Chapter 13

# 7000 BC: Apparatus of Capture

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## I

The 'Apparatus of Capture' plateau expands and alters the theory of the state presented in the third chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*, while at the same time providing a final overview of the sociopolitical philosophy developed throughout *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. It develops a series of challenging theses about the state, the first and most general of which is a thesis against social evolution: the state did not and could not have evolved out of 'primitive' hunter-gatherer societies. The idea that human societies progressively evolve took on perhaps its best-known form in Lewis Henry Morgan's 1877 book, *Ancient Society; Or: Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (Morgan 1877; Carneiro 2003), which had a profound influence on nineteenth-century thinkers, especially Marx and Engels. Although the title of the third chapter of *Anti-Oedipus* – 'Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men' – is derived from Morgan's book, the universal history developed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is directed *against* conceptions of linear (or even multilinear) social evolution. Deleuze and Guattari are not denying social change, but they are arguing that we cannot understand social change unless we see it as taking place within a *field of coexistence*.

Deleuze and Guattari's second thesis is a correlate of the first: if the state does not evolve from other social formations, it is because it *creates its own conditions* (ATP 446). Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the state begins with a consideration of the nature of ancient despotic states, such as Egypt or Babylon. What was the origin of such empires? And how did they acquire their astonishing dominance? Marx proposed a famous answer to

the second question: the archaic state is a milieu of interiority that stock-piles the surplus production of the surrounding agricultural communities, constituting a transcendent public power that converges on the person of the despot (Marx 1965: 69–70; cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 194). In the archaic state, primitive codes, with their lineages and territories, are allowed to subsist, but they are overcoded by the state and taken up into its eminent unity. The despotic state is literally a mega-machine, in Lewis Mumford's terms, in which human beings function as its working parts in a kind of 'generalised enslavement' (ATP 456–7). The machine is con-structed like a pyramid, with the agricultural communities at its base, the despot at its apex, and a vast bureaucracy in between.

*Anti-Oedipus* had proposed the term 'overcoding' to describe the basic mechanism of the archaic mega-machine: the coded filiations and alliances of primitive societies are overcoded by a new alliance (of the people with the despot) and a direct filiation (of the despot with his deity) (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 192, 205). The concept of capture introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus* is meant to provide a more detailed account of the way in which overcoding works. The state is a transcendent 'apparatus of cap-ture' that incorporates everything into its form of interiority through three primary mechanisms – rent, labour and money – which are a variant of the 'trinity formula' analysed by Marx (Marx 1981: 953), and operate through two interrelated operations: *direct comparison* in the form of abstract quan-tities, and *monopolistic appropriation* in the form of stock.

*Ground rent.* Rent is a mechanism of capture that incorporates land, or the 'earth', into the state apparatus. But the earth is not a given; if we understand the earth as an abstract general space – the *geo* in geometry, and not the more general notion of Earth [*terre*] sometimes employed by Deleuze and Guattari – we must say that this abstract and striated space was *created* by the apparatus of capture. 'Before' the earth, the land was occupied or territorialised without being measured or divided: there were only the shifting territories of primitive societies (or the smooth spaces occupied by nomadic societies). The genius of the state, in creating the concept of the earth, is to insist that these territories and their occupation coexist in a general and abstract space, a space that belongs to the despot. In turn, it is the constitution of this indeterminate and abstract space that allowed the earth to be divided and portioned out in plots, which were distributed to officials whose title to the land was entirely dependent on their position in the state bureaucracy. There was no private property: the despot was the sole public-property owner, who maintained control over his officials through the imposition of rent. Even when agricultural com-munities were permitted a certain autonomy, they were subordinated to the state apparatus through the payment of rent.

Such is the origin of geo-metry: the constitution of the earth (*geo*) and its measurement and striation (*metron*) are coexistent. Every year in Egypt, after the Nile floods, land surveyors or 'rope-stretchers' (*hardenonaptai*) would restriate the land; the Greeks called them, precisely, the 'measurers of the earth' (*geo-meters*) (see Serres 1993). The measurement and striation of the earth was the condition for the extraction of rent and tribute, since rent requires a *direct and quantitative comparison* of yields to be drawn between qualitatively different lands. The worst land bears no rent, but it thereby constitutes the lowest element in a cardinal series that allows the other soils to produce rent in a comparative way (differential rent). Ground rent, as an apparatus of capture, creates the conditions for its own operation: rent requires striation, and striation presupposes the earth as a general space. But in creating the earth, the state at the same time creates the transcendent unity to which the earth is subordinated (the despot). States are often seen as territories centred on the palace-temple complex of a capital city, but more properly one must say that the state 'deterritorialises' the surrounding territories and subordinates them to an imperial centre of convergence located outside and beyond them. Ground rent is thus an apparatus through which the earth is captured and made the object of the state's higher unity.

*Labour.* Similarly, human activity is appropriated by the state in the form of surplus labour, which is stockpiled in large-scale public works projects (pyramids, irrigation projects). The state thus implies a specific mode of human activity that does not exist elsewhere: labour. In primitive societies, strictly speaking, people do not 'work', even if their activities are highly constrained and regulated. Deleuze, following Martial Gueroult, calls this non-labour mode of activity *free action*, which is in continuous variation: one passes from speech to action, from a given action to another, from action to song, from song to speech, from speech to enterprise, 'all in a strange chromaticism with intense but rare peak moments or moments of effort' (ATP 491; Gueroult 1934: 119ff.).

