Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari and the *Rhuthmoi* of War – Part 4

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[Previous chapter](#)

War Machine and War

The end of the chapter was devoted to the complex relationship between war machine and war throughout history.

Deleuze and Guattari first contrasted, in a traditional way, war waged by regular army and guerrilla operations. The war machine was naturally on the side of the second (p. 416).

Second, in a more original way and quite paradoxically, they separated the war machine from war itself. The war machine has been invented, they noted, by the nomad to occupy a smooth space, move within it, and compose fuzzy aggregates. This was "its sole and veritable positive object *(nomos)*" (p. 417). Nomad war machine would actually turn to war only because of its collision with "States and cities" which would oppose "its positive object."

> If war necessarily results, it is because the war machine collides with States and cities, as forces (of striation) opposing its positive object: from then on, the war machine has as its enemy the State, the city, the state and urban phenomenon, and adopts as its objective their annihilation. It is at this point that the war machine becomes war: annihilate the forces of the State, destroy the State-form. The Attila, or Genghis Khan, adventure clearly illustrates this progression from the positive object to the negative object. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 417)

Therefore, war was actually only a contingent "supplement" to the nomad war machine. It was not intrinsic to it.

> Speaking like Aristotle, we would say that war is neither the condition nor the object of the war machine, but necessarily accompanies or completes it; speaking like Derrida, we would say that war is the "supplement" of the war machine. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 417)

In this sense, the nomad war machine embodied "a pure Idea" of "absolute, unconditioned war" but, empirically, "[did] not have war as its object." It was dragged into waging war only by the

aggression of the State.

> The pure Idea is not that of the abstract elimination of the adversary but that of a war machine *that does not have war as its object* and that only entertains a potential or supplementary synthetic relation with war. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 417)

By contrast, contrary to popular belief, the State was not originally interested in waging war. This is why, Deleuze and Guattari noted—quite inconsistently, one must recognize, since war machines were supposed to be originally war-free—many archaic states, based chiefly on administrative agencies, police force and prisons, seem to have disappeared due to the lack of proper military force and the intervention of exterior war machines.

> War is not the object of States, quite the contrary. The most archaic States do not even seem to have had a war machine, and their domination, as we will see, was based on other agencies (comprising, rather, the police and prisons). It is safe to assume that the intervention of an extrinsic or nomad war machine that counterattacked and destroyed the archaic but powerful States was one of the mysterious reasons for their sudden annihilation. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 417-418)

However, states have rapidly appropriated nomad war machines for their own benefit as, sometimes, for their own detriment.

> But the State learns fast. One of the biggest questions from the point of view of universal history is: How will the State *appropriate* the war machine, that is, constitute one for itself, in conformity with its size, its domination, and its aims? And with what risks? (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 418)

Once the nomad war machine transformed into a regular army, the State could "lay hold of war and thus turn the war machine back against the nomads." This has been the case of Genghis Khan (1158-1227) who succeeded, thanks to this reversal, in founding a huge Empire over Central Asia and portion of China. But such appropriation was not without risks either for the State itself. The case of Tamerlane (1336-1405) shows, just a century after, that such kind of State may become an "apparatus all the heavier and more unproductive since it exist[s] only as the empty form of appropriation of that machine" (p. 418). Warriors may form a separate cast undermining the power of the ruler. Territorialization of war machine, granting of land to warriors, fiscal regimes imposed on the rest of the population to pay for the construction of fortresses, fortified cities, strategic communication, logistical structure, industrial infrastructure, etc., all of these may limit the power of the State itself (p. 419).

In other words, there has been a crisscross transformation. While the nomad war machine which embodied the pure Idea of war had war only as an empirical supplement, the State which was not originally interested in war had appropriated the nomad war machine and turned war into an

intrinsic element of its power.

These interlaced dynamics accounted partly for both the modern politicization of the use by the State of military power, noted by Clausewitz (p. 419), and the transformation of war into "total war."

> It is at the same time that the State apparatus *appropriates* the war machine, subordinates it to its "political" *aims,* and gives it war as its direct *object.* And it is one and the same historical tendency that causes State to evolve from a triple point of view: going from figures of encastment to forms of appropriation proper, going from limited war to so-called total war, and transforming the relation between aim and object. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, pp. 420-421)

However, the development of capitalism should also be taken into account to explain this transformation of military force and of war itself.

