

## On Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

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### I

It is in *Sein und Zeit* that Heidegger decrees the end of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and their tradition (Enlightenment and Hegelianism), when, as he is commenting on the *Briefwechsel* [exchange of letters] between Dilthey and Yorck von Wartenburg, he pays homage to the latter for "his full understanding of the fundamental character of history as virtuality [...] [which he] owes to his knowledge of the character of being of human *Dasein* itself." Consequently, Heidegger continues, "the interest of understanding historicity" is confronted with the task of an elaboration of the "generic difference between the ontic and the historical." But he must part ways with Yorck when the latter, after having clearly established that difference, moves from virtuality to mysticism. If, on the other hand, once separated from the ontic, "the question of historicity shows itself to be an ontological question which inquires into the constitution of being of historical being", it is once again towards Dilthey that one must turn, in spite of his confused vitalism.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger effects two operations at once. On the one hand, he expels the *Geisteswissenschaften* from the position they occupied at the heart of metaphysics, as the inheritors of the Enlightenment and the outcome of Hegelianism. On the other hand, he brings to fulfillment the critical labor which had precisely shown its value in Dilthey's historicism (in spite of the limits that Yorck had pointed out)-acritical labor which develops the search for the meaning of historicity and allows one to move from the theory of objectivity to that of expression, from the acknowledgment of historiography in the context of the critique of cognition to its definition at the heart of the transcendental schematism. Historicity is then posited as an ontological dimension and leaves only its ontic residue for historiography.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that here Heidegger breaks (and this phenomenon recurs often in him) "with ambiguity" the "destinal" rhythm of his critique of the modern, while he paradoxically draws an "other" meaning from it-which refers back to that other vision of modernity which, from Machiavelli to Spinoza and Nietzsche, had understood historicity as absolute virtuality, and being as the power of Being-there. Machiavelli's *virtus* dwells precisely in that dimension. But it is above all in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that the meaning of history was viewed as the realization of a faculty: imagination. Born from the confusion of the first type of cognition, it is dissolved in a creative manner in the second type, and introduces the absolute potentiality of the ethical construction of being. It is that drive of being as the opening of historicity, that absolutely immanent definition of a meaning of history, that Heidegger took over and set here "with ambiguity". Nietzsche had grasped without any ambiguity this fundamental critical point which at once digs the grave of historicisms and demands the opening of historicity, by making it the heart of a theory of untimely, virtual, creative being.<sup>3</sup> The self-overcoming of time itself is in action here: it is a relation to history which consists in a redemption, not as worship of the past but as awareness that only the tension between present and future is a fabric of the possible, a power of ontological decision. Thus spoke Zarathustra:

[T]o deliver the dead and recreate every "it was" into a "I willed it thus", only that could, for me, be called redemption. Will, such is the name of the liberator and of that which brings joy; that is what I have taught you, my friends. But learn also this : that the will itself is a prisoner. To will is to free : but what is the name of that which puts the liberator himself in irons? "It was", there is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and its most solitary affliction. ' Powerless with regard to all that took place, it contemplates the past full of anger. The will cannot will backwards : that it cannot break time and the avidity of time, there is the most secret affliction of the will [...]. That time does not go backwards, there is what irritates it; "it was", such is the name of the stone it could not roll.<sup>4</sup>

It is that "could roll" which contains all of the meaning of historicity.

But let us return to Dilthey. It is indeed in his work that the tensions between historical research and the requirement of a renewal of the questioning of the meaning of historicity are most fully articulated. It is especially in his work that the labor of historical understanding seeks to identify its constitutive terrain which, roughly speaking, he sometimes defines as philosophy of life, comprehensive psychology, etc. Obsessed with the problem of historical subjectivity, Dilthey, during the whole of his research, makes the inventory of all of the possible forms in which historical science can open itself up to historicity, so to speak. From the positivist positions of his "Inaugural Lesson", which is extremely critical of the "castrated" character of historical objectivity, to the sharp consciousness in *Erlebnis und Dichtung* of the fact that "history is no way susceptible of constituting the supreme fulfilled science, capable of accounting for a given set of phenomena from concomitant causes, even if one were to grant it a maximum degree of scientificity"; from the Kantian work of the *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, held between the affirmation of the self ("the issue henceforth is to perceive, without letting oneself be bound by prejudices, the reality of inner life, and, starting from that reality, to determine what nature and history are in relation to that inner life") and a conception of the same self which henceforth is segmented, fractal, and diffused ("the singular individual is the connection point of a plurality of systems"), to the construction of historical typologies, as a methodological proposal of grasping universality and singularity at once; from the return to psychology in the *Ideen* which aims at giving a dynamic and productive consistency to the historical subject, and at discovering therein the power of *Erlebnis* (as both vitality and connection, as expression and objective determination), to the ultimate vitalist positions in which the psychological core opens itself up to the expressive function and determines itself in a presence which constitutes its ethical opening: well, during the whole of this inventory, the *Geisteswissenschaften* are always conceived of, whatever the case may be, as crises, and all of the critical pathways are opened up to the problematic of a historicity which has not yet been able to define itself. That indecisiveness of Dilthey, that way of making himself a psychologist or philosopher of life, which always lifts him beyond any philosophical position he takes, illuminates the intensity of the ontological fraying-through that he effects, which leads us to the verge of the discovery of a new meaning of historicity.<sup>5</sup>

