

A Deleuzian State Against the Capitalist War Machine

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Capitalism is a War Machine. Capitalism, our current, worldwide *socius* is a War Machine that produces *human* misery and suffering. It has to be stopped. We, Deleuzians, can contribute to this urgent task by exploiting the logical consequence of Deleuze and Guattari's political theory, even if they themselves did not want to embrace it: the only way to contain the catastrophic consequences of this damned War Machine is through its twin concept: the Apparatus of State.

I will try to show in these minutes how this can be done in the conceptual frame of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Not without "taking them from behind", I admit. In order to achieve my goal I do have to take down the implicit axiology, the anti-State political sensibility according to which Deleuze and Guattari are set upon. They *despise* the State – but they do so in Paris in the 60s or the 70s, when they have been enjoying the protection of a strong State-formation all their life - and also when they have witnessed its violence. In this context, even if they keep remarking that "there is no axiology", that there is no "better or worst", Deleuze and Guattari do have a preference for War Machines, as also do the organizers of this "War Machines Against Fascism" Conference.

But how can *we* be *so sure* that the State-form is a political dead-end in *our* Latin American countries, after *our* political experience during the early XXIst Century? The popular governments in Brasil, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia have proved that the State-form has a lot to offer in our under-developed countries. And maybe in a worldwide level. At the same time, the reaction of the capitalist War Machine against these slivers of hope has been of an extreme violence. There is no clearer image of that than Lula in a prison without crime – among other imprisonments

of political leaders and activists – and even killings – all around *la Patria grande*.

Of course, when we consider our *current* States, in Argentina and Brazil - we just want to cry and shout. Considering only the *picture* of these tragic last few years, I must agree that *these* States are only the *models of realization* of Capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari believe that this is the inexorable fate of the State-form. They believe that *every* current State-form *can only* be a *model of realization* of the Capital. They are certain that it does not matter which struggles are expressed by the democratic institutions, it all comes down to the same: just models of realization of the damned Capital. Therefore, Capitalism and State are the *same* social formation, the *same assemblage*: Apparatus of Capture.

Actually, in *A thousand plateaus* there is countless evidence that Capitalism and State are *different assemblages*. If they tend to concur, its only because Capitalism has succeeded in subsuming the State to its goals. However, under the thumb of Capitalism the State is not properly the State. Deleuze and Guattari do arrive to this conclusion at the end of the Chapter 12 of *A thousand plateaus*, the one that deals with the War Machine.

States tend to unleash, reconstitute, an immense war machine of which they are no longer anything more than the opposable or opposed parts (...) The war machine has taken charge of the aim, worldwide order, and the States are now no more than objects of means adapted to that machine (...) A war machine that takes charge of the aim, appropriates the States, and assumes increasingly wider political functions. Doubtless, the present situation is highly discouraging (TP, 421-422)

This is the main quotation that supports my thesis: Capitalism is an immense War Machine that appropriates the States, assumes political functions and takes charge of the aim. That is what Deleuze and Guattari affirm. Without political functions or the capacity of defining the *aim*, the State is no longer the State. If the present situation is highly discouraging, it is the Capitalist War Machine, its aims and political functions that must be the object of all political struggles, strategies and thought. And, if we take into consideration that the two great political chapters of *A thousand plateaus* are number 12 and 13, and that they deal respectively with the concepts of War Machine and Apparatus of Capture, it is only natural to seek a theoretical way out of the highly discouraging situation in the Apparatus of Capture, and construct an alternative of Capitalism -as the logical

outcome of the dynamic of the War Machine- with the elements of the Apparatus of Capture. Short: a Deleuzian State-form that can face the tragic consequences of the Capitalist War Machine.

Anti-State: A tree growing in the head

Immediately after reaching this *necessary* conclusion of the logic of the War Machine (that Capitalism is a War Machine), Deleuze and Guattari vacillate. “Yet”, they say. *Yet*: the very same conditions of our suffering are the conditions of revolution and empowerment of minorities. They erase with the elbow what they have just written with the hand, and affirm that Capitalism is after all not *really* a war machine, but only one *pole*. Capitalism is just the *pole* of the war machine that “takes war for its object”. Bad, bad pole!! The Apparatuses of Capture have appropriated the war machine and have made “war their affair and their object” (TP 423). I *knew* it was the State. Even if everything points toward *Capitalism* and its own schizophrenic logic, I knew it was the State! It must be, because it is the villain of the story, and everything bad comes down to it.