For labour to exist, there must be a *capture* of such human activity by the state apparatus: it is only in the state that activity comes to be compared, linked and subordinated to a common and homogeneous quantity called 'labour'. (This development reached its apex in the nineteenth century with Taylorism and Fordism.) For this reason, 'labour' and 'surplus labour' cannot be said to be independent, as if there were first a necessary labour, and then beyond that a surplus labour. *Labour and surplus labour are strictly the same thing*, and all labour implies surplus labour. The term 'labour' simply applies to the quantitative comparison of activities, a striation of the space-time of human activity, while 'surplus labour' refers to the monopolistic appropriation of labour by the state. The Egyptian

pyramids were not constructed by slaves but by conscripted Egyptian labour, and as such they constitute a form of stockpiled activity. In other words, it is surplus labour that constitutes labour as a new mode of activity in the state. There is no labour outside of the state apparatus, and human activity is transformed into labour only in relation to the state.

*Money.* Finally, just as labour does not exist outside the state, neither does money. Money was not introduced in order to serve the needs of commerce, as if there were first an autonomous domain of 'markets' into which money was introduced to facilitate exchange (Graeber 2011: 44–5). Rather, the converse is the case: money was created by the state to make taxation possible. Money, as an abstract equivalent or unit of account, is an instrument of measure (*metron*) that makes possible a direct comparison between goods and services, which the state can then appropriate in the form of taxes or tribute (Will 1955; Foucault 2013: 133–48; Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 197; ATP 442–3). For this reason, it is money that creates markets, and not vice-versa: the 'economy' presupposes the state. As Litaker observes, money striates space-time through the emergence of markets, which are spaces of commercial exchange that determine the times of production, circulation and consumption (Litaker 2014: 121).

Ground rent, labour and money are the three fundamental aspects of the state's apparatus of capture: ground rent captures the earth, labour captures human activity, and money captures exchange. Put differently, rent, profit and taxation are three forms of *stockpiling*, and each of these mechanisms converges in the person of the despot, who is at once 'the eminent landowner, the entrepreneur of large-scale projects, and the master of taxes and prices' (ATP 444). The apparatus of capture has several distinct characteristics.

First, and most importantly, *the apparatus of capture creates what it captures*. The earth, labour and money are the conditions that make possible rent, surplus-labour (profit) and taxes, but these conditions are themselves created by the state. This is why 'capture' does not simply mean an 'appropriation' of what already exists; both in fact and in principle, the state is only able to capture what it itself creates, or at least what it contributes to creating (ATP 446). The state plays the role of a foundation, but it cannot play this role if it captures what already exists: if something exists before the state, it can exist without the state. For the state to be foundational, *the state must be self-presupposing* (ATP 427), and it is the self-presupposing nature of the state that grounds its monopoly power, its triple possession *in principle* of the totality of the earth, the totality of labour and the totality of money. The monopoly power of the state can be expressed philosophically in several ways: in the language of sufficient reason, *the state is its own ground*; in the language of causality, the state is *causa sui* (Lampert

2011: 157); in the language of Kant, *the state produces its own conditions of possibility* (and thus is in itself unconditioned).

Secondly, the apparatus of capture is primarily a *semiological* process (ATP 445). For Deleuze, every social formation is both a physical system (a manner of occupying space and time) and a 'regime of signs'. In the codes of primitive societies, these signs were inscribed directly on the body in the form of markings (tattoos, circumcisions, incisions, scars, mutilations and so on) that indicated one's inclusion in the social formation – an entire system of 'mnemotechnics' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 144–5). If the ancient despotic state was able to overcode these existing codes, it was because it operated with an abstract and externalised semiotics based on numeracy, literacy and money: the development of geometry and arithmetic, the invention of phonetic writing and the issuing of currency. Money is an abstraction that functions as an abstract equivalent for goods and services. Geometry treats the earth as an abstract space in which all places are equivalent. Labour allows for a quantitative and abstract comparison of human activities. Taken together, these three heads of the apparatus of capture create an abstract locus of comparison in which land, goods, services, transactions and human activities are equalised, homogenised, compared, appropriated and stockpiled – all in a single process. In other words, the state operates by abstraction and *is itself an abstraction* (Sibertin-Blanc 2013: 50).

Thirdly, the self-presupposing and abstract nature of the state entails a particular type of *violence*, one that is itself posited as pre-established and pre-accomplished, even if it must be reactivated every day. It is often said that the state has a monopoly on legitimate violence – violence against 'criminals', violence against those who capture something they have no 'right' to capture – which the state self-regulates through the institution of law. But this juridical coding of violence *within* the state takes place within the structural violence *of* the state itself, whose apparatus of capture simultaneously constitutes and presupposes a *right* to capture (ATP 448). The state, as self-presupposing, is itself a kind of originary or primary violence that is always-already present, even if it never actually 'took place' (see Derrida 2002). As such, it is first and foremost in *myth* that the primary violence of the state finds expression, retrojected in an original violence against chaos that, at the limit, never actually occurred, even if it is omnipresent in every mechanism of the state. Hence the appeal to Dumézil's classic analyses of the two poles of sovereignty found in Indo-European myths: the jurist-kings who operate through law and a respect for obligations, but also the terrifying magico-religious sovereign who operates through a *magical capture* that 'binds without combat' (Dumézil 1988: 152; ATP 424–5). The originary violence of the state makes resistance

impossible, and it is what gives the state its power (*puissance*): territorial power (monopoly of the earth), economic power (monopoly of labour), monetary power (monopoly of currency) and, ultimately, political power (monopoly of violence).

