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Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari and the Rhuthmoi of Being - part 5

- Recherches

- Le rythme dans les sciences et les arts contemporains

- Philosophie - Nouvel article

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Sommaire

Sign Without Signifier Nor Signifiance

The rest of the chapter was dedicated to the establishment of a theory of sign that would be consistent with the view on ontology, theory of evolution, and paleoanthropology presented previously, and which would prepare the two following chapters devoted to linguistics and semiotics. As a matter of fact, once "expression," "articulation," "stratification," and "territoriality" had been duly presented and elaborated, one could wonder if the whole thing would not finally amount to a mere semiotics. Deleuze and Guattari had to explain where they stood on the much discussed matter of the sign theory. Was a theory based on expression and territoriality reducible to semiotics? Their answer was to dismiss any hasty rapprochement. The all-encompassing semiotization of world, that was fashionable in the 1970s, was "dangerous" because "it reinforce[d] the imperialism of language." To illustrate the problem, they cited, without naming her, Julia Kristeva's concept of "chora" as a presignifying state.

> Under what circumstances may we speak of signs? Should we say they are everywhere on all the strata and that there is a sign whenever there is a form of expression? [...] Should we say that there are signs on all the strata, under the pretext that every stratum includes territorialities and movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization? This kind of expansive method is very dangerous, because it lays the ground-work for or reinforces the imperialism of language, if only by relying on its function as universal translator or interpreter. It is obvious that there is no system of signs common to all strata, not even in the form of a semiotic "chora" theoretically prior to symbolization. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 64-65)

Against the numerous supporters of semiotics, who like Peirce, as a matter of fact, but mostly on Saussurian bases did not hesitate to generalize the notion of sign, Deleuze and Guattari contended that semiotics was legitimate only for human language, because in this case there was "not only a real but also a categorical" difference between "forms of expression and forms of content." In the organic as well as in the physical strata, this categorical difference was lacking and there were no real "signs." In this instance, they fully agreed with Benveniste and Meschonnic, without naming them though (for Benveniste see "Sémiologie de la langue" (1969), 1974, chap. 3 and Vol. 4 - for Meschonnic, see Vol. 6).

It would appear that we may accurately speak of signs only when there is a distinction between forms of expression and forms of content that is not only real but also categorical. Under these conditions, there is a semiotic system on the corresponding stratum because the abstract machine has precisely that fully erect posture that permits it to "write," in other words, to treat language and extract a *regime* of signs from it. But before it reaches that point, in so-called natural codings, the abstract machine remains enveloped in the strata: It does not write in any way and has no margin of latitude allowing it to recognize something as a sign (except in the strictly territorial sense of animal signs). [...] It therefore seems reasonable to reserve the word "sign" in the strict sense for the last group of strata. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 65, same idea p. 67)

The vagueness of the common semiotic concept of sign hid not only an "imperialism of language affecting all of the strata," but more specifically an "imperialism of the signifier affecting language itself" and consequently "all regimes of signs" (p. 65). Ultimately, the hidden unifying and totalizing force behind semiotics was not "the sign" but what Deleuze and Guattari called "the signifier," that is, an entity endowed with the capacity to signify or to bear "signifiance." This time, the target seemed to be Benveniste, who was famous for having recently introduced this concept borrowed from the medieval French *"senefiance,"* or maybe, as the following passage could indicate, Meschonnic, who had traded the notion of sign for a primacy of the signifier and the signifiance, however both rejected any generalized semiotics. Therefore, I think that this argument in fact mainly concerned *Tel Quel* contributors as Barthes, Sollers or Kristeva, Lacan himself and some psychoanalysts developing Lacanian theory based on the signifier, harshly accused "to spread the same canker."

> The question here is not whether there are signs on every stratum but whether all signs are signifiers, whether all signs are endowed with signifiance, whether the semiotic of signs is necessarily linked to a semiology of the signifier. Those who take this route may even be led to forgo the notion of the sign, for the primacy of the signifier over language guarantees the primacy of language over all of the strata even more effectively than the simple expansion of the sign in all directions. [...] But [one is] still going in the same circle, [one is] still spreading the same canker *[on propage la même gangrène].* (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 65, my mod.)