Why is this Diltheyian procedure so important? Because while he anticipates Heidegger's conclusions, he also explores entirely other paths, and it is only by refining and letting the dust settle on these operations that the Heideggerian ontological decision, the meaning of historicity as virtuality, take on all of their meaning.

"To put our will to truth into question; to give back its event-like character to discourse; to remove, lastly, the sovereignty of the signifier." When Foucault announces this program in his "Inaugural Lecture", -he too finds himself at the limit of the critique of historiography and of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in general; he too expresses the opening onto the virtuality of history, which was constituted as a philosophical awareness between Dilthey and Heidegger. And Foucault, just like Dilthey, had gone through some extremely ambiguous phases during the course of his scientific

experience. From his early studies of Ludwig Binswanger to those of Weizsäcker, and then of Kant's "pragmatic anthropology", Foucault followed, and exhausted, all of the attempts at the reaffirmation of the self (as opposed to historical objectivity) as a moral, psychological or biological person.<sup>6</sup> When, especially in the mature works, he finally and definitively confronts the theme of historicity as arrayment<sup>7</sup>, the frame is set henceforth - history is production of subjectivity, care of self to self, an immediate and direct onto-logical expression. Just as in Dilthey, but more than in Dilthey, the transitional, psychologizing, cultural, vitalist experimentations of the understanding of the historical real are transfigured into a new point of view : that of the presence of the world as the fabric of being, which must be passed through, which is created at any moment. Just as in Dilthey, the passage is made in Foucault from a theory of history to a fundamental apperception of historicity - after Heidegger, that is, after an awareness of it was established by the Nietzschean perspective. It is on this path, through these successive advances which analogous problems and discourses conceal, that Dilthey is, so to speak, taken up again and located at the very place of the invention of historicity, where historical action becomes the only perspective according to which being may be interpreted. The end of the Geisteswissenschaften is the renewal of ontology.<sup>8</sup>

This grandiose project still did not meet with great success in the history of contemporary thought. We are witnessing a strange phenomenon : these Geisteswissenschaften, which could certainly not have survived the long critical process going from Nietzsche to Heidegger and from Dilthey to Foucault, have not left any corpse behind. In fact, the critical renewal of research on historicity from the constitutive point of view and the discovery of the power of being have been, so to speak, neutralized within new disciplines, new distributions of knowledge, new concepts of experience and a new philosophical climate which has become increasingly relativistic and skeptical. A tenuous and superficial vitalism blocked that other vitalism, turgid but always tragic, which led from historiography to being, to open again onto historicity. Once the objectively "castrated" historiographical point of view was overturned, once Hegelianism was abandoned with all of its enthusiastic resurgences of brute effectuality and dialectics in all of its subterfuges, once this vision "from below" was acquired, which allows the historical subject to determine ontological arrayments - well, this perspective was once again brought back to the dimensions and the horizon of relativism and skepticism. The different hermeneutical schools following each other, which precisely claim to be the inheritors of Diltheyian and Foucauldian thought, have led us to the delights of "weak thinking". The meaning of the complexity of processes emanating from historical subjects has become a pretext to repudiate the ontologically strong character of their emergence. The movement of constitution denied to totality was, for that very reason, reduced to precariousness, and the singularities, reduced to the charms of bare particularity. From the end of historicism, one thus passed imperceptibly but surely to the determination of the "end of history." It is the same "castrated" objectivity against which the critiques of the Geisteswissenschaften were brought, which reappears now: historicism is once again the winner, but in the guise of an encyclopedia of knowledge for the use of the media. Historically open being has become chatting or chatty being. The end of the Geisteswissenschaften has transformed itself into the triumph of idle speech.

