rather than decrease it. So, experiment, create, but do it carefully.

NOTES

1. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 6.
2. Barenboim, *A Life in Music*, pp. 152ff.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 224ff.
4. Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 2.
5. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form Problems of the Gothic*.
6. Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*, pp. 230ff.

## *Conclusion: The Ethics of Becoming*

In Part Three of his *Ethics*, Spinoza argues that the problem with most philosophy is that it treats human behavior as if the rules of the rest of the universe did not apply to it. That is, as if it were a kingdom within a kingdom. The difficulty with this approach is that it immediately makes human behavior random and incomprehensible. Only if human behavior follows the order of nature rather than disturbs it can it be understood at all. Human behavior does not transcend nature but is an expression of it. No clearer account of what Deleuze calls the “univocity of being” in other contexts and what I call “the continuity thesis” could be wished for. Spinoza’s claim thus has the advantage of making human behavior comprehensible, but it has the disadvantage of seeming to deny human uniqueness in nature. While it is true that human uniqueness can no longer be grounded in the human transcendence of nature, this is not the only avenue available to Spinoza. In fact, he can rely on the resources of univocity or continuity to argue for a difference that is not predicated on transcendence, a difference in degree not a difference in kind. As we saw in the Introduction, a difference in kind can only be accounted for in terms of analogy. As a result, the nature of the difference cannot be known, it can only be represented. In contrast to this, the difference in degree predicated on the univocity of being produces real difference not merely analogical difference. For Spinoza, then, humans are different not because they possess a different kind of being (e.g., soul or mind), but because they are composed differently. That is, humans possess a different ratio of motion and rest among their parts than other things and are thus capable of affecting and being affected

differently than other things. This difference in affection is where real difference lies, not in an ontologically transcendent property that humans possess.

Deleuze and Guattari's project in *A Thousand Plateaus* is the direct heir to Spinoza's line of thinking. They are also interested in a flat ontology in which differences are grounded in different ways of affecting and being affected, different ways of being composed. In this respect *A Thousand Plateaus* is also an ethics, but it is not solely a human ethics; it is an ethics of assemblages. As we've seen, each plateau is the examination of a different kind of assemblage. For each assemblage Deleuze and Guattari ask, What is the manner of its composition? What combinations can it enter into that compose it and decompose it? Where is it capable of entering into new combinations? Where is it blocked from entering into new combinations? What are the limits at which the assemblage will cross a threshold and become something new? While many of the assemblages they examine have a human component, understanding that "humanness" is not their primary concern.

Another aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's project that makes it an ethics in the Spinozist tradition is that it eschews judgment. As we saw in the "Geology of Morals" an organized body is a judgment in the classical sense that it relates a subject to a predicate; that is, an organized body is a set of determined relations (e.g., the heart is a pump and therefore can't be a liver). Traditionally, this kind of organization is imposed by a transcendent form (hence "the judgment of God"). Deleuze and Guattari recognize that there are still organized bodies, but need to account for this immanently, so in this plateau they propose a process of "stratification" that accounts for organizations of this type. What the process of stratification allows them to do is distinguish between the two basic tendencies of every assemblage toward stasis and change. What stratification does not allow, however, is the division of the world into two sets of objects, static, molar, arborescent, extensive objects and fluid, molecular, rhizomatic, intensive objects. To mistake the two basic tendencies of all assemblages for two distinct *kinds* of assemblage simply reinstates a regime of judgment. With judgment comes morality. The real temptation that follows judgment is to claim that one kind of assemblage is "good" and the other "evil." This, in fact, is how Deleuze and Guattari have been read by both critics and sympathetic commentators. The argument works like this: Deleuze and Guattari argue that fluid, molecular, rhizomatic, intensive assemblages have been either marginalized or actively repressed in

the history of the thought. (So far, so good. They do in fact argue this, although an important qualification needs to be made.) It turns out, though, that far from being evil, these fluid, molecular, rhizomatic assemblages are the sole source of goodness and liberation, while the static, molar, arborescent assemblages are the sole source of evil and oppression. The task of philosophy, according to this argument, is to usher in a revolution whereby evil, arborescent assemblages are replaced with good, rhizomatic assemblages. We should chop down all the trees and plant potatoes, because potatoes are good and trees are evil.