By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari sustained that it was possible to develop a semiotics or a theory of signs freed from the concepts of signifier and signifiance. To make their point clearer, they gave as an example Foucault's analysis of the "prison-form" in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Prison was a "form of content," that is, an institution forming the human bodies, related to "other forms of content" (school, barracks, hospital, factory). But this form did not refer back simply to the word prison but "to entirely different words and concepts, such as 'delinquent' and 'delinquency,' which express[ed] a new way of classifying, stating, translating, and even committing criminal acts." Moreover, it was associated with "a set of statements *[énoncés]* arising in the social field." These other words and statements constituted "a regime of signs." In short, the prison was not a term that referred to a single thing or idea, but a "discursive multiplicity" that intersected with a "nondiscursive multiplicity," a "set of statements" with a "complex state of things," or in Foucault's words, a "discourse" with a "formation of power" (p. 66).

> The form of expression is reducible not to words but to a set of statements *[un ensemble d'énoncés]* arising in the social field considered as a stratum (that is what a regime of signs is). The form of content is reducible not to a thing but to a complex state of things *[un état de choses complexe]* as a formation of power (architecture, regimentation, etc.). We could say that there are two constantly intersecting multiplicities, "discursive multiplicities" of expression and "nondiscursive multiplicities" of content. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 66-67)

In others words, Deleuze and Guattari endorsed Foucault's dismissal, exposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), both of the traditional philosophical theory of sign as representation of thing or idea a dismissal which was, as we shall see, also shared by Meschonnic and of the more recent theory based on a common but actually quite misleading interpretation of Saussure as a unit merely composed of a signifier and a signified. To oppose both forms of dualism, Foucault had indeed introduced the concept of irreproducible "statement" that only stated one particular state of affair.

It may be objected that there is nothing enigmatic about this relation [of a series of signs in a statement]; that, on the contrary, it is a very familiar one, which is constantly being analysed: that, in fact, it concerns the relation of the signifier (*signifiant*) to the signified (*signifié*), of the name to what it designates; the relation of the sentence to its meaning; the relation of the proposition to its referent (*référent*). But I believe that one can show that the relation of the statement to what it states is not superposable on any of these relations. The statement, even if reduced to a nominal syntagma ("the boat !"), even if it is reduced to a proper noun ("Peter!"), does not have the same relation with what it states as the name with what it designates or signifies. The name or noun is a linguistic element that may occupy different places in grammatical groups: its meaning is defined by its rules of use (whether these concern individuals who may be validly designated by it, or syntactical structures in which it may correctly participate); a noun is defined by its possibility of recurrence. A statement exists outside any possibility of reappearing; and the relation that it possesses with what it states is not identical with a group of rules of use. It is a very special relation: and if in these conditions an identical formulation reappears, with the same words, substantially the same names in fact, exactly the same sentence it is not necessarily the same statement. (M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, 1972, p. 89)

He had also introduced the concept of "discursive formation" which was defined as an organized "system of dispersion of statements."

> Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation* thus avoiding words that are already overladen with conditions and consequences, and in any case inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as "science," "ideology," "theory," or "domain of objectivity." (M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, 1972, p. 38)

However, Deleuze and Guattari elaborated further Foucault's contribution. They called "regime of signs" what Foucault had called "discursive formation" and they analyzed in detail its relationship with "formation of power." "Statements" and "state of things," or "discourse formation" and "power formation" in Foucault's terms, were not associated "as a signifier with a signified."

First, by contrast with the sign, the two were irreducibly multiple, composed of diverse elements. Second, they were constantly exchanging their functions: the "expressions," the "statements" could induce new "states of things" for instance "not only a new way of evaluating crimes but a new way of committing them." Similarly, the prison as a "form of content" produced new "statements" that "did not coincide with the statements of delinquency" (p. 67). Third, they were interwoven with each other by a "double-pincered concrete assemblage" that "at most" implied, in the background, a "shared state of the abstract Machine" acting as a "kind of diagram" on both of them.

