Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari and the *Rhuthmoi* of Politics and Economics – Part 3

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Intermediate Forms of State – Royal State, Decoded Groups and Long-Distance Trade

This analysis allowed Deleuze and Guattari to refer back to back Marx's and Weber's theories of State. On the one hand, "State violence" did not "rest with the mode of production": Marx himself had to recognize that this violence "*operate[d] through the State*" and preceded and "ma[de] possible the capitalist mode of production itself."

> Hence the very particular character of State violence: it is very difficult to pinpoint this violence because it always presents itself as preaccomplished. It is not even adequate to say that the violence rests with the mode of production. Marx made the observation in the case of capitalism: there is a violence *that necessarily operates through the State,* precedes the capitalist mode of production, constitutes the "primitive accumulation," and makes possible the capitalist mode of production itself. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 447)

But, on the other hand, the Weberian definition of the State as "monopoly of violence"—strangely cited as a trivial thesis: *"on a souvent défini l'État par…"*—was not less inadequate because this monopoly actually involved a "structural violence" of the law implemented by the police.

> The State has often been defined by a "monopoly of violence," but this definition leads back to another definition that describes the State as a "state of Law" *(Rechtsstaat).* State overcoding is precisely this structural violence that defines the law, "police" violence and not the violence of war. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 448)

It must be said here that, unlike with Marx's view, it is hard to see what this suggestion added to Weber's. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari contended that archaeologists had demonstrated that the State "has appeared, formed in a single stroke," as "the archaic imperial State" with its all-encompassing apparatus of capture.

> We start with the archaic imperial State: overcoding, apparatus of capture, machine of enslavement. It comprises a particular kind of property, money, public works—a formula complete in a single stroke but one that presupposes nothing "private" and does not even assume a preexistent mode of production since it is what gives rise to the mode of production. The point of departure that the preceding analyses give us is well established by archaeology. The question now becomes: Once the State has appeared, formed in a single stroke, how will it evolve? (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 448)

This apparatus, however, did not control everything. It was submitted to an evolution according to internal principles, regardless of the external factors that contributed to it. The "overcoding" of society by the imperial State actually freed "*a large quantity of decoded flows that escape from it*." Independent labor, flows of money, or private appropriation began to increase on the fringes of the State system, especially among "freed slaves."

> The State does not create large-scale works without a flow of independent labor escaping its bureaucracy (notably in the mines and in metallurgy). It does not create the monetary form of the tax without flows of money escaping, and nourishing or bringing into being other powers (notably in commerce and banking). And above all, it does not create a system of public property without a flow of private appropriation growing up *beside* it, then beginning to pass beyond its grasp; this private property does not itself issue from the archaic system but is constituted on the margins, all the more necessarily and inevitably, slipping through the net of overcoding. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 449)

Before going on with our reading of Deleuze and Guattari's contribution, it is worth briefly recalling here at least some elements of the long discussion by which Western thinkers have constructed the opposition between "Western liberal States" and "Oriental despotic States."

In the first half of the 18~~th~~ century, in his *Lettres persanes* (1721) and later in *De l'Esprit des lois* (1748), Montesquieu emphasized the role of the geographical differences in shaping the State. The large plains of the Asiatic natural milieu would have been an essential condition for despotism, while, by contrast, the fragmented territory of Europe would have given natural support to political liberty.

At the beginning of the 19~~th~~ century, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1822, 1828, 1830), Hegel highlighted again this opposition while integrating it in his History of the Spirit. Oriental then Greek were supposed to be the first two stages of the development of the Universal Spirit, which were to be eventually superseded by Roman and Germanic peoples. In the first stage, Mongolian and Chinese Empires were systems of "theocratic despotism," in which religious and political authorities were strongly linked. The Indian caste system and the ancient Persian monarchy, for their part, constituted respectively a "theocratic aristocracy" and a "theocratic monarchy" which were only different expressions of the same unarticulated dimension of the Spirit.