## II

The self-presupposing or self-producing nature of the state leads to a third thesis: *the archaic state had no distinct cause that could explain its 'origin'*. The great archaeologist V. Gordon Childe proposed a well-known theory about the origin of the state (Childe 1951; 2009; cf. Lull and Mico 2011: 180–9): at some point in prehistory, hunter-gatherer groups learned to cultivate grain and raise livestock (the Neolithic revolution), and it was this surplus of agricultural food that is supposed to have made the state possible, with its complex divisions of labour, large economic projects and intricate social organisation (the urban revolution) (ATP 428). In other words, primitive societies eventually reached a threshold in their 'mode of production' that allowed them to pass from an economy of *subsistence* to an economy of *surplus*. Using two complementary arguments, Deleuze and Guattari show that the evidence from archaeology, ethnography and even history does not support this theory.

The first argument comes from the analysis of primitive societies. Pierre Clastres, in his 1974 book *Society Against the State* (Clastres 1989; cf. Clastres 1994), had shown that the absence of a state in primitive societies is not a sign that they were 'backward' societies that had not yet evolved or developed enough. On the contrary, primitive societies are constituted by mechanisms that deliberately *ward off* the apparatus of the state, and actively prevent it from appearing. Clastres identified two such mechanisms: the role of *chiefs*, whose status constantly waxes and wanes, thereby preventing the resonance of power in a single despot; and the function of *war*, which maintained polemical relations of antagonism between segmentary lineages, preventing their convergence in a state apparatus. Clastres had been influenced, in part, by Marshal Sahlins's *Stone Age Economics*, which had shown that hunter-gatherers, far from living at a subsistence level requiring constant toil, were in fact the first affluent society, where the quest for food was intermittent and leisure was abundant (Sahlins 1972; see Clastres 1994). The absence of a surplus did not indicate an inability to develop technical means or overcome environmental obstacles, but was a positive goal, socially valorised. Even the innovations imported by colonialists were utilised, not to increase production but to reduce work time. Sahlins's thesis was anticipated by Marcel Mauss, whose

1925 essay *The Gift* had already shown that the giving of gifts and counter-gifts (potlatch) in primitive societies was a mechanism for warding off the accumulation of wealth (Mauss 1954: 3). In short, anthropologists have identified positive mechanisms in primitive societies that *prevented* the formation of a state apparatus: there is a refusal of the state's apparatus of power as much as a refusal of markets and the economy. Primitive societies, like states, are 'self-validating' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 203). If this claim is correct, it makes the appearance of the state even more difficult to explain. How could the state have evolved out of primitive hunter-gatherer societies if these are societies whose very organisation is directed *against* the formation of the state (Sibertin-Blanc 2013: 22)?

The second argument comes from the analysis of the state. The urbanist Jane Jacobs, in the first chapter of her 1969 book *The Economy of Cities*, which is entitled 'Cities First – Rural Development Later', launched an attack on what she called 'the dogma of agricultural primacy' (Jacobs 1970: 3). Jacobs, contentiously, attempted to invert this schema: it is the state that creates agriculture, she argued, and not the converse. She based her conclusions in part on James Mellaart's discovery of Çatalhöyük, a 'proto-town' in Turkey that dates back to Neolithic times (7000 BC – the date given to the thirteenth plateau), and perhaps even further, and which would thus have been in direct contact with hunter-gatherers. Jacobs suggests that it was in such cities that seeds were first gathered, hybridised and finally planted, initially in the soil around the town, and then expanding into the countryside. To explain (and exorcise) the prevalence of the 'agriculture first' dogma, Jacobs draws an analogy with the technologies of electricity (Jacobs 1970: 46). Electricity was invented in cities, yet it is primarily in rural areas that we find the massive installations needed for generating and transmitting electricity: dams, power plants, grids. If human memory did not extend back to a time when the world had cities but no electricity, the archaeological evidence could be interpreted to imply that, initially, there were rural people with no electricity, who then developed dams and power plants, eventually producing a large enough surplus of electricity to make cities possible. We are doing something similar when we claim that an agricultural surplus made the state possible, but the error is clear: we turn the *results* of state activity into a *precondition* for the state.

The French historian Fernand Braudel, in his *Civilization and Capitalism*, took up a modified version of Jacobs's thesis, although he was writing in a different context, analysing the relation between the urban and the rural in fifteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe. Braudel likewise contested the dogma that the countryside 'necessarily preceded the town in time', but argued, not that cities preceded the countryside, but that the two were *reciprocally determined*. 'Jane Jacobs, in a persuasive book, argues

that the town appears at least simultaneously with rural settlement, if not before it . . . Town and countryside obeyed the rule of "reciprocity of perspectives": mutual creation, mutual domination, mutual exploitation according to *the unchanging rules of co-existence*' (Braudel 1992: 484, 486: see also Smith, Ur and Feinman 2014: 1532: 'Agriculture and urbanism . . . developed in tandem'). Building on his analysis of the apparatus of capture, Deleuze adopts a variant of Braudel's thesis: not that the state preceded agriculture, but that agriculture and the state were *co-determined*.