If the appropriation of the War Machine by the Apparatus of Capture is the *bad* pole, there is also a *good* pole, a very nice and clean pole, that holds the “essence” of the *War Machine*. The War Machine is therefore kind of a divinity for Deleuze and Guattari. It is a Deleuzian God that has not only created hell (“the present situation”) but also heaven: “the drawing of a creative line of flight” (TP 422). The only problem is the typical drawback of heaven: it is just not present *yet*. The silver lining is that the ethical-political conundrum becomes simple: the nice pole is the pole of *creation* while the very bad pole is the pole of *destruction*! Creation is good, while destruction is bad. We must side with creation. Everything becomes easy peasy. *Mutatis mutandis*, the axiological edge that Deleuze and Guattari explicitly and repeatedly deny *charges* the two great political concepts of *A thousand plateaus*, as the moral choice becomes: either the (essentially) good War Machines or the (essentially) bad “Apparatus of Capture”.

In short, the end of the Chapter about The War Machine after all, instead of *embracing* the

logical political conclusion (Capitalism is a War Machine – therefore, our fight strategies must be strategies *against* the War Machine), becomes the watershed of the *evil* chapter: number 13, the one about the Apparatus of Capture, where *Apparatus of Capture* becomes the concept that allows Deleuze and Guattari to bind *everything* that they despise: State and Capitalism. They are just, once against, *poles*. Only that, if the poles of the War Machine were the key of the axiological difference that has allowed them to keep on believing in the War Machine even if it was the heart of Capitalism, now the poles explain the ultimate identity of the heterogeneous: Capitalism is not essentially different to the State, it is not another assemblage, it is just *a pole* of the State (at Capitalism’s birth “it is indeed another pole of the State that arises” TP 452). The poles that were the key to radical differentiation a couple of pages before, are now a way of undermining the differences. Capitalism and State are actually *the same*.

Therefore, in the fight against Capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly put their money on the “formation or re-formation of minoritarian aggregates” that the worldwide war machine of capitalism herself will trigger (TP 472-471). They place their faith in the nomads and their logic of organization, insomuch as they compare the nomad to the proletariat. “The proletariat appears as the heir to the nomad in the Western world” (TP 558). They dream of a revolutionary mass that leaves the plane of capital. “It is the war machine, as nomad, that invents the abolitionist dream and reality” (TP, 385). The revolution must not only *transform the State*, but abolish it.

Minoritarian aggregates are key to every struggle and liberation. In that respect I fully agree with Deleuze and Guattari. However, minoritarian aggregates have several shortcomings. I will underline two. Firstly, they are *not* strong enough to fight Capitalism by themselves, they just crumble under its power. The States, on the other hand, are a much powerful assemblage. After all, the very reason why according to Deleuze and Guattari the State-form is essential to the formation of Capitalism, is its *power* (that not even the strong network of cities of the XIth to XIIIth centuries had - DII 105). It was the *power* of the State that made it possible to give birth to Capitalism. And the same is true

at the hour of fighting. Why would we leave aside the power of the State?

A second shortcoming of minoritarian aggregates is that it is *very* difficult to resort to the *War Machine* without triggering “the very [same] absolute war it is supposed to ward off” (471), as Deleuze and Guattari themselves warn. On the other hand, they recognize that “the States ward off capitalism” (TP 437). Why would we leave aside such warding off capacity against such a plague?

Deleuze and Guattari only insist in rejecting the State, they only leave aside its power and warding off capacity, because *they have a tree growing in their heads* (TP 15). It is this despotic image of the State that leads them to think the State only as a bad bad State, as an *oppressive machine*. But our responsibility as Deleuzians is to fight the image of thought that supports the current social conditions. We must not, we should not neglect the power of the State in the fight against Capitalism because of an image of thought.

