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Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari and the Rhuthmoi of War - Part 3

- Recherches
- Le rythme dans les sciences et les arts contemporains
- Philosophie - Nouvel article
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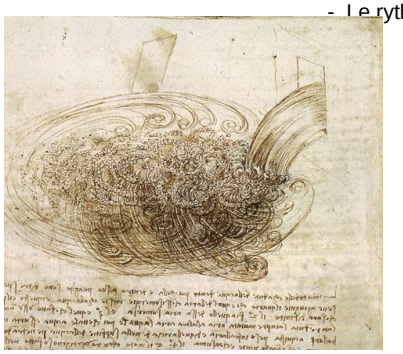

Date de mise en ligne : Tuesday 13 July 2021

Sommaire

Previous chapter

Social War Machines - Spatial Aspects, Local Absolutes and Prophets

Since "the war machine," according to Deleuze and Guattari, "is the invention of the nomads" (p. 380), the following sections were devoted to the analysis of the main aspects inherited from this peculiar social origin: "*a spatiogeographic aspect, an arithmetic or algebraic aspect, and an affective aspect*" (p. 380).

First, nomads used space differently from sedentary people. While the latter assigned "each person a share and regulat[ed] the communication between shares," the nomads "*distribute[d] people (or animals) in an open space*."

> Even though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people,* assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite: it *distributes people (or animals) in an open space,* one that is indefinite and noncommunicating. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 380)

This fundamentally irregular way to use space without dividing it into shares made space itself different. While sedentary space was "striated" and unequally appropriated, nomad space was intrinsically "smooth" and therefore without hierarchy.

> There is a significant difference between the spaces: sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by "traits" that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 381)

This peculiar use of space gave nomads their particular form of collective individuation, which Deleuze and Guattari first characterized as "consistency of a fuzzy aggregate."

> The *nomos* came to designate the law, but that was originally because it was distribution, a mode of distribution. It is a very special kind of distribution, one without division into shares, in a space without borders or enclosure. The *nomos* is the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate: it is in this sense that it stands in opposition to the law or the *polis.* (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 380)

But a few lines below they also suggested to call "speed" the "absolute character" of such kind of loose bodies which occupy "a smooth space in the manner of a vortex."

> Movement is extensive; speed is intensive. Movement designates the relative character of a body considered as "one," and which goes from point to point; *speed, on the contrary, constitutes the absolute character of a body whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy or fill a smooth space in the manner of a vortex,* with the possibility of springing up at any point. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 381)

The State would oppose speed as "absolute state of a moving body" and promote it only as "the relative characteristic of a 'moved body.'" Its first concern has always been to "regulate speed." By contrast, the nomads developed war machines that could reach "absolute speed" in a "smooth space." In this sense, "speed" was not a measurable rate of motion but a unique quality of a flowing aggregate. It was its hacceity or singularity from the viewpoint of action, especially on the social and political level but also on the scientific, philosophical and artistic levels.

> It is not at all that the State knows nothing of speed; but it requires that movement, even the fastest, cease to be the absolute state of a moving body occupying a smooth space, to become the relative characteristic of a "moved body" going from one point to another in a striated space. In this sense, the State never ceases to decompose, recompose, and transform movement, or to regulate speed. [...] If the nomads formed the war machine, it was by inventing absolute speed, by being "synonymous" with speed. And each time there is an operation against the State insubordination, rioting, guerrilla warfare, or revolution as act it can be said that a war machine has revived, that a new nomadic potential has appeared, accompanied by the reconstitution of a smooth space or a manner of being in space as though it were smooth. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 386)

The concept of "speed" was in turn elaborated further. While sedentary people would define themselves "relatively to" a "global" perspective, nomads produced "local" forms of the "absolute."