> The factors that make State war total war are closely connected to capitalism: it has to do with the investment of constant capital in equipment, industry, and the war economy, and the investment of variable capital in the population in its physical and mental aspects (both as warmaker and as victim of war). (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 421)

As a matter of fact, total war, which meant the attempt to annihilate "the entire population and its economy," could only occur through the accumulation allowed by the development of capitalism.

> Total war is not only a war of annihilation but arises when annihilation takes as its "center" not only the enemy army, or the enemy State, but the entire population and its economy. The fact that this double investment can be made only under prior conditions of limited war illustrates the irresistible character of the capitalist tendency to develop total war. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 421)

> As John Ulric Nef shows, it was during the great period of "limited war" (1640-1740) that the phenomena of concentration, accumulation, and investment emerged—the same phenomena that were later to determine "total war." (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, n.109, p. 564)

In the 20th century, due to these new historical conditions, there has been a dramatic change in the relation between State, war machine and war. While the aim has remained "essentially political," i.e. under State supervision, the object itself "has become unlimited." This has resulted in giving more independence to the militarized war machines which have tended to take the upper hand over the States.

> It is also true that when total war becomes the object of the appropriated war machine, then at this level in the set of all possible conditions, the object and the aim enter into new relations that can reach the point of contradiction. [...] the aim remains essentially political and determined as such by the State, but the object itself has become unlimited. We could say that the appropriation has changed direction, or rather that States tend to unleash, reconstitute, an immense war machine of which they are no longer anything more than the opposable or apposed parts. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 421)

Fascism has been a terrible expression of this mix of political aims determined by the State and total war allowed by capitalist accumulation but waged by a war machine that has become largely independent. However, the second half of the 20th century has witnessed the emergence of nuclear forces which, in turn, have extended the power of militarized war machines throughout the earth.

> This worldwide war machine, which in a way "reissues" from the States, displays two successive figures: first, that of fascism, which makes war an unlimited movement with no other aim than itself; but fascism is only a rough sketch, and the second, postfascist, figure is that of a war machine that takes peace as its object directly, as the peace of Terror or Survival. The war machine reforms a smooth space that now claims to control, to surround the entire earth. Total war itself is surpassed, toward a form of peace more terrifying still. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 421)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, States have thus been transformed over the last decades into "objects or means" adapted to the nuclear war machine and the military has tended to "assume increasingly wider political functions."

> The war machine has taken charge of the aim, worldwide order, and the States are now no more than objects or means adapted to that machine. [...] the States, having appropriated a war machine, and having adapted it to their aims, reimpart a war machine that takes charge of the aim, appropriates the States, and assumes increasingly wider political functions. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 421)

Since this new form of State was not much better than the previous fascist State—although, we must say, it allowed at least some intellectuals, students and even workers to denounce it—Deleuze and Guattari found the "present situation highly discouraging." But, true to their vitalist belief, they noted that the formation of a new smooth space controlled by the new global war machines, had also opened "unexpected possibilities for counterattack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines."

> Doubtless, the present situation is highly discouraging. We have watched the war machine grow stronger and stronger, as in a science fiction story [...] Yet the very conditions that make the State or World war machine possible, in other words, constant capital (resources and equipment) and human variable capital, continually recreate unexpected possibilities for counterattack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines. (*A

> *Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 422)

As a matter of fact, generally speaking, war machines could be now of two kinds. Some, appropriated by States, take war as object and global destruction as objective. Some others, free from State involvement and based on "infinitely lower "quantities'," take "the drawing of creative lines of flight" as their object and aim to compose "a smooth space and the movement of people in that space."

> We have tried to define two poles of the war machine: *at one pole,* it takes war for its object and forms a line of destruction prolongable to the limits of the universe. [...] *The other pole* seemed to be the essence; it is when the war machine, with infinitely lower "quantities," has as its object not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space. At this other pole, the machine does indeed encounter war, but as its supplementary or synthetic object, now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 422)

As a way of conclusion, Deleuze and Guattari noted that Ancient nomads had no privilege. They were only the historical inventors of the war machine and had been, "from the beginning," plagued by a tendency to come to terms with the State. They just happened to have embodied for the first time "the pure Idea" of war machine which therefore remained available for any "'ideological,' scientific, or artistic movement" which would draw "a plane of consistency, a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement" or for any "guerrilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary and popular war" which would wage war with the sole aim to create "new nonorganic social relations."