However, Hegel introduced in this last case an important codicil. The interaction of Persia with the West and the development of sea trade produced more heterogeneous elements. The sea—as in the

case of the Phoenicians and their maritime commerce—was a particularly important milieu which acted as a powerful factor of differentiation of the Spirit. Thus, Western Asiatic countries opened up the way to a different scenario, defined by Hegel as the second stage of universal history embodied by the Greek. In this case, despotism was no longer the main political category and Modern freedom of the Spirit started to emerge.

From Hegel, the theme of the political opposition between East and West passed to Marx. In *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), the latter argued against the primacy granted by Hegel to the development of the Spirit but he maintained the opposition. The "Asiatic mode of production," which prevailed in India and other Eastern countries like China and parts of Russia, was the real foundation of Oriental despotism. Since the sovereign was the sole owner of the land and the economic life was organized in largely autarkic village communities, the whole Asian economic system implied the absence of property rights and more generally of individual rights. The geographical conditions reinforced this authoritarian political and social system, because only a strong and centralized authority could provide the required agricultural watering systems. It must be noted, though, that after the first volume of *Capital* (1867), the Asiatic mode of production disappeared from Marx's writings.

A few decades later, in *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* (1897), Weber elaborated further the connection suggested by Marx between the opposition between Asiatic and European political structures. Although he was more inclined to explain historical phenomena by the spread of values and ideas, Weber observed that different geographical conditions might have caused this fundamental divergence. He pointed out the contrast between the essential role of rivers and of the managing of irrigation in Egypt or in Middle Eastern areas, and the commercial vocation of coastal Mediterranean regions open to the sea.

> The crucial factor which made Near Eastern development so different [from Greek development] was the need for irrigation systems, as a result of which the cities were closely connected with building canals and constant regulation of waters and rivers, all of which demanded the existence of a unified bureaucracy. (Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, 1897, p. 157)

On the ethical level, these differing factors resulted in "the subjugation of the individual" in the East, and, on the Mediterranean side, in the rise of a "purely secular civilization which characterized Greek society and caused capitalist development in Greece to differ from that in the Near East." On the political level, the divergent economic foundation of Asiatic and Western monarchies and the existence or non-existence of a patrimonial bureaucracy personally depending on the monarch, thus seemed, according to each case, to prevent or foster political development and modernization of the social and institutional structure.

> There was an irreversible character to this development, and with it went subjugation of the individual. On the other hand, in Greece […] the position of the monarchs declined […] and so began a development which ended […] with an army recruited from yeoman farmers who provided their own arms. Political power necessarily passed to this class, and therewith started to emerge that purely secular civilization which characterized Greek society and caused capitalist development in Greece to differ from that in the Near East. (Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of*

> *Ancient Civilizations*, 1897, p. 158)

In the early 20~~th~~ century, socialist reformists of the Second International took the concept of "Asiatic mode of production" and its political "despotic" correlate as a metaphor for Asia's backwardness. Consequently, in a typical Hegelian fashion, they saw paradoxically in colonialism a force of development and modernization. [1]

Following the Russian revolution of 1917, the concept became throughout the 1920s and 1930s the center of harsh controversies among Marxist theorists. The use of the concept raised two different issues. On the one hand, in societies subject to colonial and imperialist rule, it could be used to legitimate revolutionary strategies based on alliances between the proletariat and nationalist bourgeoisies against imperialism and indigenous ruling classes. But on the other hand, it could also be used to criticize the Stalinist regime itself as a direct heir to "Asiatic despotism." The last reason explains why the Stalinist Third International (Comintern), who favored the former but struggled against the latter, rejected the concept of "Asiatic mode of production" in 1921, and that, on the contrary, Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) and Evgenij Varga (1879-1964) continued to allude to it in their criticism against Stalinism and in proposing, for their part, anticolonial alliances of workers and peasants against both foreign imperialism and local bourgeoisies.

After a period of relative oblivion, the concept resurfaced in Marxist historiography and anthropology during the 1960s in a context of intensified anticolonial and anti-imperialist resistance.