> What is both limited and limiting is striated space, the *relative global* [...] Even when the nomad sustains its effects, he does not belong to this relative global, where one passes from one point to another, from one region to another. Rather, he is in a *local absolute,* an absolute that is manifested locally. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 382)

In short, the passage from "consistency," to "speed" and finally to "local absolute" transcribed the passage from the collective individuation of a "nomad aggregate" to its intrinsic movement and finally to its agency and its performativity. This subtle characterization must be duly appreciated. As a matter of fact, it was very close to Spinoza's and more recently Meschonnic's description of what was left of the "divine" in a worldview which was not based any longer on the hypothesis of a God creator of all things. "The divine" did not disappear altogether but it split and contracted into a myriad of "local absolutes" rising among humans then moving horizontally among them along vortical lines defined sometimes only by tiny deviations or clinamens.

Just like for Spinoza and Meschonnic, these "local absolutes" were naturally at odds with "religion." The latter "converted the absolute" into "a horizon that encompasses" or, if it appears at a particular place, into "a solid and stable center" capable of ensuring the "global" order of the world to the benefit of "the State."

> The sacred place of religion is fundamentally a center that repels the obscure *nomos.* The absolute of religion is essentially a horizon that encompasses, and, if the absolute itself appears at a particular place, it does so in order to establish a solid and stable center for the global. [...] In short, religion converts the absolute. Religion is in this sense a piece in the State apparatus (in both of its forms, the "bond" and the "pact or alliance." (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 382-383)

By contrast with the sedentary people attached to a global and centralized religious worldview, nomads had thus "a sense of the absolute, but a singularly atheistic one." In short, nomads were Spinozist without knowing it.

> It may be observed that nomads do not provide a favorable terrain for religion; the man of war is always committing an offense against the priest or the god. The nomads have a vague, literally vagabond "monotheism," and content themselves with that, and with their ambulant fires. The nomads have a sense of the absolute, but a singularly atheistic one. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 383)

This analysis led Deleuze and Guattari to pay attention like Max Weber to the character of "the prophet" and to his opposition to the religion developed by the priests employed by the State. But while Weber believed that prophets introduced a strong dualism between Earth and Heaven that made it possible to challenge established religious and political powers and to rationalize one's life according to its demand they were more interested in the role of prophecy in the development of holy wars and war machines. They unfortunately ignored its ethical aspect and focused on its military role, although in both cases prophecy broke State Law and Order by introducing the Absolutely Other or what Deleuze and Guattari called, for their part, "the outside" *(le dehors)* (e.g. p. 4 *sq*., p. 377).

> Monotheistic religion, at the deepest level of its tendency to project a universal or spiritual State over the entire ecumenon, is not without ambivalence or fringe areas [...] We are referring to religion as an element in a war machine and the idea of holy war as the motor of that machine. *The prophet,* as opposed to the state personality of the king and the religious personality of the priest, directs the movement by which a religion becomes a war machine or passes over to the side of such a machine. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 383)

Prophecy triggered a conversion of religion into a war machine liberating "a formidable charge of nomadism or absolute deterritorialization" and capable sometimes of even turning "its dream of an absolute State back against the State-form." To support their claim, they could have cited Evans-Pritchard who, in the 1930s, had identified similar phenomena in the Nuer of Sudan involving the rise of prophetic leaders with charismatic and fragile power when the Nuer had faced the British invasion at the end of the 19th century (see Michon, 2016). But this would have meant to admit that "prophets" were not completely at odds with "chiefs" while embodying very exceptional forms of leadership dictated by pressing circumstances. This is why they ignored Evans-Pritchard and concentrated on Clastres' analysis of "Indian prophecy" in South America, who debatably attributed prophecy to the sole urge of primitive societies to prevent the rise of chiefs and downplayed the obvious role of the Portuguese and Spanish invasion in triggering this

new political dynamic (*Society against the State,* 1974, pp. 184-185 - see also Chap. 8) (n. 58, p. 557).