In this new synthesis of experience and understanding over which the "post-modern" rules, the channels of perversion of the critical teaching, from Dilthey to Heidegger, are perfectly perceptible. In the great Gadamer, just as in the small Rorty and Vattimo, the circular motion of experience and understanding no longer opens onto historicity, except in the sense of a historical conditioning, substantially, of a finitude which, far from opening the subjective point of view to constitutivity, encloses it in event-like dispersion, in a need of meaning which winds itself around itself, in a pessimistic and totalizing conception of being, which seeks to justify itself in the religious but can only find a grounding in the void of mysticism or of democracy. One exalts in Dilthey the circular movement of experience and understanding without grasping the rupture in the expression of that circularity; one takes in Heidegger the critique of the empirical, of the ontic, while one carefully

avoids his perception of the potential grounding of being which alone, already in the resumption of Yorck and the polemic against his theologism, could allow the restoration of the Diltheyian point of view of expression and the creativity of historicity. This, while it is precisely by proceeding with the critique of the ontic, with the weapons of ontological apperception as the basis of historical critique, as opening to the fecundity of its experience, as experience of historicity, that Heidegger shows himself at his best. It is that Heidegger who consciously takes up the forgotten Nietzsche, and who unconsciously reproduces the Spinozism of the imagination which is then thrown on the dustpile. History is ended, the hermeneuticians and the post-moderns whisper, and the historicity of being, separated from the constitutivity of being, changes into a syrupy and melancholic pietas. The discovery of historicity is then afflicted with the disastrous feeling of the end of history and leaves us unarmed, faced with an epochal limit.<sup>9</sup>

## II

In radical contrast to the present drifting about, the Thousand Plateaus reinvent the sciences of spirit<sup>10</sup> (it being understood that, in the tradition in which Deleuze and Guattari are located, "Geist" is the brain), by renewing the point of view of historicity, in its ontological and constitutive dimension. The Thousand Plateaus preempt the postmodern and the theories of weak hermeneutics: they anticipate a new theory of expression, a new ontological point of view-an instrument which enables them to take on post-modernity, to disclose and dynamite its structures. Here we find a strong thinking, even when it is applied to the "weakness" of the everyday. As to its project, the issue is to grasp the created, from the point of view of creation. This project has nothing idealist about it: creative force is a material rhizome, at once machine and spirit, nature and individual, singularity and multiplicity -and the stage is history, from 10 000 B.C. to today. The modern and the post-modern are ruminated and digested, and reappear by abundantly helping fertilize a hermeneutics of the future. In re-reading the Thousand Plateaus ten years later, what is most impressive is the incredible capacity of anticipation which is expressed there. The development of computer science and automation, the new phenomena of media-society and communicative interaction, the new paths followed by the natural sciences and by scientific technology, in electronics, in biology, in ecology, etc., are not only considered but already taken into account as an epistemological horizon, and not just as a mere phenomenological fabric undergoing an extraordinary acceleration. But the superficiality of the context in which the dramaturgy of the future takes place is in fact ontological-a hard and irreducible superficiality which is precisely ontological and not transcendental, constitutive and not systemic, creative and not liberal.

There are at least four fundamental themes which I will seek to take up in A Thousand Plateaus. The first is the theory of expression and arrayments. The second is the theory of "networks". The third is "nomadology". The fourth is the ontological theory of the surface. Four points, four dimensions which integrate the work of constitution of the new sciences of spirit, by defining the plane on which they may develop, as products of an opening of possibility, or better still, of the potentiality of being:

A - The theory of expression and of arrayments is the first philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. The critique of psycho-analysis in *Anti-Oedipus* identified that plane of force. The force of expression is ontological, creative, and structured. This means that the point of view of singularity is immediately conjugated with a definition of space in extension, in the Bergsonian image of the opening and structuring movement. Singularity, whether individual or collective, and the determination of the relation of actor and event are set into motion. Haecceity, defined by the early Deleuze as the fundamental problem-atic term of the history of philosophy, is originally active and deploys itself according to the dimensions of movement, through a light-beam of desires or machinic elements. The initial force is subjective and constructive, it is arrayment. This term signifies : expression plus