> We thought it possible to assign the invention of the war machine to the nomads. This was done only in the historical interest of demonstrating that the war machine as such was invented, even if it displayed from the beginning all of the ambiguity that caused it to enter into composition with the other pole, and swing toward it from the start. However, in conformity with the essence, the nomads do not hold the secret: an "ideological," scientific, or artistic movement can be a potential war machine, to the precise extent to which it draws, in relation to *a phylum,* a plane of consistency, a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement. It is not the nomad who defines this constellation of characteristics; it is this constellation that defines the nomad, and at the same time the essence of the war machine. If guerrilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary and popular war are in conformity with the essence, it is because they take war as an object all the more necessary for being merely "supplementary": *they can make war only on the condition that they simultaneously create something else,* if only new nonorganic social relations. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980, trans. B. Massumi, 1987, p. 422)

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The "Treatise on Nomadology" presented in Chapter 12 was an extraordinary piece of philosophy

which provided a *rhuthmic* theory of agency extending the *rhuthmic* theory of individuation presented in the preceding chapters. It aimed to revolutionize simultaneously the theory of science and the theory of politics.

1. After a long preamble introducing the concept of "war machine," its specific form of power differing from the domination based on pure violence as much as that based on authority, its formal and para-historical nature, and its *rhuthmic* "*furor* against all measure" disturbing the metrics of power, Deleuze and Guattari described its two main manifestations: the scientific war machine which propelled "minor science" and "nomad thought," and the social war machine which energized "minority politics" and "nomad activism."

1.1 This double structure was quite clearly marked but it actually involved a sophisticated interweaving of the various parts of the essay. Both kinds of war machine would first involve historically existing *social groups*. Nomad thought as well as nomad action could not develop within the framework of the State, nor in organizations akin to it such as academies, universities, unions or political parties, and would necessarily be supported by marginal singular or collective flowing individuals.

1.2 But both would also require a sort of *theoretical nomadism*. Neither could advance within the framework of Royal Science or disciplines distributed into independent fields of study and academic special-ties, particularly the so-called "political science." It was necessarily a question of transgressing this framework, of crossing the established disciplines, and of following unexpected lines of flight—in short, of making the knowledge flow.

1.3 In other words, the "Treatise on Nomadology" combined, vertically, political action and theoretical reflection developed by marginal singular or collective flowing individuals, as well as, horizontally, a vast array of disciplines comprising natural sciences, humanities, cultural studies and "political science." It was obviously meant as being in itself a *rhuthmic* philosophical image mirroring the *rhuthmic* interactive flow of the being.

2. Consistently with these premises, Deleuze and Guattari first presented an intricate series of *rhuthmic* concepts applied to minor science.

2.1 Minor science and nomad thought were strikingly illustrated by the Ancient *rhuthmic* physics recently brought to light by Michel Serres in his book *Birth of Physics* (1977). Deleuze and Guattari recalled the "flows" making "consistency" possible, the primacy of "becoming and heterogeneity" over "being and identical," the concept of "clinamen," the gathering of "bands or packs of atoms" into "great vortical organizations," the opposition between "a *smooth* (vectorial, projective, or topological) space and a *striated* (metric) space," and, last but not least, the primacy of "problems," "accidents," "events," "affections," over "theorems," "essences," "specific differences," and "genus." Deleuze and Guattari cited Serres: "Physics is reducible to two sciences, a general theory of routes and paths, and a global theory of [flow] *[théorie globale du flot]*."

2.2 Most epistemological features of minor science were of *rhuthmic* nature. By contrast with State or Royal science which dealt with "ideal essences," nomad science dealt with "*vague*, in other words,

vagabond or nomadic, morphological essences" which were not inexact nor exact but "*anexact yet rigorous.*" Contrary to State or Royal science, which promoted the Aristotelian hylomorphic model to describe the relation between form and matter, nomad science was characterized by an attention to the *specificities of the content*, which was not reducible to "homogeneous matter," as well as to the *specificities of the expression*, which could not be reduced to "pure form."

2.3 In short, the model of minor science, which Deleuze and Guattari called the "dispars," was a plainly *rhuthmic* model opposed in every respect to the standard model they called for its part the "compars." It involved a "smooth space" populated, like the sea, by heterogeneous entities (which explained the prefix *dis*–), instead of an homogeneous "striated space" (which explained the prefix *cum*–). It aimed to "seize or determine singularities in the matter," by reaching "vague essences" or "hacceities," instead of "constituting general form[s]." It was used to the "following-up" of multiplicities, singularities and events provoked by exterior "vortical flows" and unexpected "clinamens," instead of "reproduction," "deduction" and "induction," which in "royal science" were deemed independent of the context. However, Deleuze and Guattari were aware of the limits of such dualism and they finally emphasized the need of an interplay between the two forms of science: in fact, they admitted, both were equally useful.