> When religion sets itself up as a war machine, it mobilizes and liberates a formidable charge of nomadism or absolute deterritorialization; it doubles the migrant with an accompanying nomad, or with the potential nomad the migrant is in the process of becoming; and finally, it turns its dream of an absolute State back against the State-form. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 383)

Deleuze and Guattari ended this section by contrasting Western and non-Western forms of State, and thus paying tribute to Marx's much debated analysis of "Asiatic despotism." All States have the same *"composition,"* they noted, but not the same *"organization."* In the Orient and in Africa (they cited in a footnote a study by South African and British social anthropologist Max Gluckman - 1911-1975), due to the feeble connection of the social components, the State has been constantly undermined by "revolts, secessions and dynastic changes." But these movements, according to them, did not really affect its "great immutable form." By contrast, in the West, since the social components were much more interconnected, they could sometimes join and change the form of the State itself through a "revolution."

> There is a unity of *composition* of all States, but States have neither the same *development* nor the same *organization.* In the Orient, the components are much more disconnected, disjointed, necessitating a great immutable Form to hold them together: "despotic formations," Asian or African, are rocked by incessant revolts, by secessions and dynastic changes, which nevertheless do not affect the immutability of the form. In the West, on the other hand, the interconnectedness of the components makes possible transformations of the State-form through revolution. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 385)

In addition, due to the presence of "wide-open smooth spaces" on their margins, Oriental, African or American Empires have been constantly penetrated by nomad forces and "nomad war machines" which have helped to maintain "gaps between their components," while European States have been mostly sheltered from these intrusions and therefore could hold more easily their components together.

> The great empires of the Orient, Africa, and America run up against wide-open smooth spaces that penetrate them and maintain gaps between their components (the *nomos* does not become countryside, the countryside does not communicate with the town, large-scale animal raising is the affair of the nomads, etc.): the oriental State is in direct confrontation with a nomad war machine. [...] Western States are much more sheltered in their striated space and consequently have much more latitude in holding their components together; they confront the nomads only indirectly, through the intermediary of the migrations the nomads trigger or adopt as their stance. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 385)

Many examples contradict the first part as well as the second part of this analysis. Both the brutal end of the Shogunate caused by Emperor Meiji in 1868 in Japan and the 1911 revolution in China replacing the Qing dynasty with a Republic contradict the idea of an "absence of revolution in the Orient" and of the "immutability of the despotic form."

Regarding the second part of their analysis, recent studies have convincingly demonstrated that the end of the Western Roman Empire was not caused by the so-called "Barbarian Invasions" nor by the "Migration of peoples" as the German 19th century historiography had it (the famous *Völkerwanderung*), but by the progressive constitution of new peoples which did not exist before, either by *spontaneous ethnogenesis* while moving through the Empire or *induced by* the late Roman Empire itself which tried to oppose its own decay by integrating scattered Germanic populations. In short, instead of being responsible for the collapse of the State, the constitution of the so-called "nomad war machines," at least in this case, appears to have been largely caused by the Roman Empire itself. [1]

However, this passage and the footnote that accompanies it are important because they state Deleuze and Guattari's exact political position concerning an issue that had been discussed over and over by political activists since the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Third World movements of emancipation in the 1950s and 1960s: the precise meaning of the term "Revolution." The latter, they claimed, actually involved two opposite views. The first, endorsed since the 19th century mainly by "Socialists," aimed at the "transformation" of the State, while the second, adopted by "Anarchists," aimed at its "destruction." The proletariat was itself objectively driven by two opposite impulses. The first, as *"labor power,"* was to "transform the State apparatus" for its own benefit; the second, as *"nomadizing power,"* was to destroy it. Deleuze and Guattari made no secret of preferring the second to the first.

> The idea of a "transformation" of the State indeed seems to be a Western one. And that other idea, the "destruction" of the State, belongs much more to the East and to the conditions of a nomad war machine. Attempts have been made to present the two ideas as successive phases of revolution, but there are too many differences between them and they are difficult to reconcile; they reflect the opposition between the socialist and anarchist currents of the nineteenth century. The Western proletariat itself is perceived from two points of view: as having to seize power and transform the State apparatus (the point of view of *[labor power]*), and as willing or wishing for the destruction of the State (this time, the point of view of *[nomadization power]*). Even Marx defines the proletariat not only as alienated (labor) but as deterritorialized. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, n. 61, p. 558, my mod.)