organization, or again, organized expression, organized force, extension, and motion. Being and history are conceived as production and product of sub active arrangements. The world is constructed and reconstructed from below. Historicity is given as presence. In that articulation, both a metaphysical definition of motion, or even a good Bergsonian phenomenology of space, the liberation of desire in the analytic sense, as universal, open, and singular potentiality, and lastly an ethical conception of singularity, in that Spinozian sense which Deleuze likes so much, can be seen to converge. The general framework seems at first glance to be an animistic, hylozoist, pre-Socratic one. But vitalism finds itself inverted at the very moment that it is asserted, for it does not present itself either as an envelope of the real, or as a conception of the world, nor as a force which is not distinct from the production of the real, whether natural or historical, but as all of these elements at once, placed at the service of the production of singularity, of the emergence of singularity. The contradictions which remain, within the nevertheless convergent researches of Dilthey, Nietzsche and Heidegger, are dissolved here. If being is historicity, ontology can be brought back to the instance of production, to that moment of the originary expression. From there, expression and production open themselves to the materiality of the modern. The relation between man and machine which characterizes modernity becomes the content and form of the subjective arrangement. Machines, the reality constructed by capitalism, are not phantasms of modernity after which life can run unscathed - they are, on the contrary, the concrete forms according to which life organizes itself, the world transforms itself, and the material connections within which subjectivity is produced. *Ordo et connexio rerum idem est ac ordo et connexio idearum*. However, the relation between man and machine is always a singular event, that is, an event which, seizing hold of materiality, produces subjectivity. The construction of being as a universal task thus finds itself considered on the basis of the entire process, or, if one wishes, as proceeding both from events and from singularities. The event is the production of bodies, the historical production of the set [ensemble] of bodies and of their relations. The atomistic cosmogony of Spinoza is reinterpreted and reformulated here in the light of that vitalism of historicity which the great moderns have taught us.

The production of bodies is the reduction of historicity; historicity is the production of bodies. In a page of *A Thousand Plateaus*, one finds this fundamental query: "After all, wouldn't the great book on the body without organs (BwO) be the *Ethics*?"<sup>11</sup> It is explained that the BwO is the field of absolution of desire, the plane of consistency proper to historicity. The world's matrix is zero so long as one does not grasp the process of constitution of subjectivity, and one does not follow the infinite tension of constitution.<sup>12</sup>

B - One can follow the rhythm of constitution by a second approach, which is that of the theory of "networks". After having established the instance of production in the force of desire and its machinic process, Deleuze-Guattari move to the analysis of extension [etendue], of its expansion [extension] in action and its movement. What characterizes this space is the rhizome. The rhizome is a force, a phylum which opens onto a horizon of unmasterable arborescence-and, in this process, singularity singularizes itself more and more. At the same time, in the wealth of this production of singularities, the life context presents itself as a set of interrelations-unity and multiplicity, connections and heterogeneity, ruptures and lines of flight are always inverted according to a ceaselessly renewed cartography, always forming new systems, not self-centred but in expansion.<sup>13</sup> It is from there that the sciences of spirit may begin to reorganize themselves, that is, when the rhizomatic tensions and the machinic arrayments appear as subjective arrangements of enunciation-the constitutive dynamics then shift from the physics of the rhizome to the regime of signs which characterizes the science. The surface of the world is organized according to regimes of signs, without dispersing its machinic consistency, but, on the contrary, by renewing it in enunciation. A network of the sciences of spirit therefore exists : there, rhizomatics refers back to schizo-analysis, and the latter to strato-analysis, and then to pragmatics and micro-politics. We have already examined the relation between schizo-analysis and rhizomatics in part A of this section; the issue

now is to study its relation to the other points. First of all, as far as strato-analysis is concerned: science establishes itself on the systemic horizon constructed by the arborescence of the rhizome, and discovers its conflictuality. If the system itself constitutes an arborescence, the conflict will come out of the orientation of its branches : a conflict which cannot be taken over, simplified, or reduced within the system, but which continuously repeats itself, as the rule of the self-constitution of real networks. The point of view of historicity is not only constitutive, it is also conflictual : just as in Spinoza, it is war which generates life. The networks constitute ambiguous openings and arrangements: they open, close, and open again, while determining conflicts. Each point of the machinic or enunciative arborescence is reopened sequentially, onto other arborescences, other networks, above as well as below, according to conflictual modalities. We are thus completely inserted and immersed in a set of sign-producing systems which are in permanent mutation: there is the object of concern of the science of spirit. The epistemological dimension itself is to be found on a horizon of war. The segmentation of the (expressive) traits of enunciation is continuous. It is the becoming of the real and of science, it is the result of all of these processes. Becoming is the innovative result on the magma of expression, it is in some sense the solution of the war, and thereby the reopening of conflictual scenes. Rhizomatics refers back to a Hobbesian world-in which, however, it is not proprietary individuals but (in Spinozist fashion) productive, desiring singularities, individual or collective, which are the protagonists. The sciences of spirit are therefore polemological sciences, analyses of the networks of protagonists who participate in the conflict and constitute themselves there-they accept, without any reservations, the terrain of Nietzschean questioning.<sup>14</sup>