> It is the State that creates agriculture, animal raising, and metallurgy; it does so first on its own soil, then imposes them on the surrounding world . . . It is not the State that presupposes a mode of production, it is the State that makes production a 'mode'. The last reasons for presuming a progressive development are invalidated. (ATP 429)

We return to the self-presupposing nature of the state: if the state stocks an agricultural surplus, it is because *it itself creates the conditions that make a surplus possible*.

Deleuze draws on this argument when he assesses Friedrich Engels's famous 1884 book on the *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Engels 1972). Engels appealed to several sets of factors to explain the origin of the state: *exogenous* factors, such as the need to organise wars; *endogenous* factors, such as the rise of private property and money; and *specific* factors, such as the emergence of 'public functions' (Deleuze 1979a; cf. ATP 427). But Deleuze shows how each of these factors, far from explaining the emergence of the state, in fact *presuppose* an already-existing state. States can and often do appropriate a war machine for themselves, but such an appropriation presupposes that the state already exists. Similarly, no one has ever indicated a mechanism through which one could move from a communal tribal property to private property, as if one day some exceptional person decided to proclaim, 'This is mine.' On the contrary, archaeology has been able to provide a precise mechanism, assignable if variable, showing how private property was constituted out of a system of imperial public property through *freed slaves* – but this means that the privatisation of property could become a characteristic of the state only if the public property of the archaic state were *already given* (ATP 449, 451). The same is true for the origin of money, which was created not to promote commerce, but for the purposes of taxation, which likewise presupposed an already-existing state. Finally, public functions also pre-suppose a state: irrigation, for instance, was an agricultural problem that went beyond the capacities of most agricultural communities.

These analyses all point to the same antinomy: on the one hand, the state could not have emerged from the soil of primitive societies, since

they are directed *against* the state; on the other hand, the factors typically put forward to explain the emergence of the state (agricultural surplus, the military, private property, money, public works) in fact presuppose an already-existing state. Every explanation of the origin of the state is tautological, presuming what it seeks to explain. How then can we explain the appearance of the state's apparatus of capture, if it was not the result of a progressive evolutionary process, and if it 'leads back to no *distinct* assignable cause' (ATP 427)? Deleuze draws the only possible conclusion: the state appeared in the world fully formed and fully armed, as if it were born an adult, 'a master stroke executed all at once [*coup de maître en une fois*]' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 217; cf. ATP 427). But what does it mean to say that the state appeared in the world 'fully formed'?

## III

The question of the origin of the state can be posed as both a de facto and a de jure problem. Even if one grants that the state did not evolve from primitive societies, but was a 'master stroke executed all at once', one could still (and legitimately) attempt to search for the first state. Such a search would be complicated by the fact that the criterion for identifying a state or proto-urban formation is *not* a matter of population or size, since 'primitive accumulation' occurs whenever there is an apparatus of capture. 'It is enough for this point of comparison and appropriation to be effectively occupied for the apparatus of capture to function' (ATP 447). But archaeology has continued to push back in time the appearance of the first state, and no doubt it will continue to do so. As Leroi-Gourhan once observed, 'while we may expect to discover evidence of ever older semi-urbanised units going back to the very beginnings of proto-agriculture, the first city will probably never be found' (Leroi-Gourhan 1993: 171). As such, the search for the first state is a kind of *passage to the limit*, and this limit is the point where the question ceases to be a quantitative and de facto question of regression in time, and instead becomes a qualitative and de jure question (ATP 428): the de facto problem of *chronological succession* becomes a de jure problem of *topological coexistence*. If 'the self-sufficiency, autarky, independence, and preexistence of primitive communities is an ethnological dream' (ATP 429), it is because primitive societies and states have always and everywhere coexisted with each other.

The *quid juris* question then becomes that of the relations of coexistence between social formations. Yet if the various social formations analysed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* do not represent the *evolutionary stage*s of social development, neither can they simply be identified as the

*ideal types* of a comparative sociology, despite appearances, since each type functions in a different manner (Silbertin-Blanc 2010b: 114). The concept of the 'primitive', for instance, can be seen as a type whose unity is the *unity of reason*, theoretically subsuming under a single concept a plurality of heterogeneous societies. By contrast, the capitalist type has a unity that is not only theoretical but also historical: it is a *singular universal*, in the sense that it is the result of a historically contingent process that has resulted in the universalisation of its singularity. But Deleuze and Guattari ascribe to the state a unity of a completely different nature: a *real unity* that, whether actualised or virtual, is omnipresent throughout the entire social field, not only in archaic states or modern nation-states, but even in primitive societies 'without a state'.

This brings us to Deleuze and Guattari's fourth thesis: *there has never been but one state*, a thesis that is repeated throughout *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 214, 220, 261) and taken up in *A Thousand Plateaus*. To be sure, Deleuze and Guattari readily admit that in fact there are a plurality of states, and that modern states are very different from the archaic imperial state. But these de facto differences between concrete states find their de jure ground in the ideality of a single state (pluralism = monism), which Deleuze and Guattari call the *Urstaat* (*ur-* [proto] + *staat* [state]). The *Urstaat* is both a limit-concept and an *Idea*, in the Deleuzian sense. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'the general theory of society is a generalised theory of flows' or *fluxes* (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 262), and the function of social formations is to *code* these fluxes. The Idea of the *Urstaat*, in turn, lies at the opposite pole of the Idea of a pure flux (schizophrenia): it is the Idea of a completely captured and coded flow, which is 'the eternal model of everything the State wants to be and desires' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 217). Thus, the *Urstaat* must not be confused with the archaic imperial state, which simply actualises the *Urstaat* in its 'purest conditions' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 198). Rather, the *Urstaat* is 'THE abstraction, which is realised, certainly, in imperial formations . . . but takes on its concrete immanent existence in subsequent forms that make it reappear in other figures and under other conditions' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 221).