State and Capitalism: two different assemblages

Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism suppose that State and Capitalism are the same assemblage, or poles of the same assemblage. However, their own writings show that the State is essentially *another* assemblage than Capitalism, and therefore it is not at all *essentially* its model of realization.¹ Even if Deleuze and Guattari deny this fact, the difference of regime they themselves describe is too huge to support their own denial: 1) the State is a public sphere while Capitalism is a private one; 2) the State is territorial while capitalism is a power of desterritorialization; 3) the State overcodes an already coded flow, while Capitalism organizes a conjugation of decoded flows; 4) the State is characterized by machinic enslavement (where human beings are *pieces* of the machine) while Capitalism favors social subjection (where human beings are subjects linked to a now exterior machine); 5) none of the three heads that characterize the form-State in *A thousand plateaus* (land, labor and taxation) can be effectively projected to the capitalist social formation;² finally, 6) the

1 While all “modern States” are isomorphic to the capitalist axiomatic” (democratic, totalitarian, liberal, and tyrannical), they are so as model of realization.

2 Even if these three figures may lead to think, in a first approach, that in this proposition Deleuze and Guattari are

State is in itself a “model to realize” while it becomes, under the conditions of capitalism “a model of realization”. Short, State and Capitalism are two different social formation that coexist.³

The fact that the State is not at all *essentially* a model of realization of capitalism but *another* assemblage has very important consequences. One, that I will not develop today, is that with the three heads of the State (land, labor and taxation) we can construct a *positive* social formation and not a monster. Another one (and this is my main argument today) is that it is not accurate to reduce *every* response of the State-form to the various social struggles to just adding another *axiom* that changes nothing in the axiomatic that realizes the Capitalist abstract machine. “Women's struggle for the vote, for abortion, for jobs; the struggle of the regions for autonomy; the struggle of the Third World; the struggle of the oppressed masses and minorities in the East or West” (TP 471) are not just a “struggle on the level of the axioms” (470), as Deleuze and Guattari affirm. Neither is the right for abortion, as Deleuze says in one of his lectures (DII 410). Nor is the academic struggle to speak our own language, and not to be force to fit our thought in this damned colonial English. Nor is the struggle for *techo, tierra y trabajo*. The struggles that propagate around the world will hopefully reach a boiling point when “*an entirely different abstract machine*” (TP 461) will arise. In that point the *struggle* will no longer be at the level of the axioms, and will reach the level of *problems*. We must underline the importance of the notion of “problem”, that in *Difference and repetition* equals “Idea”, and that in *A thousand plateaus* means the breaking point where the

also conceiving the State from the standpoint of capitalism 7, the confrontation of the source of these “three heads” casts doubts on this hypothesis. Marx only presents the trinity formula in order to criticize it harshly. Rent is only related to the capitalism for the vulgar economics that Marx aims to overcome; labor is only the source of value in specific conditions of production (the capitalism) and, finally, taxation is not a proper concept of capitalism, but at the most an anomaly. I quote Marx: “So it should not surprise us that (...) precisely here vulgar economics feels completely at home, these relationships appearing all the more self-evident to it, the more their inner connections remain hidden, even though they are comprehensible to the popular mind. Thus it does not have the slightest suspicion that the trinity from which it proceeds: land-rent, capital-interest, labor-wages or price of labor, are *prima facie* impossible compositions (*unmögliche Kompositionen*).”

3 The social formations do not succeed each other in a historical sequence but they coexist. At a lecture of November 20th, 1979, Deleuze enumerates the social formations, in a dynamic and coextensive logic with which he wants to replace the rigid scheme of the Anti-Oedipus (where there was a sequence of socius: primitive, despotic and capitalistic formations). He does not want to speak any longer about “primitive”, but of “warding off” (conjunction) societies; he does not want to speak any longer about “State”, but of “Apparatus of Capture”. He adds “networks” (instead of “cities”) and “ecumenical organizations” (DII, 123). Which gives him a total of four social formations. He has a lapsus: “I keep five formations... What? I do not find five, I only have four. I had five! One is missing!” (DII; 123). It is quite obvious that what is missing is Capitalism.

struggles can no longer be incorporated in the axiomatic (TP 471, DII 305). Therefore, the struggle around the axioms is important in itself, not as an “index of another combat” (TP 471). The distinction between States that are characterized by the *minimum* of axioms (totalitarianism), and another characterized by a *maximum* axioms (social-democracy) is not just a distinction of isomorphic *poles* of Capitalism. The multiplication of axioms opens up the possibility of a *breaking-point*, and consequently a change of nature of the social-formation.