C - Pragmatics and micropolitics constitute themselves in nomadology. This means that the horizon of war is bounded by pragmatic powers. The historical world, constituted into geology of action, is drawn forth from a genealogy of morals, in the literal sense of the term, a tireless, ceaseless one. Produced from conflictual arborescences, subjectivities are nomads, that is, they are free and dynamic. As one knows, subjectivities organize themselves through machinic arrayments-as war machines. War machines represent the molecular fabric of the human universe. Ethics, politics, and the sciences of spirit become one and the same thing here : war machines interpret its project, they constitute the human world, by effecting the discrimination between desire and anti-desire, between freedom and necessity. And these are once again rhizomes and arborescences-but endowed with meaning. It is choice in war which determines the meaning of historicity. But what is meaning, on this completely immanent horizon, on this absolutely non-teleological scene? It is the expression of desire, it is the enunciation and organization of desire as event, as discrimination vis a vis any transcendence, as hostility to any blocking of becoming. Politically, the war machine defines itself as positivity because it posits itself against the State. Deleuze-Guattari reinvent the sciences of spirit, while attacking the last vestiges of historicism, of Hegelianism and of their conception of an objective spirit subsuming itself in the State. Faced with the State, and faced in particular with the State of mature capitalism, the molecular order spontaneously organizes a molar apparatus<sup>15</sup>, it necessarily becomes a counter-power: society against the State, or better still, much better, the set of desiring subjectivities and their infinite arborescences, on the nomadic rhythm of their appearances, against any fixed, centralizing and castrating machine. In reality, it is only from the pragmatic point of view that one may apprehend and appreciate subjectivity and the meaning of historicity. The point of view which upholds nomadology is a genuine "philosophy of praxis". To be nomadic in the order of fixed and produced history means to permanently produce these machinic arrayments and arrayments of enunciation, which open onto new rhizomatic arborescences, and which purely and simply constitute the real. Politics thus becomes a setting into place of micro-arrayments, a construction of molecular networks, which allow desire to deploy itself, and, by a permanent movement, make it the matter of pragmatics. Pragmatics in micro-politics, and of micro-politics, is the only operational point of view of historicity: pragmatics as praxis of desire, micro-politics as terrain of subjectivity, ceaselessly travelled and to be travelled indefinitely. This

alternation of points of view and this convergence of constructive determinations are never at rest. The goal of the molar order is to absorb the force of desire and to reshape the apparatuses towards the sole end of blocking the pragmatic flux of the molecular: the molar is by definition the ontological obstacle of the molecular. On the other hand, molecular flux is elusive, it perpetually seeks to upset the apparatuses of blockage and open the way to historicity. But what is the revolution? It is making an event out of this infinite process. The political line of *A Thousand Plateaus* is that which brings the molecular apparatus of desires to resist the molar order, to avoid it, to circumnavigate it, to flee it. The State cannot be reformed or destroyed : the only possible way of destroying it is to flee it. A line of flight, organized by the creativity of desire, by the infinite molecular movement of subjects, by a pragmatics which is reinvented at every instant. The revolution is the ontological event of refusal and the actualization of its infinite potentiality.<sup>16</sup>

D - From this set of considerations which gave birth to a constitutive vision of the world, of which any subjectivity and any event have genealogy as their fabric, we can now go back and reexamine the general ontological framework which the *Thousand Plateaus* offer to us. A thousand planes of a same surface. A surface full of crevices, ruptures, constructions and reconstructions; a territory which is permanently bound and folded over. Only one direction, only one teleology: the growing abstraction of relations, which fits the complexity of arborescences, the development of rhizomes and the expansion of conflicts. An abstraction which is itself a territory, a new territory, newly covered with folds, various shadows, and possible alternatives. The power of desire made itself into the surface of a territory, and the transformation repeats itself indefinitely. This new territory is always productive, infinitely productive. It is for that reason that the world is a territory which is always to be territorialized, occupied, rebuilt, inhabited; a tension which only the intensity of a multiple creative action can satisfy. In this vision, the relation between machine and enunciation, between science and ontology, is a global one. Science is constitutive inasmuch it so as to construct it, it projects it by living it. Science constructs planes of ontological consistency each time that the set of the functions of enunciation becomes the object of a pragmatics, or again realizes itself in the event; in a determination. Subjectivity also presents itself at the surface, as a fold of the surface. But we know what is presupposed by the lightness of that strong event, the production of subjectivity: the machinic arrayment traversing the conflict, the enunciation of the project, the expression of desire, the realization of the infinite in the event." It is a new world which is described here. If every philosophy assumes and determines its own phenomenology, a new phenomenology is strongly asserted here. It is characterized by the process which brings the world back to production, production to subjectivity, subjectivity to the power of desire, the power of desire to the system of enunciation, enunciation to expression. And vice versa. It is inside the line drawn by the "vice versa", that is, going from subjective expression towards the surface of the world, towards historicity in act, that the meaning of the process is revealed (or, again, the only teleology which absolute immanence can allow itself): the meaning of the process is that of abstraction. The subject who produces the world, in the enlarged horizontality of his projections, increasingly fulfills his own achievement. At first glance, the horizon of the world constructed by Deleuze-Guattari seems to be an animistic one, but it soon appears that this animism translates the highest abstraction, the ceaseless process of machinic arrayments and subjectivities rising to an ever higher abstraction. In this world of caverns, of folds, ruptures and reconstructions, the human brain tries above all to understand its own transformation, its own displacement, beyond conflictuality, where the highest abstraction reigns. But this abstraction is again desire.