2.4 As a way of conclusion concerning minor science, Deleuze and Guattari proposed a general theory of thought. Western philosophy had from its earliest origins conformed to a model borrowed from the State apparatus. They cited more or less directly Descartes, Kant and Hegel, but also Durkheim and psychoanalysts such as Lacan. Philosophy's ways of flowing astray—if we may say so—had most of the time been channeled and submitted to rigorous linear methods. By contrast, some "private thinkers" such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, or Shestov, or some writers such as Artaud or Kleist had produced mobile, violent and discontinuous "counterthoughts." While logic and method drew mandatory paths for the *cogitatio*, this kind of "counterthoughts" or "minor thoughts" reintroduced into philosophy vortical and flowing ways of discussion and reasoning. They also definitely renounced Whole and Subject as ontological and anthropological premises.

3. In the same way, Deleuze and Guattari then suggested a series of *rhuthmic* concepts to be applied to minor social organizations.

3.1 By contrast with both the so-called primitive "lineal organization" and the "territorial organization" by the State, the nomad developed a specific form of social organization which was based on what we may characterize as a *rhuthmic* and non-measured occupation of space by a *rhuthmic* and non-measured population. By their annual cycles and sometimes random uses, nomads would constitute a kind of "territory" that, paradoxically, would not be entirely "territorialized." Instead of being strictly distributed upon a striated geometric space, nomads constituted small "fuzzy aggregates" ceaselessly moving over a "smooth space."

3.2 This peculiar use of space gave nomads their particular form of collective individuation, which Deleuze and Guattari first characterized as "consistency of a fuzzy aggregate," then as "speed" and finally as "local absolute." These last two phrases designated the hacceity or singularity of a "fuzzy aggregate" of nomads but this time observed from the viewpoint of action, that is of agency or performativity. We noticed that this characterization closely resembled Spinoza's and more recently Meschonnic's description of the "divine" in a worldview which excluded the hypothesis of a God creator of all things. "The divine" did not disappear altogether but it split and contracted into a

myriad of "local absolutes" rising then spreading among humans along vortical lines.

3.3 These peculiar forms of individuation and agency were in turn to be accounted for by the "affects," i.e. the "desires and passions," which gave the nomads their particular energy. The latter could be reconstructed from their way of life. Nomads used mainly weapons and a few tools, they preferred war to work, body to subject, affect to feeling, discharge of emotion to resisting emotion, jewelry and minor art to signs and semiotics. Unsurprisingly, they particularly favored technologies driven by the "affects" of the matter they used, which was by itself "in movement, in flux, in variation." Excluding casting, which was the model of the Royal hylomorphic scheme and the characterization of matter as homogeneous and subjectable, they preferred forging which had to follow the peculiarities of the matter it used. In other words, metallurgy, which was the typical nomadic craft, was directly plugged into the "matter-flow" that constituted the world. It was the *rhuthmic* technique par excellence.

3.4 In this sense, we have noticed that the nomad metallurgist was a kind of technical correlate of the Spinozist philosopher and the half para-Trotskyist half para-Anarchist activist. But since metallurgy "expressed itself" mainly in weapons, the metallurgist was, at the same time, a technical correlate of the nomad warrior. In short, nomad metallurgist, Spinozist philosopher, half para-Trotskyist half para-Anarchist activist, and nomad warrior were not only the technical, intellectual, political and military heralds of the *rhuthmic* world, but they also called each other: the metallurgist was an activist, a warrior but also a sort of philosopher of technology; the warrior an activist and a craftsman, but also a kind of philosopher of war; the activist a warrior, a craftsman, but also a type of philosopher of political action; and naturally the philosopher a metallurgist producing intellectual weapons, an activist for minor science and a warrior of thought.

