

**Gilles Deleuze**

**Seminar on Apparatuses of Capture and War Machines, 1979-1980**

**Lecture 02, 13 November 1979**

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**Part 1** [*Here begins the Bibliothèque nationale recording, available on YouTube from Sociophilosophy,<sup>1</sup> but not the recording available at WebDeleuze or the Deleuze Seminars*]

I cannot ... I have to mention that there are too many of you. So, I suggest cutting the section in two, and with certain differences, I'll present more or less the same thing for one half and then the other half of you in succession. That means you have the advantage for you of staying for an hour and a half, and the advantage for me is I'll have two and a half hours to say the same thing. *[Laughter]*, and... [*Inaudible comments by one or several students; laughter*] Everything will work out well that way because the current situation is unworkable for everyone. Especially since, it's true, it's true, it's true; come on, be fair... The kind of work we're doing nonetheless requires, certainly, that a lot of people participate, but also that we be able to talk together a bit. Otherwise, nobody can speak, not even me. Well, what do you think of this idea?

Student: That's a good idea.

Deleuze: Oh, the second session is more convenient? Fine, then I'll just stay here by myself for an hour and a half, that's works for me ... no, I mean, it's terrible. It seems that last week, some people couldn't make it.

Student: Evidently everyone wants to be here.

Deleuze: I can probably handle it [like this] because I'll be forced to think about something else, but surely all of you can't manage in this room, it's not possible. What time is it?

Student: A little after 10 o'clock.

Deleuze: Did you say a quarter past 10? *[Laughter]*. The ideal would be ... Last year, it was good because towards the end it began to work rather well, with me asking you questions and you answering with things that I need. Although I want to avoid arguments, it's great when I can say, 'I need something, does anyone have any idea about this topic?' But if it remains like this... nobody is going to want to speak.

Students: *[Inaudible comment]*

Deleuze: Will it cause problems to split the session?

Students: [*Inaudible comment*]

Deleuze: Don't worry, the choice of group will happen all by itself. You won't be able to sort it out through consent. When did consent ever decide anything? It'll be down to ... the rhythms of intelligence. The most intelligent ones will act quickly and come first. Then there's the opposite: those with a no less profound, but slower intelligence – they'll come to the second one.

Student: [*Inaudible comment*]

Deleuze: I'm telling you a secret: I'm not going to go into it, but that's what it comes down to [laughter]. So are these two groups going to be possible?

Student: [*Inaudible*] [Should we move to the amphitheater?]

Deleuze: No, that's worse. Then I'm done for. We already talked about that. I said why amphitheaters kill me straightaway. Here, there are too many of us, and the conditions aren't right for us truly to be able to work together, but an amphitheater? What I would do would not work there. Also we would need a microphone. So if someone wanted to say something, they would have to come to the microphone, which puts everyone off. And the Vincennes amphitheaters, I don't know if you've seen them, but it's Dracula in a pure state! [*Laughter*]. It is the grave itself. This place is all right; it's nature itself in comparison ... On the other hand, there is a certain severity in what we are about to do this year. In any case, I will stop in an hour and a half, so that those who cannot take any more ... Some people are very interested in what we do here, but they won't be able to endure more than an hour and a half. For myself, of course, I could just carry on. Anyway, let's get on with it now. [6:30, *end of the initial discussion; the timestamp starts from zero here for the rest of the recording*]

... It's a bit annoying you weren't all here last time, because I laid out the program, or at least the beginning of the program I have in mind for this year and said something about how it connects up with what we did last year. Then I sketched out, as much as was possible, a sort of recapitulation of our work last year, which above all concerned the mode of existence, the mode of space, the mode of organization, of what we called the 'war machine'. I outlined how we were increasingly led to distinguish, at least abstractly, from the point of view of the concept, between 'war machine' and 'State apparatus'; and how at the end of the year we touched more and more on the following question: well, if the war machine is defined as we tried to do it throughout the year, by a certain mode of space, by a certain mode of organization, etc. that is to be *radically* distinguished, from the conceptual point of view, from what one finds in the State apparatus; if the State apparatus does not derive from a war machine, but if, on the contrary, war machines are 'originally' directed 'against' State apparatuses; if State apparatuses, throughout their whole history, are thrown into a long and very difficult enterprise, that of appropriating the war machine, and appropriating the war machine in the form of the military institution, in the form of the army, even though the war machine in itself is something completely different to the military institution or the army ... well, if all that is true, we come up against the question (and this is where we ended last year: happily it came about that we gravitated more and more around this

question) okay, but then what? What happens with regard to the State apparatus? Where can such a thing come from?

And this thing, throughout the course of last year, we haven't stopped defining it (relying on very different authors) as an apparatus of a very special type, that is to say: the State apparatus is an apparatus of capture. It is an apparatus of capture. It captures men. Not everything is an apparatus of capture. Perhaps societies without a State proceed otherwise. And I will say it again just as I did last year, we have not tried to evaluate the degrees of cruelty involved. Is the cruelty of the war machine worse than that of the State apparatus? In no sense. I recall one of our basic ideas from last time, one of the ideas with which we were greatly occupied last year, to wit, the idea that in the State apparatus, as soon as there is the organization of work that the State apparatus implies, something quite strange transpires, because it is as if there is a primary mutilation. It is as if one is already mutilated. Mutilation precedes the accident. While in the war machine, which brings about abominable mutilations, and which is even a specialist regarding them in this sense, mutilation comes later on. Hence the problem is not to know which is the worst. Which is worst? Someone mutilated in war or someone mutilated by work? No reason to say. With regard to the societies that proceed in a different fashion, we will look into the mechanisms that permit them to function later; but, once again, the question is not at all one of cruelty, it is rather of types and of the typology of cruelties ... of cruelty.

But to return to the basic question: very well, you will say, this is not where the State apparatus comes from; so where then *does* it come from? Last time, I recalled the point we had got to last year, namely that whatever explanations of the State apparatus we are given, we have the impression that these explanations already presuppose it. I gave the list of theses accepted as classical concerning the origin of the State, and every time it seemed to me, though I could be wrong, these explanations only gave an account of the State by assuming it as already given, already there. So this was what tipped us into our problem: how to explain an apparatus of capture? And how to explain the success of such an apparatus? And how could a success be made of an apparatus of capture, as *opposed* to a war machine? This obviously means that the apparatus of capture mounted by the State does *not* proceed via the violence of the war machine. It proceeds in a different way.

I made a point of that last year, but I did not completely develop the theme. I made a point of saying that there is no question of confusing the police and the army, for example, the policeman and the warrior. Even if there are all kinds of mixtures in fact. The violence of the police is not the same thing as the violence of war, it is not the same thing as the violence of the army. I suggested that the State had policemen and gaolers well before it appropriated the war machine in the form of military institutions. The State first proceeded above all with policemen and gaolers. Where did such a power come from?

This is the question we have arrived at: what is this *civil* capture? What is this civil capture that is not made by means of weapons? Of course, to say it again, the State will appropriate the war machine, but this is not our question here. To say that the State appropriates the war machine and needs to appropriate it in order to survive is already sufficient to indicate that its own source is not there. That it faced enormous problems in appropriating the war machine, and did so at considerable cost, we will have the occasion to see through detailed examples.

So, capture by the State does not already suppose a war machine. What appeared exemplary to us were the myths related by Georges Dumézil. In particular the principal myth of the political sovereign who emerges, throwing nets, in the field of battle. He is the binding god, the knotting god, he is the god of the knot – he throws his net, he carries out his capture, and his emergence on the field of battle has the effect of freezing all the weapons. This is therefore not at all a god of war and Dumézil's analyses infinitely confirm it. It concerns a civil capture, not at all a capture of war. Well, if one defines the State apparatus in this way, then there you are: there is a State apparatus from the moment there is an apparatus of capture.

You will ask me: have we made any progress? Well, what seems interesting to me is that this is already a definition, good or bad. To my knowledge it is not that novel, or only relatively so, to conceive the State as an operation of capture. This is what we ended with last year... Fine, it's not explicable; it seems like the State emerges ready-made, in one fell swoop. In fact, when I say 'it emerges in one fell swoop', it's not worth much. Yes, it's an astonishing swoop, a great success. But a whole set of questions arise: Why does it succeed? How does it succeed? Where does it succeed? Anyway, this story turns out to be quite strange. Of course, it's not enough to say that any explanation proposed to us assumes what is to be explained. This is why we will proceed more gently. And when I talk in a rudimentary way of the State apparatus's emergence as an apparatus of capture, I think most of you will grasp what I'm alluding to. [Before turning to that], a final parenthesis: for those who participated in last year's seminar, focusing on the war machine, if we need to take up certain points this year or return to or if there are things to add, and so forth, it goes without saying that I welcome your pointing them out, particularly about the forms of space we distinguished. If we have to return to certain points, that's what we'll do.

You can see well enough what the idea of a State apparatus emerging in one swoop refers back to. Again, we must be very prudent. But what immediately comes to mind in fact is an aspect of Marxist research. Which is not to say that Marxism has necessarily integrated it, under all conditions, with respect to all the problems it poses. I'm alluding to the whole conception of what is known as the despotic or Asiatic formations, which is not to say that Marxism has necessarily integrated this. Under what conditions? What problems did that pose? -- And here, I'd like, little by little (not in the opening sessions) that a rhythm of exchange be set in place. You recall what we try to do in philosophy at Vincennes; rather than adhere to what is called progressivity, we insist entirely on the idea that one can use exactly the same language for beginners and for those who already have considerable experience and completed some study in philosophy. -- Turning to this famous question in Marxism of despotic or Asiatic formations, first of all let's immediately eliminate one thing. Where does it come from? It doesn't come from Marx. Everyone knows that the theme of an Asiatic despotism is originally formed in the 18th century, notably with Montesquieu.