Social War Machines - Numerical Aspects, Groups and Society

In the next section, Deleuze and Guattari reconstructed a vast sociological history of humankind. According to them, there has been in the past "three major types of human organization or composition: *lineal, territorial,* and *numerical.*"

"Lineal organization" was characteristic of the so-called "primitive societies." Deleuze and Guattari rightly noted that their segments alternatively "meld[ed] and divid[ed]." Unfortunately, they did not know about Evans-Pritchard's groundbreaking description of the Nuer's political anarchy which would certainly have seduce them (1940) (on Evans-Pritchard see Michon, 2005/2016, pp. 61-67 and 92-98).

> Up to now we have known three major types of human organization: *lineal, territorial,* and *numerical.* Lineal organization allows us to define so-called primitive societies. Clan lineages are essentially segments in action; they meld and divide, and vary according to the ancestor considered, the tasks, and the circumstances. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 388)

"Territorial organization" started with the rise of the State in Antiquity. Paradoxically, the latter allowed a certain degree of "deterritorialization" of the earth, which could be appropriated either by the State or by private persons.

> Everything changes with State societies: it is often said that the territorial principle becomes dominant. One could also speak of deterritorialization, since the earth becomes an object, instead of being an active material element in combination with lineage. Property is precisely the deterritorialized relation between the human being and the earth; this is so whether property constitutes a good belonging to the State, superposed upon continuing possession by a lineal community, or whether it itself becomes a good belonging to private individuals constituting a new community. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 388)

However, this new form of human organization involved, compared to the previous form, a much superior degree of territorialization mainly allowed by the use of astronomy, geometry and arithmetic to measure and control the earth.

> What moves to the forefront is a "territorial" organization, in the sense that all the segments, whether of lineage, land, or number, are taken up by *an astronomical space or a geometrical extension* that overcodes them. [...] Arithmetic, the number, has always had a decisive role in the State apparatus: this is so even as early as the imperial bureaucracy, with the three conjoined operations of the census, taxation, and election. It is even truer of modern forms of the State, which in developing utilized all the calculation techniques that were springing up at the border between mathematical science and social technology (there is a whole social calculus at the basis of political economy, demography, the organization of work, etc.). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 388)

This account of the difference between primitive and state societies was fairly traditional. It was different, though, with the third form of human organization, the introduction of which was a completely original suggestion. By contrast with the two previous forms, Deleuze and Guattari emphasized, the latter was based on a special kind of "number" which they called *"the Numbering Number."* Instead of being widely and strictly correlated with a striated geometric space, these "numbers" were connected with the distribution of small "fuzzy aggregates" as military companies into a "smooth space." In other words, they were "no longer a means of counting or measuring but of moving." Devoid of general metric dimension, these â€œnumbersâ€• were characterizing specific subjects or bodies moving through a smooth space.

> The *Numbering Number,* in other words, autonomous arithmetic organization, implies neither a superior degree of abstraction nor very large quantities. It relates only to conditions of possibility constituted by nomadism and to conditions of effectuation constituted by the war machine. [...] These numbers appear as soon as one distributes something in space, instead of dividing up space or distributing space itself. The number becomes a subject. The independence of the number in relation to space is a result not of abstraction but of the concrete nature of smooth space, which is occupied without itself being counted. The number is no longer a means of counting or measuring but of moving: it is the number itself that moves through smooth space. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 389)

Strikingly, Deleuze and Guattari here reintroduced the concept of rhythm to denote this kind of non-measured form of moving human organization. As opposed to "cadence or measure," which were used in "State armies" for reasons of

"discipline and show," rhythm enables us, they noted, to describe the "order of displacement," in other words, the particular way of flowing of small nomadic "fuzzy aggregates." This was obviously an implicit tribute to Foucault's analyses of the modern military use of rhythm in *Discipline and Punish* published in 1975, but also an unconscious homage to the rediscovery of the concept of *rhuthmos* by Benveniste.