> Maurice Godelier and other contributors to the French journal *La pensée* asserted that this mode of production remained central throughout the work of Marx and Engels. However, Jean Chesneaux did not limit the concept's validity to Asia, but extended it to a variety of traditional societies. At the same time, these authors argued for a dynamic perspective to depart from the Eurocentric bias of orthodox Marxism, which saw precapitalist non-Western societies as stagnant and undeveloped. (Marshall, 1998)

This quick overview of the theoretical and political context sheds some light on Deleuze and Guattari's contribution, which surprisingly, given their rejection of the concept of "mode of production," seemed to heavily borrow from the latest Marxist contributions of the 1960s. In a footnote, they cited Marx's unfinished *Fundamentals of a Critique of Political Economy* (1858), Marxist scientist Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* (1957), Marxist scientist Tőkei Ferenc's *Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production* (1966), and the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Marxistes' studies *On the Asiatic mode of production* (1969) (n. 9, pp. 564-565). In addition, they also cited, in another footnote, the Australian Marxist archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe's *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (1929) and *The Prehistory of European Society* (1958) (n. 42, p. 569).

As we already noticed, the State apparatus, Deleuze and Guattari claimed for their part, came into being for the first time, "in a single stroke," fully equipped with its "agricultural stock and its bureaucratic, metallurgical and commercial concomitants," in the Middle East, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, but also in the valley of the Indus and China. Then it spread in the West, especially in the Aegean world, although in a special form due to the distance with the original centers.

Agamemnon of Mycenae, for instance, was a small king whose power was not in any way comparable with that of the Chinese emperor or that of the Egyptian pharaoh. “Too far away to fall into the oriental sphere but also too poor to stockpile a surplus themselves,” Aegean peoples took advantage of the oriental agricultural stock, plundering it at times, and exchanging a share of it for raw materials (wood and metals) coming from Central and Western Europe (p. 450).

This particular underdevelopment of the Western State allowed the emergence of groups of artisans, merchants and freed slaves, working on the fringes of the State sphere, participating in long-distance commercial networks, or making money circulate freely, and enjoying a freer status than in Orient. While the Oriental archaic State, which was fully integrated, tightly controlled the groups which tended to escape its grip, “the metallurgist and merchant,” even sometimes by severing the links with the exterior world like in China at the end of the Middle Ages, the Western ancient States “were immersed in a supranational economic system from the start” and left much more room to these marginal groups which tended “to become decoded.”

> In short, *the same flows that are overcoded in the Orient tend to become decoded in Europe,* in a new situation that is like the flipside or correlate of the other. Surplus value is no longer surplus value of code (overcoding) but becomes surplus value of flow. It is as if two solutions were found for the same problem, the Oriental solution and then the Western one, which grafts itself upon the first and brings it out of the impasse while continuing to presuppose it. The European metallurgist and merchant faced a much less thoroughly coded international market, one not limited to an imperial house or class. And as Childe said, the Western and Aegean States were immersed in a supranational economic system from the start; they bathed in it, instead of containing it within the limits of their own net. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 450)

This mutation resulted quite early in a series of related transformations. On the one hand, the nature of the *“public sphere”* changed from common property to “means for a now private appropriation,” while the social *“bond”* lost its objectivity “based on one’s public function” and became “personal.”

> The *public sphere* no longer characterizes the objective nature of property but is instead the shared means for a now private appropriation; this yields the public-private mixes constitutive of the modern world. *The bond becomes personal;* personal relations of dependence, both between owners (contracts) and between owned and owners (conventions), parallel or replace community relations or relations based on one’s public function. Even slavery changes; it no longer defines the public availability of the communal worker but rather private property as applied to individual workers. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 451)

On the other hand, the *“law”* became “subjective and conjunctive.” The new task of the State apparatus was not any longer to “overcod[e] already coded flows,” that is to say, to manage already ordered human populations, but to “*organiz[e] conjunctions of decoded flows”* or of relatively free human individuals. The latter which were previously merely “enslaved” by the State machine were now apparently “subjectified” while actually being “subjected” by the new social and political system.