> Form of content and form of expression, prison and delinquency: each has its own history, microhistory, segments. At most, along with other contents and expressions, they imply a shared state of the abstract Machine acting not at all as a signifier but as a kind of diagram (a single abstract machine for the prison and the school and the barracks and the hospital and the factory...). Fitting the two types of forms together, segments of content and segments of expression, requires a whole double-pincered, or rather double-headed, concrete assemblage taking their real distinction into account. It requires a whole organization articulating formations of power and regimes of signs, and operating on the molecular level (societies characterized by what Foucault calls disciplinary power). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 67)

Thus, whereas Foucault presented a still static alternative to the semiotic dualisms, substituting the pairs word and thing (or idea), or signifier and signified, with large and immobile "discursive layers" *[nappes discursives]*, they introduced, based on their previous ontological elaboration, the idea of an expressive dynamics interweaving "statements" and "states of affairs."

> In short, we should never oppose words to things that supposedly correspond to them, nor signifiers to signifieds that are supposedly in conformity with them. What should be opposed are distinct formalizations, in a state of unstable equilibrium or reciprocal presupposition. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 67)

Naturally, this called into question the preservation of the term "sign." Why indeed, Deleuze and Guattari asked themselves, "retain the word *sign* for these regimes" and one could add: when most avant-garde thinkers of the time wanted to get rid of it? Their answer was, first, that signs "formalized expression" in a different way than designation or signification of the contents; second, that signs were "defined by regimes of statements"; third and that was the main difference with Foucault that signs were above all "signs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization," or marks of "certain threshold in the course of these movements." Signs should not be defined any longer as vectors of meaning but as sheer pragmatic markers.

> Then why retain the word *sign* for these regimes, which formalize an expression without designating or signifying the simultaneous contents, which are formalized in a different way? Signs are not signs of a thing; they are signs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, they mark a certain threshold crossed in the course of these movements, and it is for this reason that the word should be retained (as we have seen, this applies even to animal "signs"). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 67-68)

Sign Without Socioeconomic Base

Then, as Foucault (see above, quote taken from p. 38), Deleuze and Guattari emphasized that what they called "regime of signs" could not be equated with the Marxist concept of "ideology," which implied another kind of dualism: the dualism between base and superstructure. Instead of the predominant influence of the former (forces and relations of production) upon the latter (culture, institutions, political power structures, roles, rituals, and state) presupposed by most Marxists, they emphasized their interwoven nature. Base and superstructure actually depended upon a common abstract machine "from which the two forms derive[d]" as well as upon specific "machinic assemblages" that regulated their relations.

> Form of content and form of expression involve two parallel formalizations in presupposition: it is obvious that their segments constantly intertwine, embed themselves in one another; but this is accomplished by the abstract machine from which the two forms derive, and by machinic assemblages that regulate their relations. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 68)

Marxism was wrong in every respect. It could not account for the specificity of language, which was much more than a simple means of "information," nor for the true nature of the regimes of signs, which directly "express[ed] organizations of power or assemblages," nor for the nature of the organizations of power, which were "in no way located within a State apparatus but rather [were] everywhere," nor for the nature of the "content" which was not economic "in the last instance."

 Thus one misconstrues the nature of language, which exists only in heterogeneous regimes of signs, and rather than circulating information distributes contradictory orders. It misconstrues the nature of regimes of signs, which express organizations of power or assemblages and have nothing to do with ideology as the supposed expression of a content (ideology is a most execrable concept obscuring all of the effectively operating social machines). It misconstrues the nature of organizations of power, which are in no way located within a State apparatus but rather are everywhere, effecting formalizations of content and expression, the segments of which they intertwine. Finally, it misconstrues the nature of content, which is in no way economic "in the last instance," since there are as many directly economic signs or expressions as there are noneconomic contents. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 68-69)

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari mocked all Freudo-Marxist attempts, which had been developed since the 1930s and especially in the 1960s, at bridging the divide between base and infrastucture, as well as between individual and society, only "by throwing some signifier into the base, or vice versa, or a bit of phallus or castration into political economy, or a bit of economics or politics into psychoanalysis" (p. 69). It was simply impossible to overcome dualism if it was implied from the outset by the opposition between base and superstructure, as well as between psychoanalysis and political economy. Philosophy had to overcome those divides.