Notice how judgment (division of the world into two kinds of things) quickly becomes morality (one kind is good, the other evil). On this reading, Deleuze and Guattari's project becomes a romantic reversal. I have argued, to the contrary, that *A Thousand Plateaus* is a "perceptual semiotics." That is, the dualisms presented throughout the book (rhizome/tree, molecular/molar, intensive/extensive) are indicative not of an ontological dualism but of the two tendencies that compose every assemblage. There are no pure rhizomes. There are only assemblages in which the rhizomatic tendency is more or less dominant. By the same token, there are no pure trees. There are only assemblages in which the arborescent tendency is more or less dominant. This is the case for all of the dualisms that run through *A Thousand Plateaus*.

What follows from a perceptual semiotics, then, is the impossibility of determining a priori whether an assemblage is good or evil. In fact, any given assemblage is likely to be both. Furthermore, the degree to which an assemblage is helpful or harmful does not necessarily align with the ratio of tendencies in a given assemblage. Thus, to take a simplistic example, if we determine that an assemblage has a ratio of 2:1 of stasis to change, it does not follow from this that the assemblage is twice as harmful as it is helpful. This is because Deleuze and Guattari are manifestly not arguing that stasis is always bad and change is always good. Additionally, the determination of whether an assemblage is helpful or harmful cannot be made in general or in a vacuum; it must be made *in situ*. The ethics of *A Thousand Plateaus* is experimental. In this respect as in many others Deleuze and Guattari take Spinoza's claim that "no one knows what a body can do" to heart.

It is also at this point that we can sharply differentiate ethics and morality. A perceptual semiotics robs morality of its force by refusing to divide the world into good and evil things. Without this division the question, What *should* we do?, loses all of its power. The ethical



question that replaces it is, What *might* we become? This question begins with what is the case and seeks only to experiment with the possibilities afforded. Experimentation is dangerous. There are no guarantees that increasing the ratio of change to stasis will result in a beneficial outcome. As Deleuze and Guattari continually point out, there is just as much danger in the tendency toward change as there is in the tendency toward stasis. They are distinct dangers, to be sure, but dangers nonetheless. What they propose in light of these dangers is careful methodical experimentation. What they are not advocating is the immediate destruction of all structures of stability. The most likely outcome of such a radical deterritorialization is the imposition of even more restrictive stratifications. Even worse, such a radical deterritorialization can become suicidal, as the example of Kleist shows. Experiment, but experiment carefully.

As we've seen, the purpose of the kind of experimental ethics promoted by *A Thousand Plateaus* is the creation of the new. Creating the new requires first of all an understanding of the conditions of possibility for the new. For Deleuze and Guattari understanding these conditions begins with a perceptual semiotics that can see not only the static tendencies in an assemblage but also the tendencies toward change. These tendencies toward change are the "deterritorializing edge" where change can occur. We find this deterritorializing edge wherever an assemblage comes into contact with its outside. Importantly, though, the relation between the inside and outside need not be thought in strictly spatial terms. Insofar as Deleuze and Guattari define an assemblage strictly in terms of external relations (its ways of affecting and being affected), all that is meant by "outside" here is an assemblage's combination with something heterogeneous. Any boundary established by an assemblage is always temporary and porous, whether it be a boundary between slowly shifting tectonic plates or within a rapidly developing conversation at a party that continually shifts as people join or leave the group. Loud music may make group cohesion impossible, or it may drive people more tightly together as the intensity of the conversation overcomes the intensity of the music. This constant negotiation of shifting intensities, whether on a short or a long temporal scale, is the site where the new is created. As always, there are no guarantees that the new that is created will be beneficial, but we also can't know that until we experiment with it.

Crucially, though, and this is the real advantage of *A Thousand Plateaus* as an ethics, it is not limited to human interactions but is both micro- and macro-scalable. That is, it is an ethics of becoming

as such. This does not mean, however, that Deleuze and Guattari's rallying cry is, "More becoming, less being!" This would turn their descriptive ethics into a prescriptive morality. Rather, following Deleuze's analysis of Nietzsche, it does not assume that becoming is one, but asks, "Which becoming?" The "which" here allows Deleuze and Guattari to look for becoming in human behavior, to be sure, but also in the rise and fall of mountain ranges, in the development of a new species of bird through reproductive isolation, or in the ways that capitalism has subsumed the state-form.