> The *law* in its entirety undergoes a mutation, becoming subjective, conjunctive, "topical" law: this is because the State apparatus is faced with a new task, which consists less in overcoding already coded flows than in *organizing conjunctions of decoded flows as such.* Thus the regime of signs has changed: in all of these respects, the operation of the imperial "signifier" has been superseded by *processes of subjectification;* machinic enslavement tends to be replaced by a regime of *social subjection.* (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 451)

Strikingly, Deleuze and Guattari insisted that these transformations equally happened in "the evolved empires, of the East and of the West." In the West, they occurred in the Roman Empire but also later during the Middle Ages in "autonomous cities and feudal systems." All those new political systems were now based on a new "private" sphere which, unsurprisingly, was mainly used by "freed slaves."

> And unlike the relatively uniform imperial pole, this second pole presents the most diverse of forms. […] It was the evolved empires, of the East and of the West, that first developed this new public sphere *of the* private, through institutions such as the *consilium* and the *fiscus* in the Roman Empire (it was through these institutions that freed slaves acquired a political power paralleling that of the functionaries). But it was also the autonomous cities, the feudal systems. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 451)

Compared with the brief survey of the long discussion about the so-called "Asiatic despotism" presented earlier, we see that Deleuze and Guattari's account of the archaic and ancient history of the State clearly opposed some parts of their predecessors' analysis while echoing others. While rejecting any crude dualism between "Liberal Western States" and "Asian Despotic States," and disregarding simplistic and deterministic views concerning the role of geography and the watering system, which marked most 19~~th~~ century and early 20~~th~~ century views, they claimed, as recent Marxist studies had demonstrated, that the State had already experienced significant transformations during its ancient history.

To account for the latter, they focused, on the one hand, on the endogenous growth of partly "decoded" groups such as metallurgist artisans, long-distance merchants, recently freed financiers, and on the other hand, on the ratio between local appropriation of surplus labor, and long-distance trade extending the appropriation to much larger spaces. When the ratio was in favor of long-distance appropriation, it resulted in a new kind of State allowing the development of a new kind of social group.

Ironically, this emphasis on the sea, as "a smooth space" allowing the growth of new social forces heterogeneous to the centralized State, was strongly reminiscent of one of Hegel's suggestions, who also claimed that sea and long-distance trade had been important factors of differentiation of what he called, for his part, "the Spirit."

Last but not least, like Weber, they insisted on the "ethical" consequences of these mutations. The change in the "public sphere" had a significant correlate in the growth of the "private sphere." The status identity was replaced by a subjectified/subjected identity.

Modern Forms of State – Nation-State and Capitalism

Capitalism was born from these "decoded flows" escaping the old imperial State but adapting and even prospering in the various new kinds of State. But it could emerge fully only when various types of decoded flows became confluent.

> The situation is that the pressure of the flows draws capitalism in negative outline, but for it to be realized there must be a whole *integral of decoded flows,* a whole *generalized conjunction* that overspills and over-turns the preceding apparatuses. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 452)

Indeed, as Marx claimed, capitalism presupposed both "the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity" and "the universality of the object defined as wealth, viz. the product in general, or labor in general, but as past, materialized labor" (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* cited p. 452). Deleuze and Guattari fully endorsed this description and explicitly referred to Etienne Balibar's contribution in *Lire le Capital* (1965) which elaborated it further. For capitalism to emerge, the flows of labor and wealth must become simultaneously "abstract" or "free" from traditional and local ties.