But when Montesquieu defines what he for his part calls 'Asiatic despotism', one can clearly see that there is an active ulterior political motive, that of the critique of absolute monarchy. And above all one can clearly see that what he describes as Asiatic phenomena are phenomena of empire that are already highly developed. Above all, one can clearly see that what he describes as Asiatic phenomena are highly developed phenomena of empire. So, fine, highly developed, but I'll put that aside because, am I already saying, well, there's a development of the State? The simple reason Montesquieu is talking about already highly developed empires is because these

are already regimes in which private property appears, in which the counsel of the Prince, the private counsel of the despot, etc., appears. When Marx invokes the idea of a despotic or Asiatic formation, it is obviously in a completely different manner, and on no account can we say that he is taking something up from Montesquieu. I believe he proposes something radically new. Particularly in relation to a set of later archaeological discoveries, which in the course of being followed up have singularly confirmed the Marxist schema. That is the first point.

Second point, over which I must pass quickly: the bibliography on this question of the ancient imperial formations. These have been given several names to distinguish them: 'despotic' or 'Asiatic' formations, 'archaic empires' – note that I don't say 'ancient', I deliberately say 'archaic empire'. Which epoch? We are talking about the Neolithic. A great archaeologist [V. Gordon] Childe, about whom I spoke last year, talks of an urban revolution and a revolution of the State in the Neolithic. Let's address questions of this sort immediately. If I were to give a summary of the Marxist bibliography on these archaic empires, the principal text would be the famous text in Marx's *Grundrisse* that opens up the whole question, that is, in the unedited draft by Marx entitled 'Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy'. It's on page 314 of the Pléiade edition that you will find the great description of the archaic imperial formation ...

Student: [Inaudible comment, no doubt requesting a reference]

Deleuze: Yes, it's in Volume II, excuse me. After that, a very important book by a Marxist called [Karl August] Wittfogel – w-i-t-t-f-o-g-e-l -- who broke with Marxism, and which has been translated under the title *Oriental Despotism*, with a very important critical preface by [Pierre] Vidal-Naquet. The third great book is difficult to find but is in the library; I cite it, because it's by a Hungarian Marxist I think is one of the best contemporary Marxists, whose name is [Ferenc] Tökei and who published in Hungary (but in French) a text entitled *Sur le mode de production asiatique* [*On the Asiatic Mode of Production*], which is one of the most beautiful texts on this subject. And finally, a collective work by CERM, Centre d'Étude et Recherche Marxiste [Centre for Marxist Study and Research] with the same title, a collection of articles, necessarily unequal in value, entitled *On the Asiatic Mode of Production*.<sup>2</sup>

To get quickly to the point: what does that phrase mean? Why 'Asiatic'? What does it mean when one says 'Asiatic despotic formations'? Or 'Asiatic modes of production'? What are all those words doing there first of all? Why *Asiatic*? Because it is in Asia that one discovers them first of all. In the Middle East, the Near East, Middle East, Far East. However, little by little, the same thing will be confirmed everywhere. And Marx already indicates that. It will be confirmed everywhere, under the strangest forms. One finds these formations, these great archaic Empires, not only in the Near, Middle and Far East – for example, in Egypt, India, China – but also in South America: the great South American Empires. One will find them on the horizon of Greece: the Cretan Empire and also to a lesser extent – but we will have to understand why it is to a lesser extent – the Mycenaean Empire. And how can one understand Greek history without referring to these empires? How to understand Greek history without referring to these empires? [Deleuze repeats] That's easier said than done. And then in Rome, one also finds ... one also has the impression ... So, everyone is content, because we have here a kind of unknown horizon.

Why unknown? These great empires that archaeology brings back to life come back to life again everywhere. In South America, even in Europe with Anatolia and Mycenae; in the case of Rome it is the Etruscan Empire. And all these empires, strangely enough, seem to have something in common, points in common. At the same time, one asks oneself: what happened, what might have happened? For these great empires are traversed by a fundamental forgetting. As if they disappeared and their memory is annulled. Why the disappearance of the great South American Empires? These great empires are a very particular case. We will call them ‘great archaic Empires’; I will try to justify the word ‘great’: sometimes the empires were indeed not that great. There is a famous case, just as mysterious as all the others, the famous empire, the famous imperial formation that appeared to reign on Easter Island, and which inspired the construction of colossal statues. The swift annihilation of that civilization ... Mycenae, Crete. In Mycenae, there was the Dorian invasion, then a radical forgetting. Truly the Greek city was only born through a forgetting, a kind of absolute forgetting of its imperial past. This is strange. How does it all happen?

How does it happen that even within Marxism, this history of archaic imperial formations was [so difficult to process]? I will say this very quickly, and you will find echoes of it in the CERM collection, but in a sense, it didn’t suit them, or at least it didn’t suit an ordinary Marxism, and for two reasons. Two reasons that are moreover connected. It puts in question the famous theory of stages and that of progressivity, to which we alluded last time in relation to progressivist explanations of the formation of the State apparatus. It appeared that in the imperial formations, the imperial apparatus springs up *fully formed!* This is why I am starting with this problem, because it helps to reinforce our question: how to make sense of such a history, this sort of massive apparatus of capture, the nature of which we will soon begin to see, and which springs up fully formed? So, [this history] could be inconvenient in obstructing the theory of stages and the theory of the progressive formation of the State apparatus in Marxism. And we must say that it suggested something else. What is suggested, rightly or wrongly – we have to acknowledge this, but actually it’s rather strange – is that this stage of the old archaic imperial formations, of Asiatic despotism, could after all be said by an anti-Marxist, could be said by an anti-communist, by an I don’t know what, [that] it’s true, many issues resulted from this. Such as: what did the Russian Revolution and Stalin create other than bring the old despotic formations back to life?

And, Wittfogel, repentant Marxist, entirely bases his whole lengthy book, entitled *Oriental Despotism*, on a rather labored parallel of the type: Stalin is the Chinese Emperor. Obviously, the Chinese Marxists, the Chinese revolutionaries, and the Soviet Marxists, have all set themselves against this thesis. And it is true that Stalin has strangely enough radically barred, radically censured, all research into this type of formation. Even the texts by Marx have only become known about quite recently. At first, they were secret; anyway, all this has a long history. If one leaves aside this history, one ends up asking oneself: was Stalin the master of an archaic Empire; but this is not so interesting for us at the point where we are. Anyway, these are the reasons why this has for a long time been such a burning question within Marxism; both for the Chinese, at the level of the Chinese Revolution, and at the level of the Soviet state. Why? Here I will finish with all these introductions.

How is it to be defined, [the Asiatic mode of production]? Marx’s text, you see, is very beautiful, very beautiful. He says there that there are agricultural communities, agricultural communes.

These are first in Marx's schema; I do not say whether we should affirm this schema, or that I myself am proposing it to you, but it is necessary to start with something. From out of these agricultural communes and, on the basis of these agricultural communes, each distinct from the other, a superior unity is erected. The agricultural communes remain in possession of the soil [*sol*], in the form of a communal possession. But the eminent superior unity alone, namely the unity of the despot, is the owner. The communes possess the soil in the communitarian or communal form of possession; the despot is the superior unity, it is like a kind of pyramid, he is the *eminent* landowner. What does all this mean? Marx evidently insists on this a great deal: what makes this type possible, not the uniting of agricultural communities but, to speak scientifically, the subjunction of agricultural communes under a formal transcendent unity, the unity of the despot? What makes this possible, according to Marx, is that agriculture has already attained a certain level of development. It is because agriculture has already attained a certain level of development at the level of productivity, with the means of production supplied by a class of craftsmen, all of this implying a certain mode of production, a development, a relatively developed mode of production. The agricultural commune remains the basis, but it finds itself, in virtue of the productive forces of which it makes use, confronted with problems which transcend *each* commune.

What are these problems? Marx and Engels already insisted on the nature of these problems and Wittfogel's whole book is centred around this very important point (which is not always encountered, but nevertheless comes up everywhere): namely, that this development of agricultural productive forces permits, on the one hand, the formation of a surplus stock – so that one leaves subsistence economy behind in order to enter into a new economy of surplus or of stock. There is the formation of a stock. The state of this mode of production makes possible the formation of a stock, and therefore makes necessary, on the other hand ... what? It makes hydraulic works necessary. Hydraulic works can be of very different types: take the case of China – for example the rice fields – or of Egypt with the flooding of the Nile – or the case of Greece, for example the Myceneans with the drying of the marshes; it is rather curious that across figurations that are very, very different, you will rediscover the same theme of hydraulic works, to the extent that Wittfogel calls these ancient archaic formations 'hydraulic Empires'. Looking more closely, one becomes aware of -- but that changes nothing -- that sometimes [empires] are not hydraulic, which does not matter. There are cases where, no, it's not hydraulic works that are fundamental. It doesn't change anything. There is a complementarity between an economy that has become capable of producing stock and the large-scale works that develop the forces of production.