Immanence as *Rhuthmic* Strategy

Against any form of dualism, be it Marxist, Freudo-Marxist, psychoanalytic, or linguistic, Deleuze and Guattari advocated a fully immanent strategy that clearly participated in the *rhuthmic* movement of the 1970s and 1980s, whose development we have been following from the beginning of this book. In this instance, we call "strategy" a manner of doing theory within a competitive theoretical field.

 The being was not composed of, nor represented by, a flow of simple semiotic elements associating a basement (the signifier) and a superstructure (the signified), but neither was it organized according to, nor represented by two all-encompassing and superposed layers (the economic and social base, and the institutional and ideological superstructure). These two perspectives seemed opposed by their respective atomistic and holistic viewpoints, but they actually shared a common vertical concern for discovering, *under* the phenomena (whether the meaning or the institutional and ideological systems), what they thought was the real, fundamental, unconscious basis of reality (the signifier or the economic and social base). This common concern explained why attempts at mixing both views had been so popular in the 20th century.

 Deleuze and Guattari opposed this hidden return of an interest in transcendence through a radical affirmation of immanence. The being was to be conceived of, and participated in, as a flow of atoms that had been stratifying since the beginning of the universe into a complex system of strata and layers, whose relations were never bi-univocal and only vertical but multivocal and going in all directions. Although Marxists, Freudo-Marxists, psychoanalysts, or linguists pretended having developed purely materialist thoughts, they were still in fact deeply attached to metaphysical ways of thinking. By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari wanted to overcome their limitations and sketch a radical materialism that would implement, on new scientific bases, both the pantheistic Spinozist philosophy of nature and the Nietzschean reversal of Platonism.

 However, achieving this goal required a last ditch effort. We remember that, at the beginning of this chapter, they insisted on the fact that the process of "stratification" contained an opposite tendency towards "destratification." Coding and territorialization, by which stratification and distribution occurred, were never free of some reverse decoding and deterritorialization processes. In other words, the passage from the virtual to the actual was never complete, while the passage from the actual to the virtual was never absolute either. Every existing concrete system appeared as a "machinic assemblage" of "intensive processes" that had to deal, on one side, with the actual strata and layers within which it had appeared and, on the other side, with the virtual "plane of consistency" or "body without organs" to which it remained nonetheless connected. Therefore their existence was seemingly caught in a constant dynamic cycle transforming the "Earth" or the "body without organ" or the "plane of consistency" into "strata," and, reversely, the actual "strata" into "Earth," "body without organ" or "plane of consistency."

 But, as Nietzsche in the twin essays *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), Deleuze and Guattari realized that this kind of cyclical response to dualism was maybe not sufficient to impede any return of it, although it had had numerous and glorious expressions in the past (see Michon, 2018b, Chap. 9). Wasn't the couple strata/plane of consistency just another name for the couple Apollonian/Dionysian or even the couple yin/yang? How could one avoid the eternal and metaphysical rolling of two opposite but equal

principles?

 This is why Deleuze and Guattari elaborated further at the end of the chapter the couple strata/plane of consistency to prove that it did not imply any hidden dualism. They emphasized that the strata with their territorialities distribution were constantly "animated" and reshuffled by movements of deterritorialization endowed with different speeds. This meant that "absolute deterritorialization" was present at least virtually "from the beginning" and that the strata were only "spin-offs, thickenings" on the plane of consistency that was "everywhere, always primary and always immanent." In short, the couple strata/plane of consistency was not symmetrical but based on a hierarchy implying a primacy of the second principle over the first, while the first remained the indispensable place of expression of the second.