> The numbering number is rhythmic, not harmonic. It is not related to cadence or measure: it is only in State armies, and for reasons of discipline and show, that one marches in cadence; but autonomous numerical organization finds its meaning elsewhere, whenever it is necessary to establish an *order of displacement* on the steppe, the desert. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 390)

The "numbering number" had two characteristics. The first was its interior articulation between components corresponding to heterogeneous entities. It was, as Morin would have suggested, a "complex" number composed of smaller numerical units.

> A first characteristic of the numbering, nomadic or war, number is that it is always complex, that is, articulated. A complex of numbers every time. It is exactly for this reason that it in no way implies large, homogenized quantities, like State numbers or the numbered number, but rather produces its effect of immensity by its fine articulation, in other words, by its distribution of heterogeneity in a free space. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 391)

The second was the exterior articulation between "two nonsymmetrical and nonequal series": on the one hand, the reshuffling of lineages into a numerical social order; on the other hand, the constitution of an elite body by the extraction of men from each lineage.

> But the numbering number has a second, more secret, characteristic. Everywhere, the war machine displays a curious process of arithmetic replication or doubling, as if it operated along two nonsymmetrical and nonequal series. *On the one hand,* the lineages are indeed organized and reshuffled numerically; a numerical composition is superimposed upon the lineages in order to bring the new principle into predominance. But *on the other hand,* men are simultaneously extracted from each lineage to form a special numerical body. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 391)

This second characteristic was, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "an essential constituent of the war machine." The number of the nomad body must have as its correlate a special body which mirrored its complexity through a simplified image and which enabled it to act and wage war. One may certainly see this concept as a remnant of Leninist ideology, possibly due to Guattari's never-denounced Trotskyism.

> We believe that this is not an accidental phenomenon but rather an essential constituent of the war machine, a necessary operation for the autonomy of the number: the number of the body must have as its correlate a body of the number; the number must be doubled according to two complementary operations. For the social body to be numerized, the number must form a special body. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 391-392)

This point of view is often forgotten by current followers of Deleuze and Guattari. The anarchist vision of the war machine, which underlined its vortical flowing over a smooth space, interacted with a para-Leninist vision bestowing power on a special corps of warriors, drawn from the common loose order of the "fuzzy aggregate" and turned into a sharp weapon. Because of this double form of organization, Deleuze and Guattari claimed, the war machine was naturally crossed by "tensions or power struggles" which prevented the rise of any centralized power.

> The war machine would be unable to function without this double series: it is necessary both that numerical composition replace lineal organization and that it conjure away the territorial organization of the State. Power in the war machine is defined according to this double series: power is no longer based on segments and centers, on the potential resonance of centers and overcoding of segments, but on these relations internal to the Number and independent of quantity. Tensions or power struggles are also a result of this. [...] It is a tension inherent in the war machine, in its special power, and in the particular limitations placed on the power of the "chief." (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 392)

Thanks to this particular internal tension, the war machine prevented both "the return of the lineal aristocracy and the formation of imperial functionaries." It developed on the very center of balance between two illegitimate forms of power.

> It is clear, especially in the last example, how the special body is instituted as an element determinant of power in the war machine. The war machine and nomadic existence have to ward off two things simultaneously: a return of the lineal aristocracy and the formation of imperial functionaries. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 393)

Social War Machines - Affective Aspects, Jewelry and Technology

After the spatial and numerical aspects of war machines, Deleuze and Guattari introduced a third viewpoint: the affects, i.e. the desires and the passions that effectuate them, which give assemblages both their consistency and efficiency.

> Assemblages are passional, they are compositions of desire. Desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination; there is no desire but assembling, assembled, desire. The rationality, the efficiency, of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them. [...] Passions are effectuations of desire that differ according to the assemblage. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 399)

In war machines, desires and passions were related with the use of weapons instead of tools. Indeed, weapons were "linked to a free-action model" while tools were related with "a work model."