You can see that the schema is quite simple. Thus, the communes are pyramidalized; but (to use a word which will be useful for me, and to try to fix my vocabulary for the sake of convenience, because I need this word) the agricultural communities remain *possessors* of the soil. Note moreover that the communitarian codes subsist and that in fact these communes are independent of each other. The communitarian codes subsist. The simple formula of the archaic empire is that the communitarian codes subsist, but they are overcoded. The old imperial formation is a formation that consists, literally, in an overcoding. Consequently, I take immediate advantage of that to give – because I will need it throughout the coming year – a definition of what, on my own account, I would like to call 'overcoding'. I will say that there is an overcoding when the codes known as primitive, being conserved ... [But] what does 'primitive code' signify? It

signifies the interlacing of the two constitutive givens of what one calls the ‘primitive code’, namely *lineage – territory*. When lineages marry, model or modulate territories, you have a code broadly, summarily called – and this is very much a summary – a ‘primitive code’. These are the nuptials of lineage and territory. It is very supple; it gives a foundation, if you like, for what one can in effect call a ‘primitive commune’ ... I will say that there is *overcoding* when the codes being conserved ... I therefore reserve the word ‘code’ for these interlacings of lineages and territories. Very mobile interlacings, these codes are very supple, why? Because the territories are in a way *itinerant*; one changes territory and the lineages themselves change, constantly change, are recast. There is therefore a recasting, a double recasting. Not at all by cause-effect, there is a *simultaneous* double recasting of lineages and territories. When a lineage rises in importance, it takes hold of such or such territory. Anyway, that is what I call ‘code’, these kinds of dynamics of lineage-territory. ... And I say that there is an overcoding when the codes subsist but are, on the other hand and at the same time, related to a formal superior unity which thus literally acts to *overcode* them. I will take this up again ... Perhaps I give the impression of saying nothing, but, we must pose notions for the next time, and I will keep hold of these very, very rudimentary definitions I have attempted to give of two themes: code and overcoding. When the codes, which are dynamic unities of lineages and territories, are overcoded by a unity – which will be precisely the eminent formal unity of the despot – at this moment, you have an overcoding that defines the archaic Empire.

Okay. But where does it come from? How does this overcoding operate? Here we rediscover a theme (I talked about it last time, I’ve started to say it here, but here I’m rediscovering it at another level): it will be the eminent *owner* of the soil, in relation to which the common codes are defined by mere *possession*.<sup>3</sup> It will be the eminent owner of the soil. It is a pyramid ... Actually, what should one call it? It’s not a pyramid, it is a trihedron. One could find a fourth side, but there are three sides, it is absolutely ... The base will be the communes, the coded communes, and then the overcoding with its three sides is the superior formal unity. The despotic unity as landowner, as eminent proprietor of the soil: that’s the first point. Second point: as master of large-scale projects, starting with irrigation projects, hydraulic projects, or projects of a completely different nature (I will specify later what ‘of a completely different nature’ means). And thirdly: master of rents [*redevances*] and tributes [*tributs*] – that is, broadly speaking, the master of taxes. Master of taxes.

Those who were there will recall the trinity at which we arrived, via a different route, last time? One could say that, yes, the apparatus of capture, the State as apparatus of capture, has three aspects, it is an apparatus with three heads. There are three faces of the apparatus of capture in its most ancient form, I would say; but this allows for a step forward, because we find a confirmation, and can better situate it in history. Nevertheless, we do not yet understand how these things could be the same, it does not seem possible. So, let’s investigate these three heads or three faces.

It is [first of all]: ground rent, and I hope that this year we can find a way (I don’t know why this should be so funny ... for my part, I find it amusing) to try to explain what ground rent is, without at all taking ourselves to be economists. If there are economists amongst us that will be perfect; they might be able to provide clarifications. I would say that the first face of the apparatus of capture is ground rent. The second face is the organization of work [*travail*]. And I

reconnect here with a theme we started to glimpse last year, but to which I would like to attach much more importance this year, in homage once again to the works of the Italian autonomists and of Toni Negri in particular.

There is something obvious which holds true for every civilization and which already holds for the ancient archaic empire: it is that, in economic terms, it is not surplus labor [*surtravail*], what one calls surplus labor, excess labor, that depends on labor; rather it is labor which depends on surplus labor. That is to say: the notion of labor only became discernible from the moment an apparatus of capture forced the people to bring a surplus labor into being. It is surplus labor that is primary in relation to labor.

Thus, the second aspect of the apparatus of capture is this: the despot is not only the eminent owner of the soil, and, for this reason, the one to whom ground rent returns (ground rent is the revenue of the owner of the soil). The despot's second face, his second aspect, is: I am the master of surplus labor, and through that, the master of all labor. In other words: he is the entrepreneur, the entrepreneur of large-scale works, starting with hydraulic works. So the ground rent of landed property, that's the first characteristic. Second characteristic: the profit of the entrepreneur.

Third characteristic: the master of taxes. Why? For a very simple reason: because he is the one who invents money, and who has every reason to invent money; therefore, we can say that money – again we will have occasion to see this further on – evidently does not come from commerce. Or maybe it does... On this, I'm quite pleased from the start because already there are some among you who will think that this question should be resolved a bit more carefully, but I would suggest as a basic hypothesis (and this is not my idea, there are certain authors who take this view) that far from deriving from commerce, money has tax for an origin and it is commercial only in a secondary sense. Why tax? In fact it is not by chance that the despot is simultaneously the founder of tax and the master of commerce. He has a monopoly on external trade. So it makes sense. Suppose that money comes from tax, leaving aside whether this takes the institutional *form* of tax; by virtue of that the despot becomes the master of external trade; and this is his third aspect.

Now, I ask you: what is the formula of the archaic empire? If you like, if I take up these three things: ground rent of landed property, profit of enterprise, trade and tax, namely, the bank ... [Interruption in the recording] [39:43]

## Part 2

... Did an evolution of the State take place? I say: if there is a State which has realised the splendid unity of the three – of the owner, of the entrepreneur and of the banker – it is obviously the archaic imperial State. Why? Because: ground rent, profit of enterprise and taxes are strictly speaking one single and same thing. And, in effect, it is understood very well that they should be the same thing, since the communes owe a ground rent to the eminent proprietor, that is to say, to the despot. How do they hand it over? They will give it both in products of nature, in natural products, which the despot turns into stocks, and in services, that is to say, in labor, in *corvées*, in work. Whence the name – which one can find already in Marx with regard to these despotic

formations – “generalised slavery”, which in fact has nothing to do with private slavery, since generalised slavery designates the activity of the communes insofar as they are subjected to the surplus labor imposed by the despot and the large-scale works of the despot. This is therefore not at all what one calls ancient slavery, it is an archaic slavery, a generalised slavery, that is to say a communal slavery, a collective slavery. Good: so, under the aspect in which the communal peasant gives products to the great despot, it is ground rent. Under the aspect in which he renders labor, surplus labor in fact, it will become determining, since it is this, it is precisely the existence of surplus labor in the State, that will install the regime of labor. Otherwise, once again, there will be no reason why activity should conform to the labor model. Once again, among the primitives, or what are called primitives, it is not at all that they don't do anything; on the contrary they pass their time by acting, but, evidently, their activity does not come under the model ‘labor’. For there to be a ‘labor’ model, once again, it is necessary that there be a surplus labor. It is surplus labor that determines that activity falls under the model of labor. Surplus labor is primary in relation to labor; it is from the moment that there is surplus labor that activity becomes labor.

Good, so that works very well. And finally: taxes, why? It is because there is something very important here. It is that the three faces, [1] coinage [*argent*] or money [*monnaie*], [2] enterprise – namely surplus labor and large-scale works, and [3] the eminent proprietor of the soil and ground rent, these three aspects imply what Marx introduces as a determining factor of these old archaic empires, precisely that they do *not* imply a war machine. One can even propose the hypothesis: if the empires disappear so swiftly and in such mysterious conditions, is this not because at the archaic stage, they do not yet have the war machine and find themselves in front of a war machine that is trained against them? And who trains this war machine against them? We already had the answer last year, because our hypothesis last year was that the war machine was precisely the invention of the nomads, that it was the riposte of the nomads against the great archaic Empires. And if these states undergo a radical liquidation (only later to be reborn under evolved forms), if some of them disappear, leaving no trace other than what archaeology later finds in indeterminate form, is that not because they are levelled by [the nomadic war machine]? But let us leave this on one side for the moment.

What I want to say is that in effect they [archaic States] do not operate with a war machine, but to make up for it they operate with a bureaucracy. And for us, this isn't about linking everything to this imperial bureaucracy; on the contrary, from this point on we can spread out a maximum of differences. It will be a very important problem for us to try to distinguish this bureaucracy that is already assumed to be very powerful, because we're quite certain about this: archaeology has provided us information about what this bureaucracy was, for example, in the Babylonian empire, what bureaucracy was in the Egyptian Empire, what bureaucracy was in the Chinese Empire; it is very instructive on all that, so we now have some serious support. The problem will be to distinguish modern forms of bureaucracy and the way they are established.

