

Gilles Deleuze – The Deleuze Seminars (deleuze.cla.purdue.edu), summaries: Charles J. Stivale

A Thousand Plateaus V - On Apparatuses of Capture and War Machines, 1979-1980

The *A Thousand Plateaus V* seminar (13 sessions in all) completes Deleuze's consideration of material begun during the previous year's seminar and corresponding to plateaus 12 (1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine), 13 (7000 B.C.: Apparatus of Capture), and 14 (1440: The Smooth and the Striated).

Session 1, November 6, 1979

Linking this seminar with these previous one, Deleuze reviews earlier work, then outlines a set six of oppositions: the fundamental, abstract opposition of war machine vs. State apparatus, or also “apparatus of capture”, equating the war machine with nomadic organization as a riposte toward the State apparatus; next, the perspective of *composition*; third, a perspective of *activity*; fourth, the point of view of *expression*; fifth, Deleuze raises the point of view of *feeling*; sixth, the point of view of *violence*, Deleuze insisting that in this regard, the State apparatus violence is “already there” and present, the war machine violence always on the horizon. Deleuze draws from texts by Georges Dumézil and Ernst Jünger to discuss distinctions of poles of violence within the two formations, notably different sorts of mutilation. Deleuze then develops the importance of matter-movement, or a phylum traversing both the State apparatus and the war machine and which, in contrast to both of these formations, is fundamentally itinerant (cf. session ATP IV.1). Deleuze considers how the State apparatus has appropriated the war machine in history through the *mercenary* pole and the *army* pole, hence, encasting or appropriating. To the fundamental question, how capitalism managed to be developed through the State pole, Deleuze answers that triumph came via the “town” pole, i.e., through the State's constituent parts. Moreover, Deleuze wonders about the role of money's development in the constitution of the State, speculating on the importance of taxation and also the role played by rents. Deleuze concludes the session by emphasizing the importance of political economy for the seminar's work, and he asks if anyone might assist in discussing (and explaining) axiomatics.

Session 2, November 13, 1979

Given the increased attendance from the previous week, Deleuze reviews the premises for continuing the previous year's topic and repeats the basic question of where the State apparatus came from. Deleuze traces the theoretical history of these premises, from the despotic or Asiatic formations, distinguishing “primitive codes” (of interlaced lineages and territories) from their “overcoding”, i.e., their subsistence in relation to a superior unity (e.g., the despot) which acts upon them to “overcode” them, thereby defining the archaic empire. Deleuze considers implications of the previous year's hypothesis, i.e., the war machine was invented by the nomads as their riposte against the archaic empires that operated via bureaucracy, insisting that money itself is drawn from metallurgical sources far away, hence the necessity of external trade allowed via taxes. Summarizing, Deleuze states that overcoding (a unit enjoying profit, rent, tax revenue, external commerce) is something added on top of the code (communes, lineages, territories), with the whole arising from communes to the Emperor, hence the formalized unity, distinct from

the set of formalized objects, occurring through transcendence. In contrast (speaking in logical terms) is “axiomatization” (discussed in the 1978-79 seminar) which is a formalization of pure immanence, alongside the formalized aggregates. Then, to distinguish enslavement and subjection, Deleuze pursues two consecutive perspectives, the first technical, the second economic, and concludes that capitalism pushed social subjection to its limit since the more variable capital increases (labor power, the sum of wages), the greater the possibility of surplus-value (and indirectly, of profit), thereby never confusing machines and men. Summarizing this model (of dual subjection and enslavement), Deleuze indicates how it contrasts with the initial, archaic despotic model, yet the early model presupposing “potential surplus” as well as a certain mode of production. Deleuze proposes following research by Karl August Wittfogel as well as archaeological research regarding archaic Empires in Neolithic and Palaeolithic eras (e.g., 7000 BC in Anatolia) to consider exchanges beyond agricultural communities and the possibility of imperial formations locked into hunter-gatherers and towns.