### III

*A Thousand Plateaus* lays out the terrain on which the materialism of the twenty-first century is redefined. What is Philosophy?<sup>16</sup>, the pedagogical essay published by Deleuze-Guattari in 1991, as an appendix to the *Thousand Plateaus*, enlightens us on this matter. This synergy of analyses on

science, philosophy and art which was tirelessly deployed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, with an exuberance worthy of the ontological matter that was treated, turns here into pedagogic illustration, into a popularization of the conceptual mechanisms which are at the basis of the process of exposition of *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this popularization essay, the methodological, theoretical and practical functions are circumscribed with the maximum of clarity. We think that it is possible to identify here (in *A Thousand Plateaus* seen through the pedagogical essay) the fundamental elements of the renewal of historical materialism, in function of the new dimensions of capitalistic development, namely this plane of maximum abstraction (the "real subsumption" of society in capital) to which it leads, and on which social struggles today are reformulated. This, without ever forgetting that in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of the sciences of spirit, just as in historical materialism, one finds the same ethical and political demand for the liberation of human power. Which, then, is the productive context in which we are moving and from which historical materialism can and must be renewed, as basis of the sciences of spirit?

*A Thousand Plateaus* gives an explicit answer to this query. Through the extent and the complexity of the analyses it develops, it sketches out the very plane that Marx tendentiously identified in the "Fragment on Machines" of the *Grundrisse*, which he defined as the society of "General Intellect".<sup>19</sup> It is a plane on which the interaction of man and machine, society and capital, has become so narrow that the exploitation of material, salaried, and temporally quantifiable labor becomes obsolete, incapable of determining a valorization, a miserable basis of exploitation in the face of the new social, intellectual and scientific forces upon which the production of wealth and the reproduction of society rest exclusively, henceforth. *A Thousand Plateaus* records the fulfillment of the tendency analyzed by Marx, and develops historical materialism within this new society. It therefore attempts the construction of that new subject which reveals the power of work, social as well as intellectual and scientific. A machine-subject, which is also an ethical subject; an intellectual subject, which is also a body; a desiring subject which is also productive force; a plural and disseminated subject which however unifies itself in the constitutive drive of new being. And vice versa, in all directions. What is fundamental here is the total dislocation of the valorization of production, in the passage from the sphere of direct material exploitation to that of political domination (over the social interaction between the development of collective subjectivity and the intellectual and scientific power of production). In that dislocation, social inter-activity itself is subjected to the molar contradiction of domination, it too is exploited; but the antagonism is brought to its highest level, it acts through a paradoxical implication of the exploited subject. Confronting the Foucauldian analyses of power,<sup>20</sup> Deleuze emphasizes the passage from "disciplinary society" to the "society of control", the fundamental characteristics of the contemporary State-form. Today, in that context, which is the one to which *A Thousand Plateaus* refers, domination, while remaining permanent, is as abstract as it is parasitical and empty. Brought to its highest degree, the antagonism has so to speak emptied itself, the "social commandment" has become useless. The control over productive society is thus a mystification from the start: it no longer even has the dignity that the function of organization took on, which in some sense was co-natural with the figure of the exploiter, in the disciplinary society and State-form. If such is the case, the productive labor of the new social subject is revolutionary from the start, always liberating and innovative. It is on this basis that historical materialism finds itself renewed, implicitly in the phenomenology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, explicitly in the methodology elaborated in *What is Philosophy?*

Before anything else, historical materialism as a science. The text tells us that scientific activity is formed by "partial observers" who assemble "functions" on "planes of reference". Can historical materialism be anything else than that which promotes the "proletarian point of view" and makes the critique of contradictions into the plane of reference? Anything else than the displacement of a partial subject within a tendency which materially translates a reading grid of the real? And in the paradigmatic case, capitalistic development as the global referent of the set of contradictions which



the movement of abstract labor determines? The plane of reference is again the world of real subsumption, of the complete submission of society to capital. Labor is the rhizome which produces the real, which is the passage from the molecular order to the molar order, in the course of development, which irresistibly passes through war and which in war defines liberation. The plane of reference is the Umwelt of social labor and its contradictions.