Now, imperial bureaucracy, that implies what? It evidently implies delegated proprietors who receive communal ground rent in the place of the Emperor. It is not the Emperor who counts, it is this whole bureaucracy. The three faces of the pyramid, or rather the three faces of the trihedron – if I call the summit the ‘formal eminent unity’ – well, the three faces of the trihedron are the three faces of the bureaucracy, and the basis is the agricultural communes. It is very simple as a

schema. Now you therefore have a first aspect of the bureaucracy which is tied to ground rent, and that implies an enormous bureaucracy (we will see why), in virtue of the nature of ground rent itself. (As for the large-scale works, it goes without saying that this precisely implies what we analysed last year, namely: the fundamental relation that exists between sign and instrument. And the couple *sign-instrument* is the couple *bureaucracy-large scale works*.) Thus the bureaucratic functionaries, representatives of the despot, receive lands and receive the ground rent attached to these lands.

You follow me? Of another kind (or the same, if you like) are the entrepreneurs delegated to large works. Let's say, then, that the great despot delegates to them *both* the ground rent or a part of the ground rent *and* a part of the profit of enterprise. That's a lot! In exchange, what do they owe? They, you see, are not themselves at the same level as the men of the commune, as the cultivators, but in their turn, they are in a state of debt to the Emperor, of whom they are the bureaucrats. What do they owe? They owe a part of the ground rent that they draw, a part of the profit. How does that happen? It's here that I believe we find the only possible conversion between the *goods* given in the guise of ground rent, I mean the natural products of ground rent, described as 'in kind' ['*en nature*'] – listen closely here because I think this is important – and the profit of enterprise, namely: surplus labor, the labor wrenched from men by the agricultural commune, this time in the form of rent in labor. The only possible equivalence between products and labor precisely implied *tax*; it is tax that fixed the equivalence, and what the great despot demanded from his bureaucratic functionaries was that those who received the ground rent, the bureaucrats who received by delegation, from the communes, the ground rent in natural products and services, that is to say in labor time, in surplus labor – what he demanded from them was to be able to bring about the conversion, because what he wanted was to at least receive a part of it in money, in coin. And the whole system of tax is absolutely necessary to the circulation of goods and activities, of goods and services. You would have no possible equivalence of goods-services, which is obviously one of the bases of every economy – without the measure of tax.

Hence, once again, the role of the bank, which is fundamental. For the entrepreneur of large-scale works and for the proprietor of the soil who benefits from a rent, a bank is required that is not at all a simple intermediary, but which is a creator of money. How does it do that? That's another problem. But from the time of the archaic empires – for example, we have documents on the role of the bank in the Babylonian Empire, it is essential – banks truly are creators of money, for they are the ones who exchange money against the ground rent in kind that the functionary receives; that is to say, they give money to the functionary against the wheat that the functionary receives, and the functionary, at this moment, returns a part of this money to the Emperor. Therefore, there is a whole circulation, money-goods-services, which will be at the basis of the economy of the great archaic empires. So, from that moment you can see the problem that is posed. Given this role of banks, which are not only intermediaries, but which really are creators of money, where do they draw this money from? Well, it is almost always the case that the archaic empires are usually very, very far from metallurgical sources; hence the necessity of external trade, which itself, however, is only permitted through the role of tax. ... All that, it's perfect.

But I conclude this very rapid schema by saying: well, you see, it is not complicated, all that. What one must keep in mind about this archaic bureaucracy is that what defines the great

empires (and it is because of this that I say that Marx's description in fact had strictly nothing to do with Montesquieu) is that literally nothing is private, and nothing can be private. Everything is public. And in fact, we also saw last year that the State apparatus as apparatus of capture, in all its forms, is fundamentally public. The notion of the State secret is a very late notion, connected above all to the moment when State apparatuses appropriate the war machines. It is the war machine that is secret (moreover without even wanting it), and which finds itself in the situation of being secret. Otherwise, in the apparatus of capture defined as great archaic empire, *all* is public. The sovereign eats in public, the despot eats in public, sleeps in public. It is the man of war, bizarrely enough, who has a veil, who covers himself in order to eat. It's pretty curious. The secret is born with the war machine. No war machine, no secret. And here again, it is not that there is anything better about this. But for the despot, if he has a mask, it is in order to *show*. It is the public mask, not the mask of the secret.

And why? One can see that, at every level, everything is public in the archaic despotic empire. Everything is public because, on the one hand, the possession of the soil is communal, so that there is no private property at this level. It is the commune that possesses the soil and it is the commune that brings about mobile distributions to family lines. At the other end, absolutely on the highest level, the formal transcendent unity of the despot, which is simultaneously possessor or eminent proprietor, entrepreneur of works, and master of money, absolutely only exists as a public agency. Property, his eminent property, is public property. His emission and creation of money is the creation of public money. The great works he undertakes are great public works. Everything is public there. And the functionaries between both, the bureaucrats – bureaucrats of rent, bureaucrats of profit, bureaucrats of tax or of the bank? They're also public, pure publicity. Why? Because it is uniquely as functionaries of the Emperor that they enjoy the delegation of property, the delegation of enterprise, the delegation of money; and furthermore, one could find quite complicated regimes where these functions are even hereditary, nothing prevents that. It is not as private persons that they enjoy these delegated powers, it is as functionaries of the Emperor. As Tökei says, in a magnificent text, you can imagine that if they revolt against the Emperor they become little local despots, but you absolutely cannot imagine that they become private owners.

Why? For a very simple reason, because it forms a part of things that are obvious and to which Marxism has long habituated us (when one does not forget it), that is to say: how could they overturn the basis of their own existence? The bureaucratic functionaries receive everything they have precisely from the tribute of the communes, from the tribute in kind or the tribute in labour. If they become private proprietors, they exactly reverse all their sources of revenue, that is to say, it is not only inconceivable – to affirm, as certain authors do, that these representatives, these functionaries, will little by little become private proprietors: it is a nonsense. It is not by augmenting little by little that one adds something, this is pure nonsense. I mean, literally, that means nothing. It is a system where everything by nature is public, from communal possession to property. So, here I'm suggesting the first characteristic, you see... you see it's very odd because I mentioned overdoding, that the archaic Empire overcodes... the archaic Empire overcodes. And you see, I'm asking you just to keep hold of the difference between code and overcoding, because I will need it throughout the year. I am just saying, because otherwise that would make you almost [*inaudible words*] not enough; why do I need this? What I call 'overcoding' is something that is added on top, and it is because of that that I use the word 'overcoding': it is

something added onto the code. Once again, the communal codes, the facts of lineages and territories continue to be exercised within the framework of the communes. What is added to this is a unit that enjoys profit, rent, money of taxation, external commerce.

Looking for an equivalent in order to attempt to be clearer, I would say that the unity of the whole of the comprised communes in the archaic Empire is almost a unity through *formalization*, or, if you prefer, through transcendence. At the basis there are communes, then it rises up to the Emperor, and it is insofar as the Emperor is on a different level from the communes at the base that the overcoding occurs and that the Emperor is the master of large works, the eminent proprietor of the ground and the creator of money. It is what in logic one would call an operation of *formalization*. I mean that the formal unity is not on the same level as the *formalized*. You follow me? It must be at a higher level. I am expressing myself in terms that are truly very rudimentary, in terms of formal logic, for those who have done it, which necessarily sends you back to something that concerns the famous formalist theories, the theory of types. I would say that the formal unity cannot be of the same type as the set of formalized objects, namely the agricultural communes. It is through this that there is an overcoding. There is an operation of transcendence, an operation of formalization.

So, this is why I immediately insist on saying this, because, in logic, as you know, there is something opposed to, or at least distinguished from formalization, something quite different. This is precisely what one calls the ‘axiomatic’ or ‘axiomatization’; and it is important above all not to confuse axiomatization and formalization. Why is axiomatization something absolutely different to formalization? I think that the reason is quite simple, but I don’t want to develop it here, since I already discussed this at the previous session, and I’d like it if later a group could be formed amongst us to put itself to work on axiomatics, for reasons to do with this year’s tasks. But, but, but,... but notice the difference here. I’m giving the impression of talking about something absolutely different to my history of the State; but we will see whether or not it is something absolutely different. I’m not so sure. Axiomatization, in what regard is it not formalization? An axiomatic is completely formal. Yes, an axiomatic is formal. Only it is a formalization of immanence, it is a formalization of pure immanence. That is to say: the formalization occurs at the same level as that of the formalized ensembles.

Axiomatics is immanent to its models. This is why it is not a formalization. Or, if you prefer, it is a formalization of immanence, while logical formalization, that formalization called ‘logical’, is a formalization through transcendence. Why am I recounting all this? It’s because if it ever occurs to us to discover in the social field, notably in the modern social field, various formations which function in a certain mode (I don’t say ‘as’ axiomatic, I say ‘in a certain axiomatic mode’), it would be necessary to recall this distinction. One would not be able to assimilate them to old great archaic empires, one would not be able to say: these involve overcoding. Axiomatics does not operate through overcoding, it operates through something else. Then one will already find oneself before a very rich field of concepts because one must sense that codes and imperial overcoding are for us only two first concepts of a series of very varied concepts to come. In fact, let us grant that these archaic empires present themselves everywhere, and that they define themselves as overcoding, or operate by overcoding: that still does not get us very far. So ultimately, I’m saying: let’s suppose that these archaic empires are evident everywhere. They are defined as overcoding, or they operate through overcoding, [but] that still doesn’t get us very far.

Because at the end of the day, how is this overcoding possible? How could it work? With the apparatus of capture, I don't know, but I have the double impression at the same time that we are making progress and yet not making progress, both together. We progress because we increasingly specify the apparatus of capture with its three faces, its trihedron. We do not progress because we don't get any further with the question: how could that work? How could a thing like that be installed? At the same time, we do advance a little because we have begun to give a status to overcoding.