> What it comes down to is that we cannot content ourselves with a dualism or summary opposition between the strata and the destratified plane of consistency. The strata themselves are animated and defined by relative speeds of deterritorialization; moreover, absolute deterritorialization is there from the beginning, and the strata are spin-offs, thickenings on a plane of consistency that is everywhere, always primary and always immanent. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 70)

Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari added a new figure to this scheme under the name of "the abstract Machine" that summarized the machinic nature of nature. This machinic principle was both "developed on the destratified plane," in other words virtually present everywhere in nature, and "enveloped in each stratum," that is, actually existing under specific forms in each stratum, for instance a "half-erected" posture in the third one. Consequently, the couple strata/plane of consistency was not only ontologically asymmetrical but the interaction between its two poles was also regulated by the scheme of the expression and its intrication of envelopment and development.

> In addition, the plane of consistency is occupied, drawn by the abstract Machine; the abstract Machine exists *simultaneously* developed on the destratified plane it draws, and enveloped in each stratum whose unity of composition it defines, and even half-erected in certain strata whose form of prehension it defines. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 70)

The action of "the plane of consistency or the abstract machine" they assimilated the two now was relentlessly "*constructing,*" from beneath, *"continuums of intensity"* between distinct forms and substances in the strata, *"emitting and combining particles-signs"* that penetrated and energized expressions and signs, and *"performing conjunctions of flows of deterritorialization,"* allowing thereby radical transformations of the individual distribution in the stratum.

> But beneath the forms and substances of the strata, the plane of consistency (or the abstract machine) *constructs continuums of intensity:* it creates continuity for intensities that it extracts from distinct forms and substances. Beneath contents and expressions, the plane of consistency (or the abstract machine) *emits and combines particles-signs* that set the most asignifying of signs to functioning in the most deterritorialized of particles. Beneath relative movements the plane of consistency (or the abstract machine) *performs conjunctions of flows of deterritorialization* that transform the respective indexes into absolute values. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 70)

These three actions came from the plane of consistency through the abstract machine and accounted for the movement of destratification that constantly opposed that of stratification.

> Continuum of intensities, combined emission of particles or signs-particles, conjunction of deterritorialized flows: these are the three factors proper to the plane of consistency; they are brought about by the abstract machine and are constitutive of destratification. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 70)

Naturally, "the abstract machine should not be confused with the "concrete machinic assemblages." The abstract machine developed upon the plane of consistency, or remained enveloped in a specific stratum "whose unity of composition and force of attraction or prehension it define[d]" (p. 71). There was one general form of abstract machine that remained virtual and was present everywhere in the cosmos and three main actualized forms, within the physical, the organic, and the social strata. By contrast, machinic assemblages performed "the coadaptations of content and expression" and guided "the division of the stratum into epistrata and parastrata." They were the supports of the actual individuals, be they physical, organic, or sociological. However, there was a straight relationship between the general abstract machine and the specific machinic assemblages which "in every respect, *effectuate[d]*" the former "insofar as it [was] developed on the plane of consistency or enveloped in a stratum" (p. 71). Together they formed the "mechanosphere" which was also called "rhizosphere" (p. 74), since they followed the rhizomatic form of development that had been presented in the first chapter.

> What we call the mechanosphere is the set of all abstract machines and machinic assemblages outside the strata, on the strata, or between strata. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 71)

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Chapter 3 was the second step in the building of a very large *rhuthmic* philosophy. After the theory of thought flow presented in Chapter 1 under the name of rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari introduced the main lines of a new *rhuthmic* cosmo-ontology.

1. First, they described three aspects of the being:

1.1. the universal presence of a virtual and self-disappearing foundation of all that existed, an evanescent principle that they variously called the "Earth," "the body without organ," or "the plane of consistency";

1.2. the still ongoing performance of a stratification process by which the world, as it actually was, had been organized according a few main strata;

1.3. caught in between, the existing concrete systems, the ever flowing machinic assemblages that performed, within each stratum, the ever incomplete passage from the virtual to the actual and vice versa.

2. Each stratum or domain generated by the stratification process, be it physical, organic, or social and semiotic, involved a "double articulation" comprising "matters" and "structures": for instance, atoms and molecules, cells and organisms, or human bodies and societies. To account for the passage from "matters" to "structures," Deleuze and

Guattari introduced the concepts of "expression" and "content," freely adapted from Spinoza and Leibniz but which retained from them an important characteristic. Instead of simply translating a content from the inside to the outside, expression implied intricate movements such as enveloping/developing, implicating/explicating, concealing/manifesting. Consequently, the so-called "structures" or even "systems" did not exist independently by themselves but were both "expressions," in the sense of "what had been expressed," developed, explicated, or manifested, through previous processes, and "expressions," in the sense of what was enveloped, implicated, or concealed and "expressing itself," through current processes. This was a second powerful way to introduce the becoming into the being.