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Session 3, November 20, 1979

In the two previous sessions, Deleuze reached a point at which the imperial archaic State form was directly linked groups to hunter-gatherers. Deleuze proposes to explore the possibility of simultaneously overlapping and diverse social formations (primitive societies, State apparatuses, war machines, the countryside, towns), with the hypothesis of defining these formations as "machinic processes", leading to the phenomenon of zigzag, rather than linearity, that places in question the evolutionist model of State development. After reviewing research in this area (notably, by Pierre Clastres), Deleuze applies the schema of wave theory for a human social field to so-called primitive communities, asserting that mechanisms for warding off State power are also vectors tending toward the formation of State power. Asserting that historians rather than sociologists best describe reasons for identifying “town” form and “State” form, Deleuze insists on their distinction, noting the States’ suspicion of their towns, and referring to European history, he also again asks how capitalism is born within the State form rather than the town form, providing extensive historical detail and references. Deleuze shifts to a “conceptual direction”, distinguishing two thresholds of the State-town: for the town form, a threshold of transconsistency; for the State form, a threshold of intraconsistency. Deleuze employs the metaphor of melodic lines, horizontal lines (the network of towns) with vertical cuts marked as counterpoints (the State form), leading him to consider the towns’ role in constituting markets. Summarizing, he enumerates four formations: the so-called primitive formation (mechanisms of anticipation-warding off); State formations (transversal, vertical apparatuses of capture); town formations (instruments constituting circuits); international, or oecumenic formations (traversing the preceding ones, in segments, astride heterogeneous formations). Deleuze cites several contemporary examples as well as work by Samir Amin regarding international economic relations, and then outlines the material for the next session, proposing to consider how coexistence between like formations (e.g., the so-called primitive) can occur and also maintain relations with the State apparatus.

Session 4, November 27, 1979

Building from the previous session, on the possibility of coexistence within a social field of extremely diverse social formations and of defining these through the commodity of "machinic processes," Deleuze emphasizes the importance of Braudel's research on relations of city and State form. He recalls the different processes coming into play (e.g., warding off-anticipation), and continuing to explore the possibilities of exchange between primitive groups, he cautions against including certain elements (e.g., stockpiling, currency, markets, regime of labor) not yet available to these groups, proper only to the State form. Deleuze proposes to consider the development of the concept of labor and labor-time, distinct from the primitive formations of exchange, in the State formation of exchange. In this process, he develops the concept of "the utility of the last object" from economic marginalist theory, with distinctions between the "limit" and "thresholds", and the concept of "the last" provides a means of understanding the movement within social groups to maintain or be required to transform the group "assemblage" in relation to the "last object" obtained in the exchange. Considering how objects exchanged may be compared under the theory of labor-value, Deleuze discovers in the classroom a student who can speak about these issues from the perspective of accountancy. While the student prepares to develop some comments, Deleuze considers the marginalists' theory of evaluation and trial and error in contrast to advocates of labor-value. In short, the "last" in the sense of marginal does not mean "ultimate", but really "second to last", since the "last" as ultimate would be the first in the other assemblage, leading Deleuze to conclude that while the limit is what is anticipated, the threshold is what is warded off. Seeking additional proof of this series of exchange, Deleuze turns to the student in accountancy, and the recording ends as the student's inaudible presentation begins.

Session 5, January 15, 1980

With no sessions available from December or from 8 January, some sessions may be missing from the recordings. After consideration of the State form versus City form in the previous session available, this 20-minute fragment (clearly situated at the end of the session) starts within a comparison, apparently between Camus's view of the Caligula story and a text by the Roman historian Sallust, as way to consider the emergence of "relations of personal dependency". Contrasting this to feudalism and to the French monarchy, Deleuze asserts that a figure of colossal importance in the sphere of personal dependency is the person who laments, the unfortunate (whatever their rank or circumstances). With reference to research by Ferenc Tökei on the Chinese elegy, Deleuze develops a list, considering the epic lament, the tragic lament, the prophetic lament (e.g., Job), the popular lament or complaint (*plainte*), especially among the Greeks and Latin poets. With Tökei's examples, Deleuze's list culminates with the example of the "freed slave", with the experience of being an outcast, and yet who is revealed as important not only for the lament but also for the development of tools of government, e.g., as the Emperor's counsel. Deleuze concludes by outlining different sorts of lament to consider: the hypochondriac's, the melancholic's, and the depressive's, each quite distinct rhythmically.

Session 6, January 22, 1980

Deleuze continues discussion of assemblages in relation to the State apparatus, comparing the territory-code combination to the land-overcoding combination, but also reviews the initial