There is an author who uses a different word, but this word must be deeply related to the same thing. This is Lewis Mumford. Lewis Mumford is a contemporary author who wrote a lot; it's good, but I don't know that much of it. He talks about archaic empires, above all about the Egyptian Empire, and uses the word 'megamachine' to describe them. He says that these are the first megamachines. *Mega*, as you know, is the Greek adjective meaning 'large'. The archaic Empires are great machines. Okay, but that does not seem to go very far, you might think. And us, what are we? What are we? Are we different great machines, machines which would operate differently? But... are there other machines that act differently? Would that make us axiomatic machines? Not despotic machines of formalization? We have no idea, we don't know anything about it. Let us suppose that the great archaic empires are megamachines. Is that simply a manner of talking? Maybe a metaphor? Not, not at all, because there is more involved in Mumford, and he puts this question: what is the classical definition of machine? What does one call a machine the most technical sense of the word? The classical definition of the machine, or one of the classical definitions of the machine, which appears for example in the 19th century in a specialist on the topic is this: a machine is a combination of solid elements .... It is a combination of solid elements each having, or having as a group, a specialised function, destined to transmit a movement and to execute a piece of work under human control.

While these are a lot of traits, this [definition] isn't bad. So: a combination of solid elements having specialised functions in order to transmit a movement and execute a piece of work under human control. At this Mumford has reason to feel full of gaiety, and he says that this is not at all a metaphor: if you take a great archaic empire, it is quite literally a megamachine. Simply put, it is a megamachine whose elements are humans. Humans are parts of the machine. Hence the idea, in fact, of an enslavement, as Marx says, a generalised enslavement. Generalised slavery, generalised enslavement. Men are the pieces of the machine.<sup>4</sup>

Okay. Well in that case, to talk of overcoding would be to say that there is a machine of which men are the pieces. And this is in fact what one sees at the level of large-scale works, at the level of ground rent, and at the level of tax. One could even specify that the great specialised functions are nothing other than our three dimensions: ground rent, tax, enterprise. Good, everything is going well. I would say that the machines, at this moment ... no, the archaic empires, are precisely apparatuses of capture – if you don't mind, it is enough for me if I can manage to accumulate synonyms – that is to say, apparatuses of overcoding or megamachines, that is to say, machines of enslavement. Fine, but why hold onto this word 'enslavement'?

Suddenly, I say to myself: don't we have an occasion here for some research, because with Guattari and others, we have tried to bring to a head a distinction between two concepts. Always with hypotheses in mind: does this work? Is there a place for such a distinction or not? Someone

could say to us: no, there is no place. So are enslavement and subjection, to be enslaved and to be subjected, the same thing? Perhaps there are many people who are both at the same time. But, to say that they are both at the same time, perhaps that does not prevent these two things from being different. What difference is there? I would like to proceed more simply: I would like to take two points of view in order to try to state this difference; in that case we stand to make a significant new step in the analysis of the ancient Empires.

I would like to take consecutive perspectives that are *technical* (but involving an absolutely rudimentary technique), and *economic* (also involving an absolutely rudimentary economy). From a technical point of view, when is there enslavement? I would say that there is enslavement when men themselves are a constitutive part of the machine. That is to say: the machine is thus defined as a set of communicating human and non-human elements. I'll deliberately keep it abstract for the moment, I will not say what kind of machine is involved. Imagine a machine of which you form a part. You are an element of it. It has human elements and non-human elements. You are among the human elements. It can group together other things; it groups together mechanical elements, it groups together informatic elements, it groups together energetic elements, it groups animals, things; but in every respect, you are part of the machine. Think about a machine of which you are an integral part, and you will say that you *serve* [*vous êtes asservis à*] such a machine. But no pejorative nuance is intended at this point.

When do you say you are *subjected*? You are enslaved by the machine, okay. So we know immediately that we are never subjected by the machine. It is always good when elementary grammar guides us: one is subjected to the machine. It is not the machine that subjects us, when we are subjected. Now, when is there subjection to the machine? I appeal to an answer just as simple as my initial summary response: we are enslaved by the machine when we are human elements making up a constituent part of the machine itself. We are enslaved [*assujettis, but Deleuze mistakenly says asservis*] to the machine in a thousand ways, to the extent that we ourselves make use of it [*nous nous en servons*], but “to make use of” is really much too vague. Well, there are two ways to make use of it: on the one hand, to make use of it in order to produce; this involves the producer, the immediate producer, the worker; on the other hand, it involves the user. If I take the metro I am, in a certain way, subjected to the metro. The users are perfectly subjected to the machines they make use of [*aux machines dont ils se servent*]. But as for those who build the metro, well, they are also subject to machines of fabrication, of production. I mean that it seems that machines of consumption, like machines of production, are before everything else machines of subjection in their modern forms. And again, please remember: I don't say that one would be better than the other. I'm saying therefore that there is subjection when the human element no longer makes a constituent part of the machine as such, but is put in relation with it, a relation which is imposed upon it as a relation of usage, of consumption or production. I am subjected to the television to the extent that I listen to it. Okay.

I'm musing here; I'd like for all of us to muse a little bit; is there nothing else here? Could there also be other ways in which one could say, beyond being *subjected* to the television, that one is *enslaved*? I avoid all pejorative sense here, because that gives the impression that I'm saying something bad, but no, once again, there is nothing bad in all that. Take a contemporary musician – perhaps this will help us to advance a little further – a classical concert musician: in a way, he is subjected to his instrument. There is even someone who subjects him in turn to his own

instrument: the conductor of the orchestra. Think about that. The listener is subjected to the conditions of the concert; you can see that this does not involve anything bad; on the contrary, this is an example of sublime subjection.

In electronic music, I think that you will see immediately that this .... Well, is this still a regime of subjection or is it something else? Is there not something else this time, namely, the constitution of a machine of which the human and non-human elements both equally form integral parts, constituting a totality of communication and reciprocal information? At this moment, one would have to talk about service, machinic enslavement, and no longer about social subjection. Or so I'm supposing. Let us continue along the same route.

This reminds me of a science fiction novel by [Ray] Bradbury [*Fahrenheit 451*]. What is science fiction talking about all the time, in a certain way? Qualitative leaps. Qualitative leaps we are forced into. Once again, it is not that they necessarily involve something worse. One must think of it more simply, just in terms of subjection. It is something else. To take one of the great authors from the old days of science fiction: Bradbury. In a story by him about television, the television is no longer at the center of the house. Imagine. The television at the centre of the house: lovely. Here is the news, it's eight o' clock. The whole family is there. I would say that we are indeed subjected to television; and the very word helps us to identify what is going on. But Bradbury imagines another system: the television is no longer at the centre of the house, it forms the very walls of the house. One buys oneself a wall-television. There's the woman who says to her husband: "We have to economise because we still only have three walls now", so there's only three-wall TV. The change here is significant, for the programming is now done in such a way that the programme varies with the person who is listening to it.

What does that imply? It means that it is not difficult for the central computer to factor in little local computers with selective views. In addition to the central memory, there are local memories. In every house, the TV anchor speaks using the proper name of the person inhabiting the house. The television has become the wall, and at the same time, the listener, the user of the television, has become a constituent part of the program itself. There are well-known analyses of certain famous shows in Germany involving calls to denunciation, and in certain French radio shows, the same thing has emerged, the same appeal for denunciations: *you make the show, and you go to the studio to make the show. It's you creating the show.* It's not about entering a competition or doing it for amusement, it's a process of crossing over... In my view, this is the passage from one regime to another. It's the passage from a regime of social subjection to a regime of machine enslavement.

Once again, I don't know which one is better. I don't even know which is the most profitable. I'm just saying that today we have the privilege of having both. They do not exclude each other. But you will object that it is very difficult to pinpoint the status of the enslaved. With regard to the subjected, I can say that they're the immediate producer, as well as the user. With the enslaved, it's a bit more complicated. Someone enslaved is involved in systems where the facts are necessarily more difficult to make out. It will involve a kind of operation which has its own terminology: feedback loops or and recurrent cycles in which there is no enslaved guy who does not also serve in the enslavement of someone. It will be much more complex... or perhaps it's

not more complex, because I simplified enslavement too much. But in any case, it does produce a much more complex formula: we will see why.

So I suggest that we keep hold of this conceptual distinction. After all, what is happening today? You know that amongst all the dangerous disciplines surrounding us, there is a particularly dangerous one known as ergonomics. This is the discipline that occupies itself with the norms of the workplace [*travail*]. Ergonomics is an important discipline today; whole factories are built on its principles. What does ergonomics tell us? I'll say something very basic, even infantile, about ergonomics for those who don't already know. The ergonomists distinguish two things. They distinguish what they call 'man-machine [*homme-machine*] systems in the singular ('man' and 'machine' both being in the singular); they also call these 'work posts' [*poste d'emploi*]. And from these they distinguish 'men-machines' systems ('men' in the plural, 'machines' in the plural).