4. In both cases, minor science as much as minor social organization, Deleuze and Guattari developed two interwoven models which were supposed to be perfectly adequate to a reality considered dynamic and plural. They sketched out a fully *rhuthmic* epistemological and political counterpart to the *rhuthmic* ontology which had been presented earlier and which was the implicit ground of these new developments. The particularity of this enterprise was that it rigorously combined scientific theory and political theory. The nomad scientific war machine with its Ancient hydraulic model, its particular *"anexact yet rigorous"* epistemology, its vortical and flowing ways of discussion and reasoning, was the exact counterpart of the nomad social war machine, with its vortical occupation of space by non-measured population, its affective energy and its passion for a particular technology, the metallurgy, directly plugged into the "matter-flow."

5. As we have seen, the project of Deleuze and Guattari was to combine two perspectives and two levels of action usually separated by academics, and to introduce simultaneously into science and politics a *rhuthmological* and *polemological* perspective. Part of this complex project becomes clearer when we restore its cultural context. As a matter of fact, Deleuze and Guattari developed in their own way a philosophical trend which had started a few years earlier.

5.1 We remember that, in patent contrast to Lefebvre and even Foucault, Barthes in his course on idiorrhythmy had clearly highlighted the deep antagonism between the pre-Platonic conceptions based on the concept of *rhuthmos* and the Platonic conceptions based on rhythm. On the basis of this preliminary discussion, he had then attempted to introduce a few innovations into the ethical and political theory by using the concept of *rhuthmos*.

5.2 Although Serres, unlike Barthes, did not acknowledge his debt, he had in fact engaged in a comparable reworking, from the concept of *turbo*, of no less than mathematics, ontology, individuation theory, physics and space-time theory, perception theory and theory of forms. While replicating Serres' denial concerning his debt towards Benveniste, Deleuze and Guattari borrowed explicitly from him the idea that science had followed since Antiquity two opposite models: one "metric," the other "fluid," that only the latter favored innovative and disruptive kinds of thought, while the former channeled any critical and imaginative attempt into the deterministic dominant order. From Serres, they also borrowed explicitly the main features of this second model they called, for their part, "minor or nomad science."

5.3 Likewise, at the very beginning of *Method*, Morin had emphasized the strong opposition that existed between the classical physical worldview, based on the principles of "order, balance, and measure," and what he called the progressive "invasion of disorders." Classical physics with its mechanistic and determinist perspective, which made it compare the world to a clock run by immutable laws, had been deeply challenged from the mid-19th century by a series of disturbing discoveries: the concept of "entropy" or irreversible loss of energy, the discovery of the relation of this loss to the increase in the internal molecular disorder, the introduction of disorder and probability into micro-physics, and finally the recognition of an unregulated expansion of the cosmos. After its final collapse in the first half of the 20th century, the classical worldview, which involved stability, order, hierarchy, general determinism, and laws, had been replaced, from the 1950s, by a new worldview based this time on becoming, disorder, multiplicity, chance encounter. Although Morin argued that the two paradigms had succeeded each other over time while for Serres as for Deleuze and Guattari they had coexisted since the most remote origins of science, he finally cited Lucretius' clinamen as a clue that the replacement which had happened in the 20th century certainly had older origins and that most modern physics clearly emulated ancient materialist physics.

5.4 In short, everything happened as if Deleuze and Guattari's contribution combined Serres'—and more remotely Morin's—physical contribution with Barthes' social and ethical concerns. The "Treatise on nomadology" deliberately mixed both perspectives which were now considered impossible to separate. This loop—as Morin would have put it—allowed Deleuze and Guattari to develop further simultaneously both subject into a fully integrated epistemological and political *rhuthmic* theory. Minor science and nomad thought, as well as minority politics and nomad activism were all to be grounded in a *rhuthmic* perspective.

5.5 Yet, compared with their predecessors' political suggestions, Deleuze and Guattari's were much more elaborate—if not always sustainable as we have seen. Instead of using as Lefebvre the most debatable opposition between *cyclical* and *linear time* to attempt at making sense of the concept of *eurhythmia*, they suggested, just like Barthes, judging the political quality of a social movement according to the opposition between *non measured rhythm* and *cadence* or *measure*. By contrast with State armies, which use the latter to regulate their marching and to discipline their soldiers, nomad groups would shape their "order of displacement," i.e. more generally their way of flowing and acting, what they called "the flowing of [their] flow," through non-metric "rhythms."

5.6 However, the simple opposition between *metric* and *fluid* models of life and action suggested by Barthes had to be clarified through three main conceptual and axiological polarities: the first opposing *flowing* and *solid aggregates*; the second *vortical* and *linear developments*; and the third

smooth (vectorial, projective, or topological) and *striated (metric) spaces*.