combination in terms of concrete instances, e.g. nomadism as distinct from itinerance, the tendency to make a fixed limit, evaluation of a final object, when one marks a limit to a territory. Deleuze emphasizes the difference between the itinerant assemblage (relation of code and a territory) with its limit and an aggregate of territories exploited simultaneously, allowing him to reiterate the definition of “archaic Empires” in relation to the State apparatus assemblage. Deleuze outlines a two-tiered model of the imperial apparatus, vertical (comparative space; monopolistic appropriation) and horizontal (segments of land, labor and money), and then recalls terms proposed previously, machinic enslavement and the mega-machine, as well as the personal function of the face in different forms, with its elements of black hole and white wall. To these, Deleuze links the subject of the lament in archaic Empires, notably in China, and he refers to Eric Alliez’s work on mercantilism in support of an analysis of taxation. An extended exchange between Deleuze and Georges Comtesse opens the session to a sequence of student questions, and another student (possibly Hidenobu Suzuki) introduces a Japanese writer, Takaaki Yoshimoto, who wrote on origins of the State in Japan, relying on Japanese myths and ethnological tales. Deleuze rejects any notion of illusions or magic but refers to Georges Dumézil on the magic link known in Roman law as the *nexum*, a way of speaking of “magical” determinations or linkages in the aggregate, e.g., of currency, land rent, tax money, labor, objective operations. Successive questions lead Deleuze in different directions, notably toward concrete, mixed assemblages in Kafka’s works, and Deleuze associates Kafka’s assemblages with Orson Welles’s encounter with Kafka, with two main themes, vertical space and longitudinal lines of flight (cf. *The Third Man*, *The Lady from Shanghai*, *The Trial*). From these reflections, Deleuze introduces the topic of passage from one bureaucracy to another, and continuing with the importance between private versus public determination under the State apparatus, Deleuze returns to a reference from the previous session, Ferenc Tökei’s work on the Chinese Empire, how property becomes privatized, ironically, through the very overcoding of the State apparatus, hypothetically, through the historical character of the freed slave, the outcast, without social status, who initiates the lament, the Chinese elegy. The freed slave becomes a master in the dual fields of commerce and crafts, hence of currency and business, and Deleuze relates this to the Roman plebs’ role in the demise of Etruscan royalty. Yet, in exchange, they receive by right an unexploited parcel of public land as private owners, and gradually become small entrepreneurs, merchants, outside the web of imperial overcoding, the archaic Empire assemblage thus producing some decoding of flows in private property, private commerce.

Session 7, January 29, 1980

Deleuze accepts Eric Alliez’s contribution in the session’s first part (approximately thirty minutes, occasionally inaudible) regarding mercantilism, the rise of banks, and tax-trade organization in Europe. Calling mercantilism a political geometry of power creating a new space of appropriation and distribution, Alliez connects this to a new assemblage, the nation, i.e., the gigantic informational machine put in place by the territorial State. Providing examples of revision of fiscal policies from England and France in the 17th century, he confirms Deleuze’s previous analysis with additional support from different sources. Then reviewing the formation of the State as an apparatus of capture, Deleuze considers the tendency toward decoded flows escaping the apparatus of capture, a tendency linked to the three forms of overcoding, public property, public works and taxes. Referring to Ferenc Tökei, Deleuze again proposes the figure

of the freed slave as the locus for the emergence of private property, both in terms of private labor and in terms of circulation of currency and creation of money (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, plateau 13, notably, pp. 448-452). With the three forms, he emphasizes the dual process of the circuit of overcoding under the State apparatus and the creation of a flow of decoded flows under the private system (that he calls their “intrinsic complementarity”), adding that “extrinsic complementarity” corresponds to archeologist Gordon Childe’s hypothesis regarding the invention of the East and its archaic Empire and their relationship to the West, particularly questions of stockpiling, metallurgy, and trade. While outlining feudalism in this dual perspective, Deleuze closes the session by reviewing these two great figures of State, within which kinds of “knots” arise, e.g., the chivalrous form of love (courtly love) and the marital circuit, overcoding as well as decoded flows, suggesting that these perspectives prepare the emergence of capitalism with which the next session will begin.