Then, they become very ... They are not strong theoreticians, but strong practitioners, you see, and they freely say to themselves: let's see, is the men-machines system (in the plural) a simple generalization of the man-machine system (in the singular)? You can see where they're going. Is there only a difference of degree between the man-machine system (in the singular) and the men-machines systems (in the plural). And, well, no there isn't. But often they say 'yes', because they're very cunning. They say: one only has to generalise the method of analysis of employment placements, and you obtain the great men-machines systems (in the plural). Well, above all, don't listen to them. Really, don't. You can tell they're lying from the beginning. The problem is not at all the same. There is a difference of nature, and it is precisely because there is a difference of nature that our technological distinction between subjection and enslavement might be thought to have some value. What is the difference of nature? It is not at all the same technological problem.

When you have a man-machine system (in the singular), what is the problem? The problem is quite simple: one or the other has to adapt itself. And the practical problem is: how to adapt man to the machine at one moment, and then how to adapt the machine to man in another moment. These are problems of adaptation, in one direction [*sens*] or in the other, or in both directions. And, in fact, the norms of adaptation will take account, according to case, of rules of use and rules of production, rules of work. Often both: there is no work without usage, just as there is no usage without work. But when you have a men-machines system (in the plural), is the problem still one of adaptation? One gets the impression that modern technology has transcended problems of adaptation. We have arrived at the moment where technology no longer concerns itself with necessary adaptations. And it is not at all because the [ergonomists] have become crueler. It's not that. On the contrary, it is because they have less and less need [for adapted workers]. And here we come upon the economic problem: why do they need them less and less? Why could they care less about adaptation? I'm exaggerating a little; it remains of course a concern, but not that much.

Why? Because what is the other problem? It has become no longer a problem of the adaptation of one element to another, or of the reciprocal adaptation of two elements, it has become a problem of communication, and therefore of selection [*choix*]. Of selection. That is to say that in a men-machines system (in the plural), the problem is no longer the adaptation of the machinic

element to the human element, of the machinic element to the human element, the problem is completely different: to select, to select well, without making a mistake. That is: *where* must one put a human element? And *where* must one put a machinic element? To what end? So that it possesses, as they say, *reliability* [*fiabilité*]. From which follows all sorts of radically new concepts like *just right* [*comme ça*], which serve them frequently in their analyses. What is *reliability*? Reliability is evidently inversely proportional to failure; the idea is that there must be as little failure as possible.

Now, curiously enough, there are many cases where even the element of a computer is less reliable than a human element. And happily, there are many cases where the human element is much less reliable, much less profitable than [a machinic element]. So, you see the problem of enslavement is a problem of selection [*choix*]. Where are you positioned? If it turns out you are not adapted, you will sense there is a difference ....

But if you say to me: the two problems are in fact often hard to tell apart, I respond that what interests me is that even affectively, even in affective tonality, it doesn't involve posing problems in the same way. Take a disabled person, for example, a stutterer or a deaf person. In the men-machines system (in the plural), one will no longer ask how to adapt them to the machine, or how to adapt the machine to them, one will ask how to arrange the system so that, precisely, it takes a deaf person for communication to occur. That's the regime of machinic enslavement. It's no longer the regime of social subjection.

Again, it's very strange, because consider this. (And I'm still continuing with the first, technological perspective, considering things from a technical perspective. Perhaps all this is wrong; it's up to you to make your minds up. I think it has to be true. It works. The distinction between concepts is always paramount and therefore guides us while guiding us towards the truth.) Again, recall the history of the machine. -- I can go full speed ahead with this. Why not? At this point, what do we have to lose? -- Let us return to our great archaic empires. We haven't forgotten them at all, it's all going to come in handy.

It is the great archaic despotic empires that invent machinic enslavement. But they don't have many technical machines. Because what do technical machines, under the best conditions, have at their disposal? What one calls ... This is the first age of the machine. There were always some [technical] machines, one mustn't exaggerate; in fact, we will see why they have always been there. It is obvious that they have always been there. Well, it's not obvious, but never mind. This is the first age of the machine, these are the so-called simple machines, let's say, anything, a lever... [*Interruption in the recording*] [86:00]

### Part 3

... simple machines, machinic enslavement immediately arrived at something quite fantastic. And it is also quite normal. The mechanical elements being extremely simple, men are human elements directly taken into the machine; hence, I think, the justice of Mumford's proposition, when he says: ancient archaic Empires are megamachines of which men are the constituent parts. And this is not a metaphor, this is in the proper sense what the machines are.

So, grant me this: that it is precisely when technical machines are very simple that a fantastic regime of the machinic enslavement of man affirms itself. There is still no subjection. Does that mean it is the beautiful life? On the contrary. So, my question is then: when could subjection have come about? One has only to follow the word. We will find that – and here I'm just sketching out a theme we will look at next time – subjection can obviously only come about with the separation out of private persons. One is subjected *to* the machine, one is enslaved *by* the machine. Precisely because the machine, the megamachine, is not technical, it is the great despotic machine. But one is subjected, not by the machine, one is subjected *to* the machine. It was necessary that something separate itself out, a private instance. We have seen that in the ancient despotic Empires, the owner, whether it is communal, or the functionary or the despot himself, was not a private owner. There could only have been machinic enslavement. Subjection could only be born much later. Subjection ... the formula ... There is genius running through all the histories of apparatuses of capture. Perhaps subjection will amount to the new form of capture invented by relatively *modern* (although it will be necessary to examine what sense to give to this word) States. Subjection is a very modern technique; or at least relatively modern.

And what does it culminate in? In the second age of the machine. (This is really just the broadest of historical overviews). Machines of the type exemplified by the steam machine, the machine that marks the beginning of capitalism. And although social subjection is certainly not the invention of capitalism, capitalism will carry it to perfection. It will carry it so far to perfection that it will have the corresponding economic regime at its disposal. I would say that ancient private slavery and feudal servitude – to classify them at the level of vocabulary, were already forms of subjection, and no longer of enslavement. But the summit, the *summit* of subjection appeared with the regime of the salariat. There, truly, man is enslaved to the machine *by* the capitalist, that is to say, by the private proprietor of what? Of what? We will have to see later on.

But what happened then? What happened then, as you know, was what one can call the third age of the machine, the set of so-called cybernetic and computer machines. Now, what everyone says is not wrong: it is quite true that this is a qualitative leap in machines, but in what sense? Precisely in the sense that the machines are no longer either machines of usage or of production. They are no longer machines of usage, of consumption-production; these are machines of communication and information. And what does that mean? It means precisely that the problem is that in such a system ... Well, it is not by chance that men-machines systems (in the plural) designate this third age of the machine, the cybernetic machines and computer machines. I do not say that this involves a return – that would be a catastrophe – but it is the invention of a new form of machinic enslavement.

In fact, the problem becomes no longer the problem of choice... no longer the problem of use, no longer that of consumption; it becomes the problem of choice and distribution. Where do I want to place you? Where do I want to be located, so that information can pass through. That's a completely different problem. So I say that at every level it would be almost necessary to live as doubles in the contemporary world, as if we are subjected to a double system. We are at the same time in a situation where a certain amount of subjectivity distances us from machine enslavement, replacing it with subjection, and in a situation where we are led to a new form of machinic enslavement proper to our age. I am moving forward very quickly, in order ... You're getting worn out. What time is it?

A student: Quarter past noon.

Deleuze: Quarter past noon? We're getting to the end. It's not human to do any more. You see, I know well if... I would relate to you... I'll be ending quickly because I see that you can't hold up much longer. It's for your own good.

I'll now move to the economic aspect. Here again I ask for pardon for talking in front of so many of you who know about these things better than I do, but I need these conceptions for my schema. I need them at a level that remains very, very elementary. What I need is this: in Marx, there is a famous narrative in *Capital* involving what he calls the composition of capital, and more precisely, the organic composition of capital. What he calls the organic composition of capital is the fact that capital has two component parts. Broadly speaking ... it's necessary to know this by heart ... I've forgotten it ... The first part is constant capital. Then ... no, sorry. Those in the know must not laugh because ... I'll just go ahead and say it, and I'm sure there are some who can no longer recall the details, because not everyone necessarily has it readily present to mind ... anyway, I think I'm obliged to say it now. Constant capital is specifically the part of capital that is transformed into raw material [*matière première*] and means of production. There, you see? The other part of capital is variable capital. This is the part of capital transformed – according to the definition, I'm taking this formulation directly from Marx – into labor power, that is to say, the sum of wages. Variable capital is the part of capital that is transformed into labor power, that is to say, the sum of wages.

What happens? If you understand that, you'll see that Marx is giving a very beautiful explanation. Beautiful and very important, because you understand: if one abandons Marxism, one abandons the last hopes one has. So, it's quite simple: we had better return to these definitions of variable capital and constant capital before saying something stupid about what's involved in the State. Now I said that Marx focuses in on a variability in the proportion. Namely, that proportionally (not absolutely – the masses of constant capital or of variable capital might be very high ...) ... that there is a certain proportion between the two parts of capital, and sometimes variable capital tends to increase relatively to constant capital. This is a first case: variable capital tends to increase relatively to constant capital.

Second case: constant capital increases relatively to variable capital. What are these two cases? Listen closely here. The first case is not so much of a problem. We could say that this is truly what one can call 'the formula' (with a great deal of caution, let us put it this way for convenience sake), 'the formula of the beginning of capitalism' or of 'the first age of capitalism'. Why does everything work well here? Because, as Marx explains very well, surplus value – which is not to be confused with profit, or rather with which profit is not to be confused but upon which profit depends in a certain manner – comes from variable capital. Therefore, it would seem quite normal that the regime of capitalism – which functions on the basis of this strange thing, surplus value, and which draws profit from it, which draws profit of enterprise from it – that it functions on the basis of a tendency to increase variable capital. There would be all the more surplus value.