The theory of the *Urstaat* must be read, in part, as Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to the Marxist debates surrounding the status of the 'Asiatic mode of production', which Marx saw as an original mode of production that was reducible to neither the ancient slave mode of production nor the feudal mode of production (see Godelier 1978; Tokei 1979; Anderson 1979). Marx introduced the concept in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1965: 69–70), referring primarily to India and China, but he abandoned it in *Capital*, and Engels renounced it in *The Origin of the*

*Family, Private Property, and the State*. During the Stalinist period, it was officially rejected in favour of Marx's theory of five stages (primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism) in which the Asiatic mode of production finds no place (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 219). But the debates never subsided. Is the Asiatic mode of production a weak hypothesis that Marx renounced after his reading of Morgan, as Plekhanov suggested (Plekhanov 1992)? If not, is it an autonomous mode of production? Or simply a 'pseudo-feudal' formation, a transition between the primitive communist mode and the ancient mode of slavery? Or is it the embryonic form of an ancient mode of production that was 'blocked' at a 'phase prior to the evolution of slavery', as Stalin argued, laying down the position that would dominate Soviet Marxism (Stalin 1940)? What Deleuze and Guattari derive from these debates is an extension of the position adopted by Karl Wittfogel in his 1957 book *Oriental Despotism*. Like Trotsky and Bukharin before him, Wittfogel, himself an ambiguous figure (Ulman 1978), likened Stalin to an Eastern potentate and saw his regime as a species of Oriental despotism, embodying the worst aspects of the Asiatic mode of production. In a sense, Deleuze and Guattari agreed: 'We have to go along with Wittfogel when he shows the degree to which modern capitalist and socialist States take on the characteristic features of the primordial despotic State' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 229; cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 219n). But they pushed the point further than Wittfogel: they argued that it is not simply modern totalitarian states that resurrect the *Urstaat*; rather, *every* type of state, whether totalitarian or fascist, democratic or capitalist, is a resurrection of the ideal *Urstaat*. '"Asiatic" production, with the State that expresses or constitutes its objective movement, is not a distinct formation; *it is the basic formation*, on the horizon throughout history' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 217).

The *Urstaat* addresses several results of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the state: the fact that a genesis of the state-form is impossible, since it is self-presupposing and has no 'cause'; the fact that the historical beginnings of the state are unassignable; and finally, the fact that the *Urstaat* cannot be identified with its material manifestations. In one of his few affirmations of Hegelianism, Deleuze writes: 'If there is even one truth in the political philosophy of Hegel, it is that every State carries within itself the essential moments of its existence' (ATP 385; cf. 460). The 'essential' moment is the ideal moment of magical capture, but the *Urstaat* is materialised in a long history of mutations, and as such, it marks the point where the traditional alternative between Hegelian idealism and Marxist materialism becomes undecidable (Sibertin-Blanc 2013: 19, 29). It is for this reason that the *Urstaat*

appears to be set back at a remove from what it transects and from what
it resects, as though it were giving evidence of another dimension, *a cer-
ebral ideality* [in the Platonic sense] that is superimposed on the material
evolution of societies, *a regulating idea* [in the Kantian sense] or principle
of reflection (terror) that organises the fluxes into a whole. (Deleuze and
Guattari 1983: 219)

But the *Urstaat* is an Idea in the Deleuzian sense: it is an immemorial Idea,
*a past that has never been given as such* (second synthesis). If there is but
one state, it is because the *Urstaat* is a virtuality or basin of attraction that
permeates the entire social field as its foundation or ground (*fondement*),
even though it cannot be identified with any of its actualisations.

## IV

But the theory of the *Urstaat* confronts an obvious problem with regard to
primitive societies. How can one claim that the *Urstaat* is present through-
out the social field, even in primitive societies, if such societies actively
ward off the state? This leads us to Deleuze and Guattari's fifth thesis: *the
Urstaat was active 'before' its existence*. If primitive societies warded off the
state, they must have had a 'presentiment' of the state as the actual limit
they are avoiding – a limit they could not reach without self-destructing.
The manner in which the *Urstaat* is actualised in historical states, in other
words, is different from the manner in which the *Urstaat* pre-exists as a
warded-off limit in primitive societies. Objectively, Deleuze and Guattari
initially explain this phenomenon from a model drawn from physics. If
one considers the social field as a field of vectors, one could say that primi-
tive societies are traversed by a centripetal wave that converges on a point
$x$ – a point where the wave would cancel itself out and be inverted into
a divergent and centrifugal wave, which is a reality of another order (the
state) (ATP 565 n.14). The point of convergence marks a *potential* or a
*threshold of consistency*, and the convergent wave has the double property of
both anticipating it and warding it off. The state is thus 'beyond' primitive
groups, but 'beyond' does not mean 'after'. The threshold of consistency
has always existed, but it is beyond the limit of primitive societies, which
are content to keep that threshold at a distance. We must thus conceptual-
ise the *coexistence* or *contemporaneousness* of these two inverse movements,
'as if the two waves that seem to us to exclude or succeed each other
unfolded *simultaneously* in an "archaeological", micropolitical, micrologi-
cal, molecular field' (ATP 431).