This possibility becomes crucial when Deleuze and Guattari relate the multiplication of axioms with the emphasis in the domestic market, while the totalitarianism’s minimum axioms means “the appeal to foreign sources of capital, the rise of industries aimed at the exportation of foodstuffs or raw materials, the collapse of the domestic market” (TP 462).⁴ This is the crossroads of *la Patria Grande*: we protect the domestic market or we are just a way station of the financial capital. In a lecture of 1980, Deleuze appeals to the case of *Brazil*, in order to point out that that year’s elections in this country where we have met today meant a rare *suspense* in the history: will a sort of Brazilian social-democracy arise or will a totalitarian system reform itself? Deleuze seems to accept that this is a breaking-point.⁵ At that moment, thinking specifically about Brazil, he shows a sliver of preference for the social-democracy. The figure of Lula, that Guattari had met the year before the publication of *A thousand plateaus* is probably key to this weakness. Nonetheless, most of the time Deleuze and Guattari criticizes the social-democracy harshly.

We can, and will take this fighting preference for the multiplication of axioms further. The difference between the collapse of the domestic market and the protection of the domestic market is monstrous. Even more in the Third-World, where it means a “mode of production” where the conditions of labor are those of slavery (DII 359, 366-367). We will fight and bleed to prevent the foreign sources of Capital from destroying the lives of our fellow Latin American brothers. We will

4 In the book the “multiplication of axioms” means that “an integrated domestic market is being organized to meet the requirements of the foreign market”. In the previous lectures this subordination is not so clear.

5 This reference cannot be thought isolated from the meeting of Guattari with Lula one year before, and the hopes regarding the birth of this great leader for our Patria grande.

fight and bleed for a “mode of production” that gives dignity, rights and meaning to the human labor force – with the necessary new meaning of “labor” in the conditions of automation – a true free labor, and not the trap of precariousness that Capitalism has constructed under that name. We will fight to the point where these struggles become *problems*, and are not longer tolerable by the axiomatic.

Deleuze and Guattari think that *problems* can not have a response at the level of the State-form. However, that is only true if the State is just a model of realization of the axiomatic. Only as model of realization the States can only add axioms that are never the “adequate expression” (470) of minorities. But if the State is actually another assemblage, as I have tried to show, maybe the minorities *can* find their adequate expression in a strong State-form. Problems *can* become the *model* to realize for an *untimely* State-form: not the archaic State, not the oriental-State, not the despotic-State, not the modern-State, not the fascism, not the social-democracy (and its weak resistance against Capitalism), but a State-form shaped according to the *event* in its problematic nature.⁶ The protection of minorities, and their nondenumerable flow, *must* be the law of these postmodern States. The State I stand for is therefore not a terrible monster of oppression and despotism, but the element of existence and survival of minorities, their warding-off against the appropriation of the Capitalist War Machine, and the only true possibility for the lines of flight not to be subjected to the conjunctions of the axiomatic, and deploy all their creativity and power.

6 In this untimely State-form that I’m trying to think, there is no body of the Despot that appropriates land, labor and taxation. Land, labor and taxation (that is, equitable distribution of way of payment) form the body of a Nation-State, that is, a flow of land, people and wealth that is not pre-given or innate,¹ but in constant process of individuation. Even if in the frame of their criticism of the Nation-State Deleuze and Guattari reject the notions of “land and people” as a Capitalist way of subjection (TP 456), they also accept the possibility of a “new Land” (472). In the notion of a Deleuzian State that I’m trying to construct today, minorities are the new-people, whereas the untimely-State is the “new Land” (472).