 3. Based on this virtual/tensive/actual ontological trilogy, as well as the previous expression/double-articulation/stratification cosmological trilogy, Deleuze and Guattari fiercely opposed the cosmo-ontological views, such as Teilhard de Chardin's, which conceived of the world as the result of a linear, cumulative and progressive history.

 3.1 While Morin opposed it by emphasizing the tremendously expensive cost of the emergence of order and organization, the "destruction and dispersion," the "fruitless expenses" and "useless agitations" which it was based on, he still conserved a historical approach to it. Deleuze and Guattari took a more radical path. They substituted it with a non-historical narrative, a view apparently inspired by the calm and almost immobile spirit of geology but which was in fact entirely dynamic and *rhuthmic* whence the title of the chapter: "La géologie de la morale - The Geology of Morals" which was also a play on words and a wink to Nietzsche's *La généalogie de la morale - On the Genealogy of Morality*, that was unfortunately partly erased by the translation into English.

 3.2 Like for Nietzsche, Man and his morality were not to be understood as the final stage of a progressive development, not even as the last emergence in a random history. By contrast, they were to be referred to a superposition of intermingling strata constituted and reproduced through differentiated "expressions" of the same basic universal virtual plane, which then clearly appeared to be an analogue of the Nietzschean foundational principle of "will to power." Physical, organic, and social domains were not integrated into one another like ever more refined Japanese boxes, but only superposed upon each other as geological layers, supported and intermingled by the same evanescent dynamic foundation, and endowed with the same level of complexity from base to top.

 3.3 The consequence of this *rhuthmic* cosmo-ontology was inevitable. As any other strata, the third stratum was entirely "machinic," and the "machines" it was dominated by were "a technical social machine" that imparted its "formations of power" to the populations of human bodies, and "a semiotic collective machine" that had the power to "overcode" all other strata. As a result, the traditional or modern concepts of "man," as center of the Creation or final outcome of a progressive History, were only "illusions" produced by these two machines.

 4. The fourth significant rhythmological contribution of Chapter 3 was a sophisticated theory of individuation.

 4.1 As Morin, and in the same materialist spirit, Deleuze and Guattari presented existing individuals as "machines." But the concept of machine was built in a slightly different way. First, Morin used it in a more extensive manner including living just as physical and cosmological individuals. Second, for Morin, machines were endowed with a self that accompanied their persistence and reproduction through time. For living beings, this self resulted from and guided both homeostasis and reproduction processes.

 4.2 On their part, Deleuze and Guattari used the concept primarily for living beings, including humans, although they also seemed, at times, to refer to a broader meaning. Second, since machines were for them mostly "machinic assemblages" associating heterogeneous matters, they did not entail any self, and as a matter of fact, it was no accident that they never mentioned the concept of "homeostasis." Finally, they added to the concept of machine a concern for its sphere of existence, which they called their "territorialities," a concern that was clearly lacking in

Morin's analysis. This elimination of "self" and its substitution by "territoriality" was perhaps the most significant difference with Morin's concept of individuation. The comparison between the two perspectives shed some light on the concept of "territoriality" which clearly appears as a way to account for a principle of individuation which would not be a consistent and persistent "self" but which would have, by contrast, the fleeting limits of an actual sphere of existence.

5. The last important rhythmological contribution of Chapter 3 concerned the theory of sign.

5.1 We saw that Morin's analysis concerning sign and language was probably the weakest part of his contribution, although he also had some good hunches. Contrarily to Serres, he rightly criticized cybernetics and communication theory for not having recognize that information was an *activity* that was always *strategically actualized* according to the pragmatic situation, and, as a result, was not only a transfer of data but was *creative*, that is, *expanding and complexifying* the sphere of existence of the living. On the same basis, he also explicitly criticized the concept of sign for not taking into account the genuine *genetic* power that made information fundamentally different from a mere designative tool, nor its *mnesic* power that not only preserved but also "translated, reproduced, *re-presented*" the past and opened, by so doing, new paths for human's life.