But there is a second issue that comes to the fore here, which is more
subjective. Since every exchange of objects requires a way in which one can

*compare* the objects of exchange, no political economist can avoid the question, how should one evaluate the criteria of exchange? Responding to this question requires a theory of *collective evaluations*, or what one might call, in a Kantian vein, 'anticipations of social perception' (Deleuze 1979c). In the Marxist theory of labour-value, the way to compare exchanged objects – for instance, an iron axe and a steel axe – is to compare the labour time that is socially necessary for their production, which requires a collective evaluation of both the worker and the entrepreneur using a scientific (or pseudo-scientific) form of quantification. In primitive societies, however, this route is closed off in advance, not because a measure is lacking, but because there is no 'labour time' to be measured. Human activity is in constant variation, and there is nothing that corresponds to labour, much less to labour time.

On this score, Deleuze appeals to the nineteenth-century neoclassical theory of marginalism, which was originally invented to account for the equilibrium of prices within the capitalist regime. If Marx held to the classical theory in which the value of commodities is derived from the quantity of labour required to produce them, marginalists like Stanley Jevons argued that value should instead be analysed in terms of the utility of the 'last' or 'marginal' object (Clarke 1982: 147–50). Business owners know that, beyond a certain limit, the structure of their business will have to change: there are thresholds beyond which an 'assemblage' (*agencement*) cannot maintain its current consistency. For example, how many cows can a dairy farmer purchase without making any changes to his business, such as adding acreage or procuring more equipment? The last cow he could currently buy is the 'marginal object', since if he purchases more, he will have to fundamentally alter the size and structure of his business. More importantly, it is his *anticipation* of the last or marginal cow that determines the price he is willing to pay for the cows he currently needs. If his business can only sustain twenty additional cows, he will not buy fifty, even if their price is substantially discounted. In marginalism, it is the evaluation of the *idea* of the last or 'marginal' object that determines the value of the entire series of real terms.

Although Deleuze finds marginalism weak as a general economic theory, he finds a new field of application for a modified marginalism in non-capitalist formations (ATP 437). In primitive societies, he argues, the object of collective evaluation is not labour time, but rather the idea of the last object or marginal object that governs the series of exchanges, and *agriculture is incapable of entering into these serial schemas*. We can thus conceptualises a difference between the 'limit' and the 'threshold': in a collective evaluation, what is anticipated is the *limit* (the penultimate exchange, which allows one to remain in the same assemblage) but what is

warded off is the *threshold* (which would force one to change assemblage). 'It is the evaluation of the last as limit that constitutes an anticipation and simultaneously wards off the last as threshold or ultimate (a new *agencement*)' (ATP 439). The threshold marks the point where stockpiling would begin, and the temporal succession of territories would be replaced by the spatial coexistence and exploitation of different territories: the apparatus of capture.

## V

Though the state was not formed by an evolution but appeared in a single stroke, Deleuze and Guattari nonetheless point to an inevitable and internal 'becoming' or mutation of the state-form. The principle of this mutation comes from the same process of overcoding and capture that defines the archaic state, but functions as its supplementary double: the archaic state cannot overcode and capture without at the same time freeing up a large quantity of decoded flows that escape from it. It cannot create large-scale public works without a flow of independent *labour* escaping from its hierarchised bureaucracy of functionaries, notably in the mines and in metallurgy. It cannot create coinage without flows of *money* escaping, and nourishing or giving birth to other powers (notably in commerce and banking). It cannot create a system of public property without a flow of *private* appropriation growing up beside it, and then starting to slip through its fingers. Finally, it is with the rise of private property that *classes* appear, since the dominant classes are no longer part of the state apparatus, but become distinct determinations that make use of a now-transformed apparatus.

This is Deleuze and Guattari's sixth thesis: in a multitude of forms, *the apparatus of overcoding inevitably gives rise to decoded flows that escape the apparatus of capture* – flows of money, flows of labour, flows of property, flows of population (ATP 449; Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 223). If the first great movement of deterritorialisation appears in the overcoding performed by the despotic state, the second movement appears in the decoding of the flows that are set in motion by the despotic state's own apparatus of capture. This is the 'paranoid' vector that is inherent in the state-form (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 193): the state is at once capture and the impossibility of complete capture, since the state can only overcode by decoding (abstraction). The state cannot presuppose itself without *also* presupposing what escapes its form of interiority, namely, *decoded flows*, which are the figure of the 'outside' (*dehors*) of the state, the inverse of its Idea. Just as the state creates what it captures, it creates what *escapes*

its apparatus of capture: it is the state's form of interiority (capture) that at the same time creates the state's absolute outside (decoded flows).