Good, well that seems simple enough. Note that when the crudest, hardest, most wicked capitalists have said 'we are humanists', they have a literal reason for saying so. They are just

saying something simple: obviously, we have never confused constant capital and variable capital. No capitalist has ever confused, whether in the accounts or in calculations, constant capital, which is destined for raw material and machines, and variable capital, which is destined for wages and labor power. They have always clearly demarcated them. And here you see why I have been pointing to the importance of the regime of subjection. Why has capitalism pushed social subjection to its limit? It has pushed social subjection to its limit because of this: the more variable capital increases, the greater the possibility of surplus-value (and indirectly of profit). So it has never confused machines and men.

Now, what does Marx say to us? Second point. I have almost finished my rough economic schema. In some famous pages, Marx tells us that strangely enough – but it turns out it's not so strange, it makes complete sense – the more capitalism progresses, the more importance constant capital takes on relatively to variable capital. (To be precise, for those of you who are specialists, there is grafted on to that another distinction related to constant capital, namely the distinction between fixed capital and circulating capital, but I do not want to introduce this because it would over-complicate the schema and the point I want to make). In effect, the more capitalism progresses, the heavier the investment of capital in the domain of both raw materials and machines. Why? Because ... Interesting phenomena come out of this, for example, the narratives of an industrialisation that does not simply content itself – Marx explains the reasons very well – with becoming larger and larger at the scale of the factory, but which passes to the stage known as automation. This is the stage of automation that Marx analyses so splendidly in famous pages of the *Grundrisse*.<sup>5</sup>

We are concerned with a relative proportion, because the surplus-value can of course increase, the mass of surplus value can increase in absolute terms, but this is not the question, what is at stake is the proportional relation between the two. The tendency of capitalism is a tendency of development, as Marx never stops recalling, and this tendency to development tends to increase the proportion of constant capital relative to variable capital. This means what? It changes everything because from this moment, Marx says, the worker, with automation, is nothing more than *adjacent* to the process of work [*travail*]. He is now nothing more than adjacent to the process of labor. From this moment on, strangely enough, work [*travail*] will take on wholly new forms. These are forms less analysed by orthodox communist Marxists than by Autonomist Marxists, notably in Italy, who have opened up and pushed forward the analysis of these forms as they appear in phenomena that are thoroughly complementary: the role of the worker in automation; the role – and this is not at all something different – of subcontracting work, since, in an industry of automation, the old factory work tends more and more to be replaced by subcontracting, which is a very important modern development; the development of a black market – and it is not by chance that the first analyses of all these phenomena should be by the Italians, because the Italians found themselves in an economy where the black market had taken on a determining significance right from the beginning, not for people's survival, but for the very functioning of the economy: immigrant labor, etc. Very new forms of work posing problems and revolutionary possibilities that are absolutely new, but which are perfectly and directly in line with this fundamental phenomenon of capitalism: the tendency for the proportional increase of constant capital to bear on variable capital.

Now here I rediscover exactly the same conclusion as before. What is the formula of social subjection? It is precisely: the greater the predominance of variable capital in relation to constant capital, the more social subjection. This is a law, that is to say, a law is added to Marxism that is purely Marxist, it seems to me. The more constant capital [writing on the board] takes and tends to take relative importance in relation to variable capital, the more machinic enslavement there is. At this moment, man becomes a piece of the machine instead of being subjected to the machine, he becomes a piece of the machine, namely: he is enslaved by the machine. But once again, there is just as much room for desolation as consolation. What new revolutionary chances can emerge here? All those who criticise a certain insufficiency in the contemporary struggles of workers' unions, all those who denounce the positions of communist party officials, base themselves above all, from the point of view of economic analysis, on these phenomena of capitalism.

So I hope you can see that in these two very elementary matters, the technological development and the economic development I've just sketched, one will be led to distinguish social subjection from machinic enslavement.

In any case, we already have machinic enslavement. We have both at the same time: one is subjected, one is enslaved. But again, that's all the more reason for hope, for seeing new possibilities for struggles, for any number of things, than a reason for despair. No, it is not at all a reason for despair. That's how it is, that's all. But at the same time, it creates something else, it generates factors that are all the same rather peculiar. I have only introduced this whole developmental account as a function of our first model. This model excludes [social subjection], because it cannot be conceived within the framework. The men of archaic despotism, the men of the archaic empire *cannot be subjected* because, once again, social subjection implies the construction of a private sphere, and this construction, we will see (we'll try to determine it in a clearer way, but it probably can't be done) only happens in empires that have evolved. Many things had to happen first. We saw that in an archaic empire, there is nothing that permits a construction of the private, neither at the level of the despot, nor at the level of the commune, nor even at the level of the functionary. On the other hand, there is a triumph of machinic enslavement. And when I say, 'today we are rediscovering machinic enslavement', it is not a way of being Hegelian and saying: 'at the end you rediscover the beginning'. It goes without saying that this is a totally new machinic enslavement and one of a very different type.

Let's now draw things to a close. Can you do more? I'll stop if you can't. There's no point in me continuing ... I'll just take a look at your faces and take the pulse, to see if you can do any more. Okay, I will just summarise because I will take it up again, especially as there are some among you who have knowledge in this area, and I hope they will be able to review all this for next time.

Let's assume I've given a summary of the Marxist description of these imperial formations. We have made a bit of progress with the description; we have even progressed with regard to the question of how this three-headed apparatus functions. We still don't know how it could have come about. But I do not claim to have said anything about that yet. It is better to go very, very slowly. However, there is one thing that remains striking in Marx's description. It is that these archaic despotic formations presuppose something. They presuppose, if you have followed me so

far, a certain level of development in agriculture, in so far as this is capable of providing, according to the perfect expression of one author, which nevertheless renders it slightly nebulous, a *potential surplus*. A potential surplus that will be actualised by large-scale works, works of irrigation. I would say that this rather bites its own tail. Ignacy Sachs, a Marxist Hungarian: the only good Marxists are Hungarians. It presupposes certain craftsmen; it presupposes a certain level of development of the communes. You understand? Now, it is for this reason (and I have not said this until now, but it would be dishonest not to say it) that everything I've said presupposes the development of agriculture, a certain artisanal metallurgy, a certain state of simple machines. Marx and the Marxists never stop saying that the Asiatic despotic formation, the archaic empire, is an expression devoid of meaning unless you put it in relation with a mode of production. You see?

This is why they are particularly furious with Wittfogel. It's true Wittfogel is a slightly ambiguous character to encounter. The communists have a grudge against him because he appears to have done some questionable things: while a refugee in America he participated in Senator McCarthy's campaigns; his name seems to have become linked with some unsavoury stories. So there has been a terrible settling of accounts between Wittfogel, who said that oriental despotism is Stalin, and the communists, who note that Wittfogel has become embroiled in the McCarthy affair. This adds complications to the debate. But they also have a grudge against Wittfogel because he had sort of left behind the theme of the mode of production. In fact, in his concern to bring together Stalin and the Chinese emperor, he constructed an image of these archaic empires as really standing by themselves.

But then we apparently have a catastrophe on our hands, for we are taking exactly the same position, minus the malice and shady business: we are taking exactly the same position as Wittfogel. For everything we have said ... If we recall that Marx, for his part, commits himself to fundamentally linking archaic empires to a mode of production, namely to a certain development of agriculture, to a certain development already in process of artisanship and metallurgy, this means that despotic formations only exist under a mode of production that Marx or Marxists call the Asiatic mode of production (which is not solely Asiatic; it is called such because one locates it above all and first of all in Asia). But for our part, I don't know why, we are inclined to be follow Wittfogel and say: but no, it does not happen quite in the way Marx says. It doesn't happen like that, why?

Happily archaeology backs us up, that is to say, we do not need to be as shady as Wittfogel because we can rely on archaeological support. For if there has been a revolution, or at least something very new in recent archaeology, it is the following discovery that seems insignificant. I'll sum it up: there were archaic empires, and they were not only Neolithic, but almost Paleolithic. What is more, since what has been found of these Empires can be considered (the archaeologists have often had the habit of making these hypotheses) as the last link in a chain of vanished previous empires, one could go as far as to speak freely of Paleolithic empires. You will say to me: what's the difference between making the history Neolithic or Paleolithic? Well, there is a difference in making the history Paleolithic, because that changes everything. It changes everything. Why does it change everything? It changes everything because in the Paleolithic, there is no question of a developed agriculture. There can be no question of a developed agriculture. What is more: no metallurgy.<sup>6</sup>

I'm referring to the fact that in Anatolia, one finds, dated archaeologically to around 7000BC – a huge shift back in time – the traces of a great Empire. It was not negligible, according to the archaeological data: its impact, its sphere of influence, would have been 3000 kilometers wide. It is an enormous, not a little, Empire.

How to explain it? Do you understand why I say that this changes everything? If the archaeological discoveries are confirmed ... To add to the short bibliography I've given, these are discoveries in Anatolia by an archaeologist called James Mellaart, and by a very extraordinary woman called Jane Jacobs, who has written a book called *La Nouvelle obsidian*,<sup>7</sup> and who, starting from Mellaart's discoveries, extracts a type of imperial model, the model of these Paleolithic empires. Mellaart encountered a whole set of difficulties; his excavations were prohibited at one point, issues arose not at all because of his discoveries, but out of pure misunderstanding. You know how it can happen to archaeologists to become embroiled in very serious misunderstandings, where they are reproached for not having left behind with the States involved everything they should have left.