Wide-ranging analysis of this type is the hallmark of any good philosophy. What sets *A Thousand Plateaus* apart is its elegance. It is able to generate remarkable analytic power from a few basic suppositions. The key terms in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy are assemblage, stratum, abstract machine, and as we've seen becoming. Assemblages replace the things, subjects, and objects of traditional philosophy. Stratum and becoming are the two tendencies of every assemblage. A stratum is a tendency toward stasis, while becoming is the tendency toward change. The number and types of strata and becomings are myriad and follow from the assemblage under examination. The first and most important thing to note about abstract machines is that they do not pre-exist strata or assemblages and are only separable from either in principle. They are not a transcendental (ontologically discontinuous) form that organizes chaotic matter. Recall that "abstract" here is not the opposite of "concrete" it is the opposite of "discrete." An abstract machine thus describes the limits of continuous variation that an assemblage may undergo. We discussed this above in terms of topology, the transformation of the letter A into the letter R. Another way we might think about this is to suppose that assemblages are solutions and abstract machines are problems. Thus coniferous and deciduous trees are solutions to the problem of converting sunlight into sugar. Though each type of tree has solved the problem differently, they are nonetheless solutions to the same problem. All of the different species of trees suggest a range of continuous variation described by the abstract machine. The abstract machine neither pre-exists nor determines the range of variation but describes it. The reason abstract machines are important for Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is that they allow for an account of the intensive processes that underlie assemblages. Abstract machines allow us to think assemblages in their becoming not just their stratification, because abstract machines allow us to think assemblages as temporary stabilities in a process of continuous variation.

Through these very few concepts we can see clearly (and hope I have shown some of) the ways in which *A Thousand Plateaus* transforms philosophy not simply by giving us a new system but by showing us how new concepts can be created. Deleuze and Guattari's work not only describes the creation of the new but performs it before our very eyes. I think, though, we would largely miss the point of the book if we simply marveled at its breadth and complexity. While there is no doubt much to marvel at, *A Thousand Plateaus* is a call to action, more specifically a call to becoming. This call to becoming is not limited to philosophy. As we've seen, Deleuze and Guattari draw on a dizzying array of disciplines in order to fashion their concepts, from biology to metallurgy to linguistics. Later, in *What is Philosophy?*, they go on to distinguish different disciplines according to what each produces. Here, though, while they consider *A Thousand Plateaus* a work of "plain old philosophy," they do not articulate how art or science might differ.<sup>1</sup> Rather, they employ a perceptual semiotics in order to reconceive everything from economics to geology. It's this perceptual semiotics that I think makes the book so fruitful for other disciplines and practices traditionally thought to be far-removed from philosophy. Deleuze writes, "The best moments of the book while we were writing it were: music and the ritornello [refrain], the war-machine and nomads, and animal-becoming. In these instances, under Félix's spell, I felt I could perceive unknown territories where strange concepts dwelt. The book has been a source of happiness for me, and as far as I'm concerned, it's inexhaustible."<sup>2</sup> Deleuze finds his happiness in mapping unknown territories and creating strange, new concepts. *A Thousand Plateaus* is for him an inexhaustible source of such becomings.

I think we can draw two lessons from this. The first is that *A Thousand Plateaus* can play a similar role for us. It can be the source of strange, heterogeneous connections through which we might discover new territories and new becomings. This has been done both inside and outside of philosophy as scholars, technicians, and artists have taken up this work in order to open their disciplines to diverse outsides. Architecture has used *A Thousand Plateaus* to rethink notions of space and flow. City planners have done the same thing on an even larger scale. Visual artists have used it to expand on the notion of an abstract line. Political activists have used it to rethink notions of mass and crowd. Even if the artists and technicians aren't consciously drawing on *A Thousand Plateaus*, theorists can use the concepts found there to describe these practices in an

effort to connect them to an outside and create new concepts. The second lesson is that we are not limited to the concepts created in *A Thousand Plateaus*. A great deal of this type of creative work draws on Deleuze's solo work and Guattari's solo work. It doesn't even have to be Deleuze and Guattari, any philosopher will do. This is the key to Deleuze's work in the history of philosophy. He does excellent historical and exegetical work, but his goal is to discover what new concepts the philosopher has created. Obviously, as *A Thousand Plateaus* shows, we need not limit ourselves to philosophy. Any assemblage, whether theoretical, artistic, or technical, can be the source of something new when viewed through the perceptual semiotics articulated here. Perhaps the best way to think about Deleuze and Guattari's work is as an open-ended field guide. *A Thousand Plateaus* identifies a few assemblages in order to show where their lines of flight are, but the real value of the book lies in the method by which new assemblages might be described in order to become the source of new concepts. The twin poles of description and creation thus compose the perceptual semiotics of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