> *On the one hand,* the flow of labor must no longer be determined as slavery or serfdom but must become naked and free labor; and *on the other hand,* wealth must no longer be determined as money dealing, merchant's or landed wealth, but must become pure homogeneous and independent capital. [...] Capitalism forms when the flow of unqualified wealth encounters the flow of unqualified labor and conjugates with it. [a footnote refers here to Lire le Capital] (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 452-453)

The following paragraphs described a situation presented as already stabilized but which anticipated what would happen—at least partly—in the coming decades under the name of "globalization": the emancipation of the Capital from the bonds of the States and the constitution of "a de facto supranational power untouched by governmental decisions." We said "at least partly," because the question remains in fact open until now whether capitalism has definitely escaped the framework of the States or whether it still needs their protection and that of the main Central Banks to overcome its own crises and continue to develop, as the Global financial crisis of 2007-2008 as well as the current crisis seem to have shown.

> When the flows reach this capitalist threshold of decoding and deterritorialization (naked labor, independent capital), it seems that there is no longer a need for a State, for distinct juridical and political domination, in order to ensure appropriation, which has become directly economic. The economy constitutes a worldwide axiomatic, a "universal cosmopolitan energy which overflows every restriction and bond," a mobile and convertible substance "such as the total value of annual production" [Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]. Today we can depict an enormous, so-called stateless, monetary mass that circulates through foreign exchange and across borders, eluding control by the States, forming a multinational ecumenical organization, constituting a de facto supranational power untouched by governmental decisions. (*A Thousand*

> *Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 453)

Deleuze and Guattari were aware of the staunch opposition of capitalism to the State, which would be implemented, as a matter of fact, very soon through Kohl's, Thatcher's and Reagan's neoliberal policies.

> From all these stand-points, it could be said that capitalism develops an economic order that could do without the State. And in fact capitalism is not short on war cries against the State, not only in the name of the market, but by virtue of its superior deterritorialization. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 454)

However, they rightly argued that this mutation did not mean the complete demise of the State but a transformation of its nature. On the one hand, capitalism having imposed itself as a common universal system, modern States could only be "models of realization for a worldwide axiomatic that exceeds them."

> The different sectors are not alone in serving as models of realization—*the States* do too. Each of them groups together and combines several sectors, according to its resources, population, wealth, industrial capacity, etc. Thus the States, in capitalism, are not canceled out but change form and take on a new meaning: models of realization for a worldwide axiomatic that exceeds them. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 454)

But, on the other hand, this new form of State subjected to global capitalism was characterized by a few features which preserved a certain coherence. First, those nation-States still played a stabilizing role that could "moderate" the capitalist deterritorialization and provide "compensatory reterritorializations." Deleuze and Guattari alluded clearly here to past Western welfare state policies, that were fundamentally limited by their embeddedness in a more general deterritorializing capitalist system.

> It is thus proper to State deterritorialization to moderate the superior deterritorialization of capital and to provide the latter with compensatory reterritorializations. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 455)

Second, "all modern States," even the "so-called socialist States," were parts of the "*only one world market,* the capitalist one." As already noticed above, the subsequent explosion of the USSR in 1991 and the integration of China into the WTO in 2001 showed that their diagnosis on this point was also correct.

> Are not all modern States isomorphic in relation to the capitalist axiomatic, to the point that the difference between democratic, totalitarian, liberal, and tyrannical States depends only on

> concrete variables, and on the worldwide distribution of those variables, which always undergo eventual readjustments? Even the so-called socialist States are isomorphic, to the extent that there is *only one world market,* the capitalist one. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 455)

Third, "more generally," modern nation-States were the first basic units within which "work flow" and "independent capital flow" were allowed to circulate freely, that it so say, within which capitalism has been able to fully develop from the 19th century, by contrast with its previous forms based on long-distance trade between towns.

> More generally [...], we must take into account a "materialist" determination of the modern State or nation-state: a group of producers in which labor and capital circulate freely, in other words, in which the homogeneity and competition of capital is effectuated, in principle without external obstacles. In order to be effectuated, capitalism has always required there to be a new force and a new law of States, on the level of the flow of labor as on the level of the flow of independent capital. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 455)

Contrary to a certain number of Marxist theorists, who refused to grant any autonomous consistency to nation-States which were, according to them, only ideological fronts covering a more fundamental capitalist activity, Deleuze and Guattari emphasized that the nation entailed complex historical-anthropological processes. Admittedly, the nation-State was "the model of realization for the capitalist axiomatic," but the nation was not "an appearance or an ideological phenomenon." It had the consistency of a singular and collective passional embodiment.