5.7 Consequently, contrary to Barthes' and Serres' suggestions, politics should not be reduced to benevolent interactions in small group of friends living in some isolation from society and trying to foster the possibility for everyone to find their own rhythm. It should consider larger "fuzzy aggregates" assailing all frozen social structures and groups, disrupting the common linear developments by "vortical movements" and transforming the striated and metric space we live in into a "smooth space." Unlike Barthes and Serres who only envisioned small utopian communities, Deleuze and Guattari suggested the possibility of a general revolution that would completely redistribute the power of the State into society.

6. The complexity of Deleuze and Guattari's project mentioned above can also be explained, at least partly, by restoring the historical and social context in which it appeared.

6.1 The *intricacy* of the treaty very clearly reflects the extremely specific social and theoretical conditions of the Experimental University of Vincennes. The latter had been founded in 1969 in response to the events of May 1968 and it allowed the transgression of the usual academic curricula as well as the sometimes chaotic and sometimes creative expression of a certain number of militant groups not affiliated to major political parties (see the vivid description of this "creative chaos" in Dosse, 2007). As a matter of fact, it is hard to imagine that such theory—and more broadly such kind of book as *A Thousand Plateaus*—could have ever been elaborated by academics teaching at the venerable Sorbonne.

6.2 Concerning the *rhuthmological* perspective, we can also notice that the 1970s were also marked by the rapid regression of Structuralism and Systemism, at least in human and social science. For many thinkers, it was time to get rid of global theories providing all-encompassing, homogenized and pacified worldviews and to reintroduce critical ways of thinking socially more favorable to dissent, dispute and disagreement, and theoretically, to interaction, unexpected divergence, bifurcation and event.

6.3 Concerning now the *polemological* perspective, it must be mentioned that, in the years following the events of May 1968, Capitalism and the purported "Real Socialism" appeared as two symmetrical systems, both preventing actual agency. The burning issue at the moment was how to imagine an alternative to the so-called "overthrow of the Bourgeoisie" and "destruction of the Bourgeois State" through "Proletarian Revolutions" led by Communist Parties, which had resulted in the development of Totalitarian regimes and a new dominant class called Nomenklatura. The revolution from above having failed and the conquest of the State having shown its crippling limitations, it seemed necessary to imagine a revolution from the bottom, a kind of decentralized social war, and a political system rid of the State. As Lefebvre, Foucault, Barthes, and Serres, Deleuze and Guattari clearly leant towards the anarchist side of 1968. Consequently, they tried to define new ways of fighting power that would not close "the Revolution" upon itself but would let it happen indefinitely. According to them, such form of "molecular revolution," as Guattari had it (1977), would result in maximal agency of societies and individuals.

6.4. Since State power and Royal science, whether in the Eastern or in the Western hemisphere, were imposing extremely solid "systems" and "structures" of domination over human lives, only

aggressive scientific and social warfare, challenging from the bottom up these systems or structures, were considered capable of reopening possibilities of agency for singular or collective human individuals. But, as we have noticed, the two aspects were closely linked in Deleuze and Guattari's mind. The molecular political revolution involved opening up critical lines of thought emancipated from the academic order, while, conversely, the development of new and freer forms of knowledge required support from social groups that were no longer subject to the common political order. In this sense, the "Treatise on Nomadology" was meant as an integrated political and scientific agenda for a coming Revolution that would, this time, really free people and knowledge from the shackles of the 20th century.

6.5 At the end of their essay, Deleuze and Guattari painted however a very pessimistic picture of the expansion of the State in the 20th century—which resembled, it must be said, many similar pictures based on the concept of "closed system." They argued that a dramatic crisscross transformation had occurred. While the nomad war machine, which embodied the "pure Idea" of war, had war only as an "empirical supplement," the State which, according to them, was not originally interested in war, had finally appropriated the nomad war machine and turned war into an intrinsic element of its power. In the 20th century, mainly due to the development of Capitalism and soon of Nuclear Power, there had been a spectacular change. While the aim of war had remained "essentially political," i.e. under State supervision, war itself "ha[d] become unlimited." This had resulted in giving more independence to the militarized war machines which had tended to take the upper hand over the States. Whether in the Totalitarian regimes of the first half of the century or in the Liberal and Socialist regimes opposing each other in the Cold War, new war machines had expanded throughout the earth.