> Weapons and weapon handling seem to be linked to a free-action model, and tools to a work model. Linear displacement, from one point to another, constitutes the relative movement of the tool, but it is the vortical occupation of a space that constitutes the absolute movement of the weapon. It is as though the weapon were moving, self-propelling, while the tool is moved. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 397)

Naturally, the true affective meaning of weapons and tools depended on their actual use by the assemblage which was their "formal cause," whether it was a "war machine assemblage" or a "work machine assemblage."

> What effectuates a free-action model is not the weapons in themselves and in their physical aspect but the "war machine" assemblage as formal cause of the weapons. And what effectuates the work model is not the tools but the "work machine" assemblage as formal cause of the tools. [...] The very general primacy of the collective and machinic assemblage over the technical element applies generally, for tools as for weapons. Weapons and tools are consequences, nothing but consequences. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 398)

The "work regime," in other words the regime using tools, corresponded with "a development of Form" accompanied with a "formation of the subject" based on a "sense of form" and "feelings." Instead, "the regime of the war machine" using weapons resulted in the primacy of "speeds and compositions of speed" accompanied with the predominance of "the moving body" over the subject and of "affects" over feelings. While the latter were "always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion[s]," the former were "active discharge[s] of emotion" launched like projectiles.

> The work regime is inseparable from an organization and a development of Form, corresponding to which is the formation of the subject. This is the passional regime of feeling as "the form of the worker." Feeling implies an evaluation of matter and its resistances, a [sense of form and of its developments], an economy of force and its displacements, an entire gravity. But the regime of the war machine is on the contrary that *of affects,* which relate only to the moving body in itself, to speeds and compositions of speed among elements. 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. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 399-400, my mod.)

The series of oppositions between tools and weapons, work and war, subject and body, feeling and affect, resistance to emotion and discharge of emotion, found its symbolic or expressive counterpart in the oppositions between "signs" and "jewelry," "semiotics" and "minor art." Historically, we know that work, tools and subject were closely linked with the invention of writing signs and the development of the State apparatus.

> There is an essential relation between tools and signs. That is because the work model that defines the tool belongs to the State apparatus. [...] For there to be work, there must be a capture of activity by the State apparatus, and a semiotization of activity by writing. Hence the affinity between the assemblages signs-tools, and signs of writing-organization of work. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 400-401, my mod.)

In nomad groups, Deleuze and Guattari noted, war, weapons and moving bodies driven by their affects were associated with light and elaborate jewelry "carried on objects that are themselves mobile and moving." As weapons, jewels were themselves affects "swept up by the same speed vector."

> Entirely different is the case of the weapon, which is in an essential relation with jewelry. [...] something lights up in our mind when we are told that metalworking was the "barbarian," or nomad [ ] art par excellence, and when we see these masterpieces of minor art. These fibulas, these gold or silver plaques, these pieces of jewelry, are attached to small movable objects; they are not only easy to transport, but pertain to the object only as object in motion. These plaques constitute traits of expression of pure speed, carried on objects that are themselves mobile and moving. The relation between them is not that of form-matter but of motif-support. [...] Jewels are the affects corresponding to weapons, that are swept up by the same speed vector. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 401)

Apart from the difference between tool and weapon, the development of technologies was in general driven by the "affects" of the matter it used which was by itself "in movement, in flux, in variation." Far from being only a homogeneous matter to which a form was applied as a mold, according to the Aristotelian hylomorphic scheme, it was in itself "a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression."

> The *machinic phylum* is materiality, natural or artificial, and both simultaneously; it is matter in movement, in flux, in variation, matter as a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 409)

Deleuze and Guattari borrowed here again from Gilbert Simondon (*Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, 1958). Instead of resulting from a simple association of an ideal form and a homogeneous matter, technologies actually resulted from the encounter between "processes of deformation" such as forging or wood splitting, and "an entire energetic materiality in movement, carrying *singularities* or *haecceities* that are already like implicit forms" like "the variable undulations and torsions of the fibers guiding the operation" as well as *"variable intensive affects"* like when the "wood [...] is more or less porous, more or less elastic and resistant."