The place of philosophy is there-insofar as it is pragmatic, ethical, political. The "partial observer" of science here becomes the "conceptual character" of philosophy. Can this conceptual character be anything else than the new figure of the proletariat, the 'General Intellect' as subversion - that is, a new figure of the proletariat which is all the more reunited as social and intellectual power of production, because it is diffuse in space (a Spinozian "multitude" in the literal sense of the term)? The philosophy of Deleuze-Guattari mimics the new reality of the modern proletariat, and scans the figures of its necessary subversion. On one side, then, the conceptual character duplicates the real, makes it appear in its conflictual dynamism, and in the fulfillment of its tendentious movement. On the other side, presenting itself as desire, as unmasterable Utopian production, the proletarian conceptual character effects a ruthless and permanent rupture of all of the material references to which it is subjected. The "plane of immanence which philosophy constructs is a permanent insurrectional project, effected through an absolute overview of the real, by the radical untimeliness of the contact between molecular order and molar order, by the actual inactuality of resistance.

Art (for there is also an art of revolutionary thinking) collaborates in this dynamic of transformation and subversion of the concept, in an essential manner, by composing the different planes of the imaginary, and always referring them back to the urgency of praxis.

The didactic scheme of What is Philosophy? brings to light the phe-nomenologically constructed threads in the Dionysian Thousand-Plateaus, and in such a lavish manner! What I mean to say is that the equation of the two works is in no way an identification, as if the latter were only a chapter of the former. On the contrary, the issue here is to underscore their differences, which are all to the credit of A Thousand Plateaus. For the Thousand Plateaus (despite the functional reduction I have performed in my demonstration) do not only make up an extraordinarily rich phenomenology of the conceptual character of 'General Intellect'-half machine, half subject, entirely machine and entirely subject. They also constitute a revolutionary experiment. The years of desire and of the Erlebnisse of "changing life" that followed 1968 are gathered up there, through the reexposition of those extraordinary casuistics that only great revolutionary episodes can propose. It is said that there is no book which restates 1968: that is false! That book is A Thousand Plateaus, A Thousand Plateaus is the historical materialism in act of our epoch, it is the equivalent of Marx's Class Struggles, in Germany and France. If the text never ends, is never content with definitive conclusions, it is (just as in the equivalent Marxian thinking) because they unearth a new subject, whose formation mechanism is not yet completed, but who has already acquired consistency in the plurality of micro- and macro-experiments which have been accomplished, ethico-political experiments that in any case are significant. A Thousand Plateaus is the drive of a collective body, of a thousand singular bodies. The political as expressed here is that of the communism of the Spinozian "multitude", that of the devastating mobility of subjects on the recently constituted world market, it is that of the most radical democracy (of all subjects, including the insane), directed like a weapon against the State, the great organizer of the exploitation of workers, of the disciplinarization of the insane, of the control of the 'General Intellect'. A Thousand Plateaus explicitly refers to the diffuse and autonomous social struggles of women, youths, workers, homosexuals, marginals, immigrants ... within a perspective according to which all walls have already fallen. This richness of movement makes up the context in which the scientific point of view and the definitive construction of the concept are henceforth possible. For this concept is an event, and the system of concepts is the fracture of the geology of action through a genealogy of event-desire.

The conditions of the reconstruction (of the Geisteswissenschaften, within the perspective of a theory of expression and in the context of a historicity which is at once the very movement of being and the incidence point of the subject, are thus given. One example may suffice, for that issue: the treatment given to the history of philosophy in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?*, and the methodological hypotheses developed there. The historiographical continuity of the history of philosophy is dissolved here, as is its ontic teleology - philosophical historicity is thus treated as historicity tout court, understood as a singular confrontation between thinking and the actual problematic of being. History of philosophy itself can only be understood, can only be reconstructed as event, untimeliness, present 'unactuality'. Philosophy is always a Spinozian "scholium" of the deployment of the real. The scheme of the sciences of spirit will therefore always be horizontal, articulated on the event, interdisciplinary, stratified by the interrelations of its multiple elements. But where is the past, or that which it produced? In fact the rhizome of the present and of creativity is opposed to the machinic phylums, which are at once the result and the residue of the past. But the science of spirit is born where those machinic phylums are consumed in the determination of a new creation, of a new event. Material determinations, their accumulations, the opaque depth of the past constitute a dead whole which only living labor revives, and which the new machines of subjectivity reinvent. When that does not take place, the past is dead, it is even our prison. The *Thousand Plateaus* are the materialist theory of social labor, understood as the creative event of a thousand subjects opening themselves up to present reality, on the basis of a machinic conditioning which that same labor produced, and which only living and actual labor can once again valorize.