Anyway, the Mellaart case is very complicated, but on the other hand, the nature and importance of his discoveries have not been put in question. Now, why is this something more than simply pushing the date back, with me telling you: okay, these great empires don't date from 3000 BC, but from 7000 BC, and so what? I insist that this changes everything. Why? Because, obviously these are imperial formations which are not locked into a base that has already developed agriculture, but which are directly locked into groups, communities, of hunter-gatherers. Of hunter-gatherers. The archaeological importance of such a discovery, if it is confirmed of course (once again, I don't think archaeologists are in any doubt about the importance of Mellaart's work) ... if one reflects on it, what is it that is truly important here?

Take a very great archaeologist, who died around ..., I don't know when, is he even dead? Perhaps not, I hope not. Anyway, his books are pre-war, from around 1930-40: Childe, Gordon Childe. What is very interesting is that Gordon Childe archaeologically confirms – and he is not a Marxist, he is a pure archaeologist – the Marxist theory of imperial formations down to its details. He says: it's obvious ... Well, he never cites Marx, but if you read the pages of Childe (one should do that at least once, it will allow you to pass three tranquil hours) alongside the pages of Marx or certain Marxists, you will not see any difference. The schema is the same: namely, relatively developed agricultural communities, an archaic imperial formation that stocks the surplus, and makes large-scale works; Childe's schema, which again is a purely archaeological schema, confirms what he himself calls 'the urban and State revolution of the Neolithic'. I would say that a discovery like Mellaart's makes a further step possible: the necessity from this point on – although you understand the difficulties here – these are mud and earth empires, I mean empires that have vanished. It goes without saying: empires of wood ... all that is rotting, it's not made of stone.

So, what happened? What am I saying is important about it? I would say that this type of archaeological discovery ... it is not by chance that Jane Jacobs has extracted a schema that in my opinion, renews many things, it is very important. I'm not at all trying to convince you, it's just to make hypotheses. Let's suppose therefore that we are in an environment that no longer implies developed agricultural communities at all. What does it imply? It implies hunter-

gatherers, full stop, that's it. What might happen then? There can no longer be a formal despotic unity, overcoding: the code is a code of lineage-territory of itinerant hunter-gatherers who exhaust one territory, passing onto another territory. All that works well. But what happens? How will the despotic formal unity install itself? Let us suppose – to continue the hypothesis – that there are exchanges. Now, I want you to hold onto that because you will have every right to ask me: what aren't you allowing yourself, [namely] exchanges between groups of hunter-gatherers? To attempt to justify this move will be my object next time, or if not, the time after that. This will be an essential problem. How to conceive a regime of exchange between groups which one otherwise claims are autarchic groups without communication with each other?

These are not agricultural communities; these are itinerant hunter-gatherers. Suppose that there are exchanges. It's all done in a bag, which I find wonderful. In Jane Jacob's hypothesis, everything happens in a bag. You fling things into a bag, and an empire comes out. How's that? In this aspect, it's very modern: it is a method of chance. The hunter-gatherers exchange wild seeds. There's no agricultural enterprise yet. They exchange wild seeds. They pass the seeds around amongst each other. "Look what I found." The other: "Nice". It's no more stupid than any other regime of exchange, after all. Then there needs to be some small wild animal that's not too much trouble. So, the small docile animal [he writes on the board], which doesn't bite too much and which is not too prickly.

Suppose that these things are put in a bag – no, in two bags – the little animals and the wild seeds that come from different territories. It will produce two phenomena, at first by chance. There will be a production through chance, that's why I said everything is in one bag.<sup>8</sup> There will be two very curious, very important phenomena: phenomena of the hybridization of the seeds, which would otherwise never happen, and phenomena of natural selection between the small animals which would otherwise never happen. Time is required for these wild seeds in a hybrid form, suppose that ... You'll say to me: but then you're assuming large stretches of time, etc., but grant me all that for the moment. I am trying to proceed in order, because if I mix everything together at once it will be terrible. Let me stay with Jane Jacobs' schema.

... Suppose there is a social formation which sets itself the task of putting these wild seeds originating from different territories into a bag. That produces hybrids. These people will then sow these hybrids on their own territory. Now, obviously, that already implies the equivalent of an imperial formation. It is a stock. There is something momentous in this hypothesis. I mean: try to sense the reversal in relation to the Marxist schema (which was already very profound), in relation to the classical Marxist schema: it is no longer the surplus that makes possible the stock, it is precisely the inverse. It is the act of stockage, namely the mixing of the wild seeds that makes possible the existence of a surplus, that is to say the most fertile hybrids, more productive than the wild seeds. That will then produce a series of hybridizations, a series of selections that will operate on the very soil of this formation of stock, on the very soil of the imperial formation.

Hence the very beautiful conclusions of Jane Jacobs, when she suggests formulas of the type: obviously, it is the *Empire* – and the *town*, as concretion of the Empire (we will see later in what sense, I'm committing myself to all sorts of directions that have not been justified yet) – that invent agriculture. That completely demolishes ... What is very important is that this seems to go much further than all the critiques up until now of evolutionism, of evolutionism applied to

human societies. You no longer have stages (for example: hunter-gathers, small agriculturalists, townships [*bourgades*], cities, Empire) at all. You have imperial formations directly locked into the groups of hunter-gatherers. And this is the imperial formation. It is the town that invents agriculture. Agriculture comes from the town. Livestock farming comes out of the town.

If we try to establish the reversals in relation to Marx: in the Marxist conception, there would have to be the possibility of a surplus in order for there to be stock, while here on the contrary, it is the constitution of stock that makes the surplus possible. In the Marxist schema, the despotic imperial formation presupposed already developed agricultural communities; here, the opposite happens. The formation of agriculture is a product of the archaic imperial formation. This is why it is not a matter of shifting dates back, of pushing the Neolithic back into the Paleolithic, or – if you accept this, considering the archaeological data – of pushing archaic imperial formations back into the Paleolithic; it is the very terms of the problem that change. From this moment we can indeed say that it is the archaic imperial formation that creates or makes possible the mode of production, and not at all the inverse. With what consequences? It is at this moment one finds oneself before a broken evolutionism reading. Meaning: to sort this out, we need a field of coexistence. How to explain the coexistence, from the Paleolithic onward, between so-called ‘primitive’ communities of hunter-gatherers and imperial state formations, towns, war machines and other things still?

Next time we will divide into two, so that we are less numerous, and it can work better. And I’d like for those of you who are affected by these problems to have me go back over this and tell me directly what you think about the current situation, and then we will continue. [End of the session] [2:06:25]

**Notes** [N.B. All notes established in 2020 or 2023]

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TCpVh9E1NY> (verified December 16, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari reference these works in *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 564-565, note 9: the French text, *Le despotisme oriental* (Paris: Minuit, 1963, or 1964) was first published in 1957 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press). According to the footnote, the French edition removed Pierre-Vidal Naquet’s preface in the second edition. The other references are to Ferenc Tökei, *Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979) with Deleuze and Guattari’s reference to *Studia Historica* 1966; and the CERM publication, *Sur le mode de production asiatique* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> On the distinction between possession (*Besitz*) and ownership (*Eigentum*) in Karl von Savigny, Hegel and Marx, see Lawrence Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 13-16.

<sup>4</sup> On Mumford and this term, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 428, 457, cited by Deleuze and Guattari as mentioned in an article “The First Megamachines”, *Diogenes* 55 (July-September 1956) (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 570 note 55). However, they also cite Mumford in *The Pentagon of Power*, volume 2 of *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1970) (p. 570, note 58).

<sup>5</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 692-695.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of these references, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, plateau 13 “7000 BC: Apparatus of Capture”, section titled “Proposition XI. Which Comes First?”, pp. 427-437.

<sup>7</sup> On Mellaart and Jacobs, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 565 note 11: Mellaart, *Earliest Civilizations in the Near East* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965) and *Catal Hüyük* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Jane Jacobs, *The New Obsidian*; French translation of *The Economy of Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972 [1969]). In the original English text, Jacobs uses the term ‘city’, but Deleuze uses *ville*, usually translated as ‘town’. As for V. Gordon Childe, Deleuze and Guattari refer to him in plateau 12, on nomadology and the war machine, *A Thousand Plateaus*,

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p. 563, note 101, specifically, *The Prehistory of European Society* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1958) and *The Dawn of European Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 1958).

<sup>8</sup> Jacobs suggests that the “excellently manufactured hide bags” (*The Economy of Cities*, 29) initially used in New Obsidian for the transportation of obsidian from volcanoes are themselves bought by external traders, who then use them to carry quantities of seeds in their subsequent exchanges with the traders in obsidian. She does not mention any small animals, which it seems obvious would not in any case be transported in such excellent bags; she clearly distinguishes the activities of the “barter-seed stewards” from the “animal stewards” (36), who handle *large* animals of varying degrees of docility. *A Thousand Plateaus* makes it clear that there are two distinct flows, of seeds and animals: “It is a stock of uncultivated seeds and relatively tame animals from different territories that performs, and makes it possible to perform, at first by chance, hybridizations and selections *from which agriculture and small-scale animal raising arise*” (ATP 428).