5.2 But, at the same time, Morin's evolutionary theory of information met some significant limitations. His intuitions pointing towards the linguistic and poetic *rhuthmic* paradigm were not fully elaborated and lacked theoretical bases. He wrongly thought that "information" could become the master-concept that could bridge *physis*, life, and the socio-anthropological sphere, a mistake that drove him into reducing the linguistic, poetic, and artistic spheres to a "noological sphere." As in the most traditional Idealist theories, art, poetry, and discourse were, according to him, primarily dealing with ideas. Finally, Morin dissolved *language pragmatic* into a much larger *ontological pragmatism*. Language was considered only secondary to energy, force, and action. However, he was not the only one to support this kind of questionable claim, as we saw with Serres and will see with Deleuze and Guattari.

5.3 As for Deleuze and Guattari, their position concerning language and sign was more elaborate, although not completely convincing either. First, they joined with Meschonnic in his radical critique of the "dualism of the sign" which they considered the basis of most dualistic conceptions. Like Benveniste and Meschonnic, they also rightly criticized the abusive extension of the notion of sign by mainstream semiotics from human language to any other domain. To account for the formation of the "third stratum," that is the social, linguistic and human domain, they convincingly borrowed from Leroi-Gourhan's description of the joined development of technology and language induced by the successive transformations of the protohuman and human body. They even recognized, this time by contrast with Leroi-Gourhan who limited his view to concepts and syntax, language as an articulated "vocal substance" which "brought into play various organic elements: not only the larynx, but the mouth and lips, and the overall motricity of the face." Moreover, language relied on a temporal succession that required a synthesis power and a pragmatic cycle relating emitter and receiver through comprehension. Last but not least, language allowed "translation" from "all the other strata" into its own; in Benveniste's words, whom they strangely dismissed, it was the "interpreter of all other systems of signs." All this was in tune with the latest pragmatic and poetic theory of language and literature. It was a powerful push towards the *rhuthmic* linguistic and poetic paradigm coming from the physical *rhuthmic* paradigm.

5.4 However, this movement was simultaneously hindered by strong impediments. They contradictorily maintained the notions of "sign" and "semiotics" which became quite confusing since they seemed to refer to the mainstream notions while they denoted new and quite obscure, as a matter of fact, meanings. They extended again the notion of sign to animals, as for wolves. Concerning Leroi-Gourhan's paleoanthropology, they not only fell short of taking into account the formal similarity between the "syntax of language" and the "syntax of the operative chains" needed in tool fabrication, but also of noticing the massive and decisive use of the concept of rhythm by Leroi-Gourhan in his book. Concerning Benveniste and Meschonnic's theory of language and literature, they entirely missed their ground-breaking contributions to a theory of subjectivity. Benveniste was mocked as a naive semiotician, imbued with

an outdated imperialist view of linguistics, telling banalities. And Meschonnic was absent altogether, although he was teaching at the same university as Deleuze. As a matter of fact, instead of the traditional dualist concept of sign, they advocated, based on Foucault's theory of discourse, to carry out detailed studies of the complex intertwinings of "regimes of signs" or "system of statements" ("discursive formation" in Foucault's terminology) with "power formations." This approach allowed them to avoid any kind of simplistic semiotic dualism, such as word/thing or signifier/signified. But since it required to observe the "discourse" only as a "heterogeneous assemblage" of "statements" and "power formations," it bracketed enunciation and any development of subjectivity in language even if, as Benveniste or Meschonnic argued, this subjectivity had nothing to do with the traditional concepts of ego or self. Although it did not match Deleuze and Guattari's own metaphysics of expression, they strangely joined Foucault in what he himself called his "happy positivism" and proposed, at least in this chapter, an entirely objectified view of language. Finally, they joined Serres and Morin in the affirmation of an ontological pragmatism which gave primacy to energy, force, and action, and considered language as secondary.