If vitalism thus revised, the theory of expression, and absolute immanentism are the basis of the reconstruction of the sciences of spirit, what prevents one from going astray into scepticism or some form of a weak reading of value, on this horizon? Nothing is further from *A Thousand Plateaus* than the temptation of absolutizing some element of the internal process, were it being itself, so as to avoid relativistic wandering. On the other hand, what allows the sciences of spirit to be reborn, and the logical and ethical power of materialism to be renewed, is the concept of surface, ontology open onto historicity, taken as present subjectivity. Let us look back for a moment: when Heidegger posits the inversion of the ontic into ontology, of historiography into historicity, as ineluctable, he at the same time makes this reversal, the logical rupture, the refusal of destiny, into the only meaning of the existent. The Heideggerian operation is tantamount to a blockage of life. It pushes the metaphysical procedure towards an arrival point, to an extreme. Heidegger is Job, who sees God and remains blinded. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, on the contrary, to see God, in Spinozist fashion, is to effect once again the methodological reversal of the ontic to the ontological, in a new perception of being - of open being -, not to reassert God, but to exclude him definitively, not to grasp an absolute, but to consider the construction of being omnino absoluta; from the work of the singularity at work in human labor. As they are rhizomatic and centred on the present, the sciences of man may be reconstructed: the sciences and therefore the planes of reference, philosophy and therefore the planes of consistency, the sciences of man and therefore the convergence of these approaches, approximations of the event, ethical charges passing through ontological machines, subjective arrangements which are more and more abstract. There is no other way to consider being than to be it, to make it.

Ten years later, one can still read *A Thousand Plateaus* as a perfectly operational phenomenology of the present; but one must especially see it as the first philosophy of the post-modern. A philosophy which, sinking its roots into the alternative, immanentistic, and materialist option of modernity, suggests the bases which would allow the sciences of spirit to be reconstructed. And because "Geist" is the brain, and the "brain" has become (as Marx foresaw, to the rhythm of the crisis of capitalistic, transcendentalist and idealist modernity) General Intellect, *A Thousand Plateaus* announces the renaissance of a historical materialism worthy of our epoch. The latter awaits the revolutionary event that will verify it.

## NOTES

1. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 1st division, § 77.
2. A. Negri, *Saggi sullo storicismo te.de.sco* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959), v. I, chaps. 1-3.
3. G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962); Eng. tr. H. Tomlinson, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
4. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On Redemption", cit. in K. Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1941), p. 310; Eng. tr. D. Green (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, orig. 1964).
5. R. Aron, *La philosophie critique de l'histoire*, 2nd ed. (Paris: PUF, 1950).
6. A. Negri, *Macchina tempo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1982), p. 70f.
7. ["Agencement" is rendered here by "arrayment" or "arrangement". The term is important in Deleuze and Guattari's work, particularly the latter's: see, e.g., *Cartographies schizoanalytiques* (Paris: Galilee, 1989) and *Chaosmose* (Paris: Galilee, 1992) - Tr.]
8. G. Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1987); Eng. tr. S. Hand (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1988)
9. P. Macherey, "Chroniques d'un dynosaure", *Futur Antérieur* no: 9 (Paris, 1992).
10. [The author renders *Geisteswissenschaften* literally as "sciences de l'esprit", and has expressed his preference for the broader English translation "sciences of spirit", rather than "sciences of mind". The ensuing connotations are part of the content of the essay. - Tr.]
11. G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Mills Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), pp. 190-191; Eng. tr. B. Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 153.
12. *Ibid.*, chapter 6.
13. *Ibid.*, chapters 1-2.
14. *Ibid.*, chapters 5, 9-10. V
15. ["Dispositif is rendered here by "apparatus". Cf. G. Deleuze, "Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif!", in F. Ewald, ed., *Michel Foucault philosophe* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), translated as "What is a dispositif?" by T.J. Armstrong in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher* (New York: Routledge, 1992). - Tr.]
16. *Ibid.*, chapter 12.
17. *Ibid.*, chapters 14-15.
18. G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce-que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit 1991)
19. K. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953); Eng.tr. M. Nicolaus, *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage, 1973), and A. Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx* (South Hadley,

Ma.: Bergin & Garvey, 1984; New York: Autonomedia, 1991)

20. G. Deleuze, Pourparlers (Paris: Minuit, 1990); Eng.tr., Interviews 1972-1990 (forthcoming from Columbia University Press), Postscript.

[http://www.korotonomedia.net/theoria/Negri\\_1000plateaus.html](http://www.korotonomedia.net/theoria/Negri_1000plateaus.html)

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Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-157.html>