Session 8, February 5, 1980

With two forms of the State delineated previously – topical or qualified conjunctions between decoded flows and the imperial machine for overcoding already coded flows --, Deleuze seeks a definition for capitalism linked to its possible intersection with the figures discussed previously. Searching first for the nominal definition, Deleuze turns to Marx (*General Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*), discerning the distinction of unqualified, subjective wealth and unspecified, abstract labor. Deleuze asserts that capital is the operation through which the subject is posited as universal (i.e., wealth itself) and appropriates the object whatsoever (labor). After an exchange with Georges Comtesse regarding the nominal definition, Deleuze leaves the domain of topical conjunctions and shifts to the session’s second part, to introduce the importance of the axiomatic, which begins a new machinery, without personal dependence, a sole and universal subject attributing itself any object whatsoever (abstract labor). However, Deleuze first addresses the real definition, showing the possibility of the investment in the means of production following from the definition of capital, maintaining that capitalism’s emergence required the fantastic contingency of the conjunction of two heterogeneous series: a deterritorialization of labor through numerous internal and external factors as well as the production of independent wealth. Here Deleuze reintroduces the conjugation of two decoded flows and the topical conjunctions that stop the decoding, and after discussing several examples derived from works by Étienne Balibar and from Marx, Deleuze questions the need henceforth for the State apparatus given the new formation operating through the axiomatic. Drawing again from Marx as well as from Virilio, Deleuze concludes that far from needing to eliminate the State apparatus, capitalism requires a very special kind of apparatus with the flows of independent capital and of unspecified labor working through the force of the State apparatus, an apparatus of violence. After considering some concrete cases of the State apparatus under capitalism, Deleuze examines the axiomatic through its model of realization as this relates to the State apparatus under nation States, defining several tasks to develop these intersections with reference to Robert Blanché’s *L’axiomatique* (1955) and to the circle of mathematicians writing about the axiomatic under the name Bourbaki, *Théorie des ensembles* (1939). He outlines two (of many) models of realization and also four specific problems within the axiomatization process (examined in *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 460-473), intending to return to these points.

Session 9, February 26, 1980

After discussion of possibilities for a subsequent seminar (including on Leibniz), Deleuze defines the current session as a “parenthesis” for considering “what exactly is the axiomatic?” since he sees the axiomatic as the only discourse allowing a direct comparison between heterogeneous sets or domains insofar as being heterogeneous (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, plateau 13’s final section). He starts with the axiomatic as determining functional relations between any elements whatsoever, also insisting that an axiomatic refers to models of realization in which elements take on a qualified nature. After clarifying the distinction between axiomatization (cf. David Hilbert) and logical formalization (cf. Bertrand Russell), he concludes that while the axiomatic is the functional relations that refer to models of realization, formalization is the formal relations which constitute models to be realized. In terms of the State apparatus, he hypothesizes that unlike the archaic State, the modern State has ceased to be a model to be realized, becoming instead a model of realization in relation to an axiomatic. After some brief discussion with students, he discusses the enunciation of the set of axioms as a new type of experimentation, allowing him to consider ways in which axiomatics, while inherently innovative, can also be contradictory and subject to failures. Then Deleuze returns to the four categories (or problems) introduced at the end of the previous session (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 461-473), topical conjunctions between flows, generalized flow conjugations, and connections allowing flows to escape the axiomatic and putting them into vectors of flight. This discussion leads him to focus, first, on a Dutch school of mathematics, intuitionism or constructivism, that reacted against the axiomatic and calling for a calculus of problems. Then he traces three cases in the history of mathematics of this kind of duality (first, in Greek geometry, second, a double pathway from the 17th to the 19th century, regarding algebra and analytical geometry, third, formation of axiomatic power versus anti-axiomatians). Summarizing the categories cited earlier, Deleuze associates the third category of connections to the calculus of problems and mathematics of the event, which attracts him particularly since this mathematics does not seek true or false, but sense or nonsense of the problem. Finally, returning to the question of the State and politics in terms of an axiomatic, he outlines four aspects of this intersection, Deleuze notes four problems linked to an axiomatic, first, the process of adding and withdrawing axioms at the level of capitalism; second, the axiomatic’s saturation; third, the status of models for realizing the axiomatic of capital; and, a fourth aspect to be considered at the next session.

Session 10, March 4, 1980

Rather than discuss the axiomatic and problems linked to it, Deleuze allows the students to discuss diverse problems on the Vincennes campus and in French national politics related to the university (cf. François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. Intersecting Lives*, chapter 19, “Deleuze at Vincennes”). The specific discussion concerns notably the imposition at Vincennes (on the pretext of drug trafficking) of a system of “para-police”, on-campus security guards to verify both students’ and professors’ identity cards, a measure momentarily enforced and then revoked. While raising several ways in which these and other actions correspond to aspects of the apparatus capture, the bulk of the class is devoted to communicating details of actions taken by the University Council, to outlining tactics for responses, and to discussing certain thresholds beyond which holding class would no longer be possible. This session is especially remarkable for showing Deleuze’s careful intervention on behalf of the students’ interests and his way of

providing insight for their positions based on his knowledge of departmental and university initiatives.

Session 11, March 11, 1980

After previous discussion of the axiomatic, Deleuze considers several problems linked to the axiomatic, asking first what ways the axiomatic criteria are allowing us to orient ourselves within contemporary political situations (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, plateau 13, pp. 460-473), and the four problems detailed constitute four axiomatic criteria to be examined (only the first two considered in this session). First is the problem of addition or withdrawal of the axiomatic; second, the problem of saturation of the axiomatic, hence the question of limits, in relation to which Deleuze refers to Marx's *Capital*; third, nation-States as possible models of the axiomatic of capital; fourth, a problem to be explained subsequently. This session is interrupted abruptly by noise from outside, seemingly a demonstration occurring that draws the group's attention, at which point Deleuze feels compelled to end the session.