> It is in the form of the nation-state, with all its possible variations, that the State becomes the model of realization for the capitalist axiomatic. This is not at all to say that nations are appearances or ideological phenomena; on the contrary, they are the passional and living forms in which the qualitative homogeneity and the quantitative competition of abstract capital are first realized. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 456)

Although the nation was based on territories deterritorialized by the flow of capital, the "land," and on a population decoded by the flow of naked labor, the "people," it found a certain consistency in the modern State which allowed a collective "subjectification" at the very moment it imposed a collective "subjection," both parallel to those of the singular individuals. The first two decades of the 21st century have shown, once again, that Deleuze and Guattari's description was correct. All dominating powers of the period still have strong national bases: suffice it to cite the USA, China, Russia, India and the European countries.

> The land, as we have seen elsewhere, implies a certain deterritorialization of the territories (community land, imperial provinces, seigneurial domains, etc.), and the people, a decoding of the population. The nation is constituted on the basis of these flows and is inseparable from the modern State that gives consistency to the corresponding land and people. It is the flow of naked labor that makes the people, just as it is the flow of Capital that makes the land and its industrial

> base. In short, the nation is the very operation of a collective subjectification, to which the modern State corresponds as a process of subjection. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 456)

Compared to the ancient State which—as Morin, Deleuze and Guattari cited here again Lewis Mumford—resembled a "megamachine" enslaving the population (p. 457), the modern State developed a new form of "subjection" based on a simultaneous "subjectification" of the individuals.

> We distinguish *machinic enslavement* and *social subjection* as two separate concepts. There is enslavement when human beings themselves are constituent pieces of a machine that they compose among themselves and with other things (animals, tools), under the control and direction of a higher unity. But there is subjection when the higher unity constitutes the human being as a subject linked to a now exterior object, which can be an animal, a tool, or even a machine. The human being is no longer a component of the machine but a worker, a user. He or she is subjected *to* the machine and no longer enslaved *by* the machine. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 456-457)

Yet this was not to say that modern individuals were freer than their ancient counterparts. The ancient "State megamachine," which operated from above, was replaced by a penetration of all sorts of machines (motorized and now informational) down deep into society which made the modern subjection even stricter since these machines were not any longer mere tools used by workers or users, but required more and more that the human beings be sheer "constituent parts" of them.

> It is the reinvention of a machine of which human beings are constituent parts, instead of subjected workers or users. If motorized machines constituted the second age of the technical machine, cybernetic and informational machines form a third age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible "humans-machines systems" replace the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 458)

Nowadays, the scenario exposed by Deleuze and Guattari appears once again rather premonitory if we consider the invasion of our lives by the use of "big data," the multiple ways of entering our private sphere, the major operations to hijack elections by informational manipulation, even if they did not consider the new possibilities for individual and collective action that the informational revolution allows simultaneously.

Deleuze and Guattari ended the section with a recap of their findings. In short, the State had followed a three stage history: after its sudden emergence during the Neolithic period, it developed first as "imperial archaic State"; then came a long intermediate period already beginning in Antiquity and running through the Middle Ages and the Modern period dominated by "evolved empires, autonomous cities, feudal systems, monarchies"; finally, from the end of the 18~~th~~ century, modern nation-States started to form and became, tightly associated with the capitalist economic

system, the dominant political form today.

> We may return to the different forms of the State, from the standpoint of a universal history. We distinguish three major forms: (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). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 459)

Next chapter

Footnotes

[1] I borrow most of the material of the next two paragraphs from Marshall, Gordon (1998), "Asiatic mode of production," *A Dictionary of Sociology*, http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-Asiaticmodeofproduction.html, retrieved December, 21 2020.