It is this situation that initially gives rise to a diverse variety of state-forms – 'evolved empires, autonomous cities, feudal systems, monarchies' (ATP 459) – all of which will have as their aim the *recoding*, by means of regular or exceptional topical operations, of the products of these decoded flows. For example, the ancient Mediterranean world (Pelagians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians) created an urban fabric that was distinct from the archaic imperial states. Both states and cities are social formations that 'deterritorialise' their surrounding rural territories, but cities accomplish this deterritorialisation in a very different manner than states. The state is a phenomenon of *intraconsistency* that captures territories by relating them to a superior arithmetic unity (the despot), by subordinating them to a *transcendent* or mythic order imposed upon them from above. Cities, by contrast, are phenomena of *transconsistency* that bring about an *immanent* deterritorialisation that adapts the surrounding territories to a geometrical extension in which the city itself is merely a relay-point in a vast network of commercial and maritime circuits. The power of the city does not lie above but in the middle; it exists only as a function of circulation, and is a correlate of the road. As such, the city is a singular point through which commerce enters and exits; it is an *instrument of polarisation* rather than an apparatus of capture: 'it effects a polarisation of matter – inert, living or human' (ATP 432). Whatever the flow involved it must be deterritorialised to enter the network, to submit to the polarisation, to follow the circuit of urban and road recoding.

Nonetheless, it was the decoding power of the state-form – and not the city-form – that would ultimately lead to the rise of capitalism. If the state appears fully formed on the horizon of history, capitalism appears only after a long succession of contingent events and encounters. *Anti-Oedipus* provides an analysis of the formation of capitalism, which is similarly defined by a process of decoding and recoding, and it addresses the question posed by historians such as Braudel (Braudel 1973: 308) and Balazs (Balazs 1964: 34–54): Why was capitalism born in Europe rather than, say, in Rome or thirteenth-century China, when all the conditions for it were present but not effectuated (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 197, 224). What *A Thousand Plateaus* adds to this is an analysis of the new status the state assumes within capitalism as a *model of realisation* (a term that does not appear in *Anti-Oedipus*). Although it is the state that produces capitalism, capitalism in turn transforms and subsumes the state (Holland 2013: 131–5). As Marx showed, capitalism appears when the *generalised* decoding of flows set loose by the state reaches a threshold of consistency that allows two of these unqualified flows – abstract capital and naked labour

– to conjugate in a differential relation. These flows are 'unqualified' or unspecified because, in and of themselves, they have no content: labour can produce a myriad of commodities or services that capital can purchase, but the nature of these products is not qualified in advance (a commodity is a qualified product of a quantity of labour). If the ancient despotic state operated with an abstract semiotics (writing, geometry, money) that was capable of overcoding existing codes, capitalism required for its functioning a new form of abstraction – a new 'regime of signs' – capable of dealing with unqualified flows that have no specifiable content. Deleuze and Guattari's seventh thesis is that it is only *axiomatics* that can play such a role.

## VI

But by what right can capitalism be compared with a mathematical notion as precise as axiomatics? In his seminars, Deleuze distinguishes between logical formalisation and axiomatics, which are related but not identical (Deleuze 1980b). The difference is that a logical formalisation is a system of formal relations between *specified* or specifiable elements, whereas an axiomatic is a system of functional relations between *non-specified* elements. Though they have ancient roots, both procedures were given a rigorous status at roughly the same time by Russell (formalisation) and Hilbert (axiomatics). Russell, in response to the self-referential paradoxes generated by set theory (e.g. the barber paradox), had proposed his famous theory of *types*, which is a formalisation based on the principle that *a set cannot contain itself as an element*. The theory establishes a hierarchy of types, and holds that objects of a given type must be constructed exclusively of objects of a preceding type, lower in the hierarchy. Although antiquity was aware of similar paradoxes, such as the liar paradox, it had made no attempt to provide a formalised remedy such as Russell's. Yet it is not anachronistic to think of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the state in terms of logical formalism, as if this formalism was already present socially without being formalised theoretically. The claim that the archaic state overcodes agricultural communities means that the 'apparatus of capture' is of *a different type* than the 'agricultural communities'. We find here a logical confirmation of the preceding analyses: the state *cannot* be an agricultural community; rather, the state is a *model to be realised*, a model that transcends the agricultural communities and creates its own ground.

Axiomatisation differs from logical formalisation and has a distinct historical trajectory. In the late nineteenth century, both mathematics

and capitalism confronted a *crisis in the foundations*. In mathematics, the lack of 'clear and rigorous' foundations, particularly for the calculus, led Hilbert to propose a programme to ground mathematics in a finite set of axioms – a project that the Bourbaki group in France, starting in 1935, pursued in a series of works entitled *Éléments de mathématique*. At the same time, capitalism was provoking a parallel crisis in the socio-economic realm: its generalised decoding of fluxes had led to a collapse of the foundation that had once been provided by the state. The monetary mass of capital is a continuous or intensive quantity that increases and decreases without being controlled or mastered by any agency. In both capitalism and mathematics, when the foundation collapsed, it was axiomatisation that took over: the foundation was now provided by a set of axioms. The axioms of capital are '*operative statements* that constitute the semiological form of Capital and that enter as component parts into assemblages of production, circulation, and consumption' (ATP 461) – such as legislative, regulative or financial statements: banking legislation, public spending, wage regulation, property laws, human rights statutes and so on. These axioms deal not only with flows of capital (finance), but also with flows of commodities (markets), flows of population (migrants, unions, employment), and flows of matter-energy (oil, gas, electricity). Deleuze even suggests that ultimately 'the true axiomatic is social and not scientific' (Deleuze 1972).