Session 12, March 18, 1980

Based analysis of two of the four axiomatic criteria -- adjunction or withdrawal of axioms; saturation or limit of axioms --, Deleuze develops these with concrete examples regarding the assimilation of politics and the axiomatic. First reviewing material covered for the adjunction-withdrawal criterion, he reviews the second, saturation criterion, with reference to Marx's *Capital*, book III, regarding what kind of limits might be attributed to capitalism, emphasizing the irony of capitalism's very special limit which is immanent, experienced internally to the system. His reading of Marx has him attribute this to a contradiction within capital generally, and this immanent limit is at once produced by the system, which the system seems to reach and yet which recedes constantly, irreversibly. Referring to works by Robert Linhart and Samir Amin, he discusses contemporary Brazil at length (and several other countries) to illustrate these overlapping topics, particularly the immanent limit. Considering the third criterion, the axiomatic of politics or models of realization, he develops two notions, homogeneity and isomorphy in terms of modern States, and specifically to so-called "central States", in which the axiomatic is centered (referring to what Braudel calls "world-economy" (*économie-monde*), and to James Burnham on advanced homogenization of capitalist and socialist-bureaucratic States). Suggesting a second bipolarity (East-West), then a third (North-South), Deleuze distinguishes the "mode of production", linked to the status of variable capital, from the "relation of production", and then he develops a typology (and examples) of States in relation to capital: central States (wealth security in capital) in contrast to social-bureaucratic States (wealth security in the economic plan); Third World States in terms of their affinity regarding capital (to either of the two preceding models), outlining the characteristics for these peripheral States and the complex interrelations between States with higher development; zones of true periphery, possible "Fourth Worlds", i.e., Third Worlds constituted in the center of old territories. He summarizes these points of the third criterion, particularly isomorphic relations between central States and more peripheral ones, with the axiomatic sustaining a certain polymorphy, distinct axiom layers and transfer of types of axioms from one point to another.

Session 13, March 25, 1980

In the seminar's final session (before the five sessions on Leibniz), Deleuze's lengthy (30-minute) answer to a question regarding the status of the blacksmith allows him to summarize not just this seminar but the preceding (1978-79) seminar, discussing types of peoples (nomads, sedentaries, troglodytes), of spaces (smooth, striated, holey) and their links to the complex topic of metallurgy in early societies as it relates to economic development and exchange (cf. *A Thousand Plateau*, plateau 12, notably, pp. 387-423, and plateau 14). Also recalling Toynbee's comment that nomads are people who do not move but want to hold onto the desert, which grows while others flee, Deleuze also links the types of people to contemporary issues and countries, e.g. Gypsies, Turkey, and concludes, regarding the blacksmith, that the specificity as a blacksmith -- wherever he is, among nomads or among sedentary people -- is to create holes and inhabit and invent a holey space. Deleuze then completes the discussion of the axiomatic as it relates to the State and to politics, first, reviewing the three categories outlined in the previous two sessions, and finally indicating the fourth as the question of power (*puissance*), i.e., the relationship of the axiomatic of capital to an actual war machine. Given that the war machine today need not have war as its object, Deleuze suggests that the sense of "enemy" changes since it becomes the axiomatic notion of any enemy whatsoever (*l'ennemi quelconque*). Then proposing a fifth category, the war machine as a kind of power of the continuous, ceaseless redrawing of a new global map, Deleuze argues that the capitalist axiomatic generates and remains confronted by so-called "undecidable propositions", in which axioms do not take hold, demanding extreme measures by the axiomatic of capital in response. After reviewing previous formations, Deleuze reviews the overcoding apparatus of previous formations, he recalls that at the extreme, some flows escape being axiomatized. In opposition to generalized conjunction of flows are connections drawing on flows of materials that tend to resist homogenization. While indicating two discussions of the compromise, Deleuze asserts that a revolutionary connection would consist of logical movements, e.g., the development of active minorities or "minoritarian" movements in contrast to the nationalitarian movements of the nation-State. Deleuze develops the criteria distinguishing a majority from a minority, or subsets, and while he recognizes certain aspects of this that might raise suspicions, he insists that connections, lines of flight, must be established, even the majoritarian fleeing toward a minoritarian becoming.