In writing this book I focused mostly on the description pole. This was a necessity given the kind of book I was writing, but it also feels like a betrayal. I am comforted by the fact that at a conference I once asked, "How do you write about Deleuze and Guattari without betraying them?" A well-known scholar of Deleuze and Guattari's works turned to me and said simply, "You don't." In terms that we've seen here, I have overcoded *A Thousand Plateaus*. At the same time, we've also seen that no overcoding is complete. There are always flows that escape the overcoding. This is the nature of any assemblage; it has tendencies toward both stasis and change. This book, no doubt, tends more toward striation, but not wholly. My hope is twofold. First, that the descriptions are useful. That is, that they allow both the striations and the becomings to be seen. Second, that some of those becomings might be taken up in order to create new concepts. In Spinozist terms, I would articulate my hope in this way—that combining with this book might make more rather than fewer combinations possible.

## NOTES

1. Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, p. 176.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 239–40.

## *Suggestions for Further Reading*

The literature on Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari is voluminous and growing more rapidly every year. As a result it's easy to become overwhelmed. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that much of the literature on *A Thousand Plateaus* is (perhaps rightly) more focused on using some of its concepts in order to create something new. This is especially true in applications of Deleuze and Guattari outside philosophy. There are some short and helpful discussions of *A Thousand Plateaus* contained in general introductions to Deleuze, but very few that give you the sense of the whole work. There are, though, three works that discuss *A Thousand Plateaus* at length:

- Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*, 1992.

This book is by the English translator of *A Thousand Plateaus* and is the first extended treatment of the book in English. It is a thematic approach to the book and has some very insightful discussions of content and expression. At the same time, as the subtitle indicates, Massumi is interested in making something new with the tools he finds in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

- Mark Bonta and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary*, 2004.

This book does the great service of solidifying the connection between Deleuze and Guattari's work and complexity theory. What makes it especially helpful, though, is the glossary. *A Thousand Plateaus* is a massive, complex work that connects and

re-connects its concepts in unexpected ways. This book prevents one from stumbling over technical terminology not only by defining it but by indicating related terms. In the same vein, see also Adrian Parr's *Deleuze Dictionary* and Eugene Young's *Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary*.

- Eugene Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader's Guide*, 2013.

Like Massumi's book, this one is organized thematically. This is particularly helpful as it allows the reader to survey multiple plateaus simultaneously and from different perspectives. Holland is also very good at situating the themes of *A Thousand Plateaus* in their historical and philosophical contexts. My only wish is that this book had been published a little earlier. It would have been a big help to me as I was struggling through *A Thousand Plateaus*.

In addition to the secondary sources directly focused on *A Thousand Plateaus*, there are two primary sources that shed additional light on the book.

- Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995*, 2006.

This collection of short essays and interviews follows in the wake of *Anti-Oedipus* and has many helpful pieces leading up to *A Thousand Plateaus*, as well as reflections on the work itself. It is in an interview that we discover, for example, that Deleuze sees philosophy as the creation of concepts and that *A Thousand Plateaus* is “about” assemblages.

- Félix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, 2011.

This book was published in French the year before *A Thousand Plateaus*. Here we see Guattari working through many of the key concepts of *A Thousand Plateaus*, such as semiotics, faciality, and the refrain. Here one can find new perspectives on plateaus such as “Several Regimes of Signs,” “Faciality,” and “Of the Refrain.” It is an especially good antidote to the tendency in much scholarship to elide Guattari's contribution to *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The last two books on this list provide additional context but of different kinds. The first provides historical context, while the second provides, for want of a better word, imaginative context.

*Suggestions for Further Reading*

- François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, 2010.

This is an excellent biography of both Deleuze and Guattari. It makes very clear the social, political, and intellectual context of both prior to and in the wake of their meeting in 1969. It also makes very clear the extent of Guattari's contribution, not just to the co-authored works but to the political and intellectual climate in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s.

- Manuel DeLanda, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 1997.

While this book is not intended to be a strict explication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, it can very fruitfully be read as an extended commentary on the “Geology of Morals” plateau. DeLanda has the great virtue of writing very clearly from the perspective of complexity theory and providing a seemingly endless array of examples to illustrate his arguments. There are certainly points at which I disagree with his analysis, but at the same time there are few authors who have helped me to “see” so clearly what Deleuze and Guattari are up to.

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