6.6 Nevertheless, they noted that the formation of a new smooth space controlled by the new global war machines had also opened "unexpected possibilities for counterattack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines." Therefore war machines could still be of two opposite kinds. Some, appropriated by States, take war as object and global destruction as objective. Some others, free from State involvement and based on "infinitely lower 'quantities'," take "the drawing of creative lines of flight" as their object and aim to compose "a smooth space and the movement of people in that space."

7. Let us now end this investigation, at least temporarily, with some critical considerations. Forty years have passed, allowing us to better see the limits of Deleuze and Guattari's "nomadology." We will focus here on theoretical dead ends and discuss social and political limits in the next chapter.

7.1 Although they sometimes hinted at a renovated concept of rhythm close to that of *rhuthmos*, their approach was hindered by their contempt for Benveniste which they unfortunately shared with—or borrowed from?—Serres. They not only repeated Serres' confusion between Archimedes' and Lucrecius' views, and that of Democritus, but they also attributed to Benveniste the very Platonic view which he had so convincingly deconstructed. By a rather unfortunate twist, Benveniste was accused to have endorsed the metrical sense he had brought to light and to have rejected the atomist sense of rhythm he was precisely promoting. His illuminating analysis of the term *rhuthmos* as way of flowing was ignored. This mistake explains why Deleuze and Guattari did not notice that their own suggestion to define "the rhythm without measure" as "the flowing of a flow" was very close to the one they criticized. Naturally, this ignorance cut them off from the possibility of relating their own *rhuthmic* perspective, which, as we have seen, was quite elaborate, with Benveniste's

rhuthmic perspective on language.

7.2 Due to these biases, these mistakes, this lack of philological precision, and this blatant misappropriation of Benveniste's contribution, a large blind spot appeared, just in the middle of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of agency, which could not remain without unfortunate ethical and political consequences. As in previous chapters, the subject was inconsistently both recognized as "local absolute" shifting from individual to individual, energizing and empowering them successively, and, for lack of knowledge concerning the particular nature of subjectivity in language, bluntly dismissed as totally illusory.

7.3 Another problem, closely related with the previous one, concerned the way in which Deleuze and Guattari dealt with the phenomenon of prophecy. Although they rightly paid attention to these vectors and spreaders of "local absolutes," they entirely bypassed Weber's and Evans-Pritchard's intrepretations and limited themselves to Clastres'. While Weber believed that prophets introduced a strong dualism between Earth and Heaven that made it possible to challenge established religious and political powers—and to rationalize one's life according to its demand—they concentrated on the role of the prophets in the development of holy wars and war machines. Moreover, although Evans-Pritchard had already demonstrated in the 1930s, the role of foreign invasion in triggering the rise of prophets organizing the military on religious grounds against the invaders, they wholeheartedly endorsed the highly questionable analysis by Clastres who attributed South-American Indian prophecy to the sole urge of primitive societies to prevent the rise of chiefs and downplayed the obvious role of the Portuguese and Spanish invasion.

7.4 In short, Deleuze and Guattari focused on the military side of prophecy while ignoring its ethical side. At stake was here, in our opinion, a possible inconsistency between their praise of "local absolutes" and their more general naturalistic framework which did not leave room for any form of "dualism," even a local and limited one. This inconsistency was in fact related with their previous limitation. How indeed can we account for "local absolutes"—given that we renounce any strong religious dualism—without evoking the very particular power of transcendence conferred on humans by their language activity? Since they refused to take the latter into account and reduced the language to a mere series of statements, never uttered, they could not explain what exactly was at stake in the prophetic activity which was nevertheless based on preaching and which they inconsistently reduced to its military function.

7.5 This exaggeration of the military function of prophets to the detriment of their speech and ethical function, which made agency circulate in a different way from the agency reached through war, must be related with Deleuze and Guattari's strange praise of the constitution of an elite body in each war machine. This remnant of Leninist ideology, possibly due to Guattari's never-denounced Trotskyism, collided with their anarchist vision which underlined, for its part, the vortical flowing of the war machine and the constitution of a smooth space. A para-Leninist vision bestowing power on a special corps of warriors, drawn from the common loose order of the "fuzzy aggregate" and turned into a sharp weapon, was disturbing and obfuscating their political strategy. Did the revolution emerging from the bottom of society need an elite corps of warriors, or was it strong enough to transform by itself the common order of Capitalism and States?