The status of the state has changed accordingly. Modern nation-states are still actualisations of the *Urstaat*, with its Idea of a completely coded flux, but one could say that the concept of a 'model' has altered: the state is no longer a transcendent *model to be realised*, but an immanent *model of realisation* for the axiomatic of capitalism. In model theory, models are the heterogeneous structures or domains in which an axiomatic is realised. Within capitalism, there is a genuine heterogeneity of state-forms – democratic, socialist, communist, totalitarian, despotic – but each of these forms is *isomorphic* in relation to a single global capitalist market (ATP 464). Nation-states differ primarily in the way that they master the flows (ATP 262), either through a multiplication of directing axioms (social democracies) or a subtraction or withdrawal of axioms (totalitarianism). Axiomatics is sometimes seen as a kind of 'automation' of thought, but in reality it should be seen as a specific mode of experimentation, since no one can say in advance what axioms should be chosen, or whether an axiomatic will be consistent. From the viewpoint of its axiomatics, the history of politics can be seen as a history of constant and often decisive errors (ATP 461). The 'Apparatus of Capture' plateau concludes with a detailed analysis of the contemporary nature of the capitalist axiomatic – including analyses of what *exceeds* the axiomatic, such as the power of the continuum

(the war machine) and non-denumerable multiplicities (minorities) (ATP 460–73).

## VII

How, finally, are we to understand the claim that social change takes place within a *field of coexistence*? Deleuze and Guattari give their response to this question in their final thesis, which recapitulates the others and constitutes the principle of their critique of social evolution: '*All history does is to translate a coexistence of becomings into a succession*' (ATP 430; cf. Lundy 2012). This thesis allows us to distinguish three levels of Deleuze and Guattari's sociopolitical philosophy, which begins with *types*, then evaluates their *powers*, and finally maps out their *becomings*. At the first level, *Anti-Oedipus* initially presents us with a typology of social formations, and these 'types' can be understood in a Bergsonian manner. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson created his well-known concepts of 'pure memory' and 'pure perception': although perception and memory are always mixed together in experience (de facto), these concepts allowed him to distinguish (de jure) the differences in nature between the two lines or 'tendencies' of pure memory and pure perception. The same is true for Deleuze and Guattari's typology of social formations. Although each type *in fact* coexists with the others within a single field of coexistence – in our contemporary situation, states, war machines and archaic territorialities all coexist within the capitalist axiomatic – each concept is a tool that allows one to demarcate distinctions or differences in kind within the social multiplicity (Bogue 2004: 172–3).

At a second level, however, *A Thousand Plateaus* characterises each of these types in terms of a specific 'machinic process': primitive societies are characterised by mechanisms of anticipation/prevention; states are characterised by apparatuses of capture; nomadic war machines, by the occupation of smooth space; cities, by instruments of polarisation; ecumenical organisations, by the encompassment of heterogeneous formations; capitalism, by decoding/axiomatisation. This is no longer a question of types; rather, each of these processes is a *power* (*puissance*) that indicates a certain *capacity* or *capability* of a social formation. Primitive societies *anticipate* and *ward off*, archaic states *capture*: this is what they 'can do', what they are capable of. In a Spinozistic manner, each of these powers or processes must be grasped *positively* as a determinate quantity of reality (see Sibertin-Blanc 2013: 41–6). The problem with evolutionary schemas is that they tend to view social formations through the prism of the state-form, which leads to the litany of 'societies without' – 'without a state', 'without history',

'without writing.' But this focus on the state-form winds up assigning privation and lack to other formations, severing them from the forms of power that each of them affirms positively. The second level takes us from Bergson to Spinoza: beneath the categorial typology of social formations, one finds an ethological map of their constitutive powers, 'a logic of coessential positivities and coexisting affirmations' (Deleuze 1988: 95).

But the third level is uniquely Deleuzo-Guattarian. Far from being governed by a single form of power, every social formation, both in fact and in principle, is composed of a *plurality* of processes that are in 'perpetual interaction' with each other (ATP 430), and each process can function at a 'power' other than its own. Anticipation-prevention mechanisms, for instance, 'are at work not only in primitive societies, but are transferred into Cities that ward off the state-form, into the state that wards off capitalism, and into capitalism itself, which wards off and repels its own limits' (ATP 437). Similarly, the state is able to capture, not only land, activity and exchange, but also the anticipation-prevention mechanisms themselves, as well as the war machine and instruments of polarisation. And the powers 'become' something other when they enter into relations with each other: the power of the war machine changes nature when it is 'appropriated' by the state, just as the state's apparatus of capture changes nature when it is subordinated to the worldwide capitalist market. This is the sense of the term 'becoming': it is what takes place *between* two multiplicities, changing their nature. What appears in evolutionary theories as a chronological succession is, for Deleuze and Guattari, a phenomenon of transfer or transport between becomings. In each case, one must ask: What is a social formation capable of? What can it tolerate or support? What are the processes that exceed its capacities for reproduction, and put it in question? When does it pass its limit and enter into a new threshold of consistency? How does it *become*? Thus, we have to say that the term 'field of coexistence' does not refer to an external and de facto coexistence of social formations in a historical space-time, but rather to an intrinsic and de jure coexistence of powers and processes in a non-historical space-time, a continuum in which divergent temporalities coexist. This is what Deleuze calls the 'plane of immanence', a field where all the powers of the social machine coexist virtually, in constant becoming, enveloped and implicated in each other in 'a topological space and a stratigraphic time' (Lapoujade 2014: 218).

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