> Simondon demonstrates that the *hylomorphic* model leaves many things, active and affective, by the wayside. On the one hand, to the formed or formable matter we must add an entire energetic materiality in movement, carrying *singularities* or *haecceities* that are already like implicit forms that are topological, rather than geometrical, and that combine with processes of deformation: for example, the variable undulations and torsions of the fibers guiding the operation of splitting wood. On the other hand, to the essential properties of the matter deriving from the formal essence we must add *variable intensive affects,* now resulting from the operation, now on the contrary making it possible: for example, wood that is more or less porous, more or less elastic and resistant. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 408)

In other words, nomadic technology did not result from the application of a plan or an idea to some kind of neutral matter. On the contrary, it resulted from the progressive and interactive connection between "a materiality possessing a *nomos*" and technical "operations."

> At any rate, it is a question of surrendering to the wood [suivre le bois], then following where it leads [et de suivre sur le bois] by connecting operations to a materiality, instead of imposing a form upon a matter: what one addresses is less a matter submitted to laws than a materiality possessing a nomos. One addresses less a form capable of imposing properties upon a matter than material traits of expression constituting affects. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 408)

The best witnesses of this inseparable link between heterogeneous material and complex operations were craftsmen who introduced and maintained the nomadic spirit in the technological sphere. Just as nomads followed "flows of grass, water, herds" (p. 410), craftsmen developed tools and weapons by following "a flow of matter." There were *" the itinerant, the ambulant."*

> We will therefore define the artisan as one who is determined in such a way as to follow a flow of matter, a *machinic phylum.* The artisan is *the itinerant, the ambulant.* To follow the flow of matter is to itinerate, to ambulate. It is intuition in action. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 409)

However, among craftsmen, who worked equally with earth, wood or metal, metallurgists provided perhaps the most significant example of this nomadic nature of technology. While pottery was naturally akin to the hylomorphic model, metallurgy had to constantly combine both the singularities of matter and those of the technical operations.

> It is as if metal and metallurgy imposed upon and raised to consciousness something that is only hidden or buried in the other matters and operations. The difference is that elsewhere the operations occur between two thresholds, one of which constitutes the matter prepared for the operation, and the other the form to be incarnated (for example, the clay and the mold). The hylomorphic model derives its general value from this. [...] In metallurgy, on the other hand, the operations are always astride the thresholds, so that an energetic materiality overspills the prepared matter, and a qualitative deformation or transformation overspills the form. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 410)

Because of that particular characteristic, metallurgy brought to light "a life proper to matter, a vital state of matter as such, a material vitalism." It was directly plugged in the "matter-flow" that constituted the world. It was the *rhuthmic* technique par excellence. In this sense, the metallurgist craftsman was a kind of technical correlate of the Spinozist philosopher and of the half para-Trotskyist half para-Anarchist activist.

> In short, what metal and metallurgy bring to light is a life proper to matter, a vital state of matter as such, a material vitalism that doubtless exists everywhere but is ordinarily hidden or covered, rendered unrecognizable, dissociated by the hylomorphic model. Metallurgy is the consciousness or thought of the matter-flow, and metal the correlate of this consciousness. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 411)

But since metallurgy "expressed" itself in weapons, the metallurgist was at the same time a technical correlate of the nomad warrior.

> AXIOM III. *The nomad war machine is the form of expression, of which itinerant metallurgy is the correlative form of content.* (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 415)

In short, the metallurgist craftsman, the Spinozist philosopher, the half para-Trotskyist half para-Anarchist activist and the nomad warrior were the technical, intellectual, political and military heralds of the *rhuthmic* world.

Next chapter

[1] See Halsall, Guy (2006), The "Barbarian invasions," in Fouracre, Paul (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 1: c. 500 - c. 700,* Cambridge University Press and Halsall, Guy (2008), *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, Cambridge University Press.