**Prologue to chapter 3**

**A second cluster of concepts**

It may seem, at this point, that all the needed concepts are to hand, and the discussion of the active left of politics in the 1990s should begin forthwith. The preceding chapter dwelt on the link between the use of signs, and biopower. It presented the concept of immanent critique; it discussed the partnership of the virtual and the actual in composing the real; and it examined types of multiplicity, including subjugated groups and subject-groups, which are formed by constituted power and by constituent power respectively.

There is, however, a further cluster of concepts, bringing an added dimension to my account of the active left in the nineties. Deleuze and Guattari paint a portrait of society and desire, in which constituent power and subject-groups emerge through cracks in social structures’ hold over desire. Chapter three pays tribute to that portrait. The chapter works with concepts for dissecting the process of socialisation of desiring-bodies, concepts which reveal the rhizomic side of that process. The work done here helps to set the scene for a connecting, further on in the thesis, of active left politics with a certain ‘world/cosmic delirium’ seen in a cycle of films from the mainstream cinema of the nineties.¹ Chapter three also helps to position my work vis a vis the widely discussed concept of Empire, developed by Hardt and Negri.

Before beginning the discussion of social structures and desire, however, I need to take up two points, one of which I find quite awkward. I first address the straightforward one (about machines), and then the awkward one, which is about ‘savages’ and so forth.

**Why machines?**

It is worth briefly indicating the basis on which a key role is assigned to machines, in Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on human affairs. In part, the couching of discussions of living things in terms of machines is the authors’ way of overcoming the dualist view that sets matter apart from spirit, and their way of refusing the choice between mechanist and vitalist stances regarding life. Their praise for Samuel Butler’s argument in ‘The Book of Machines’ (published in 1872 as part of *Erewhon*) brings out that point.²

In addition, the featuring of machines is a result of the work of Guattari at the Clinique de la Borde, during the 1950s and sixties. Guattari and his colleagues became convinced of the need to spread a new way of thinking desire, so as to get rid of the illusory self of Freudian clinical practice. The particular construct that they set about dismantling and

---

¹ On world/cosmic delirium, see p 44 below.
replacing is the self that experiences desire as a lack, where the lack occurs within some setting shaped by the repressed fear of being punished (castrated) by a dominant power.

The effect that Guattari and his co-workers wanted to create, and to share, was the overcoming of the illusion of being a personal self, a unified self that forms the ground, or cause, of desire (a self that seems to be the ground in which desire arises). For guattarians, desire is a creative, impersonal force, a force that has its own machinic mode of assembling, dismantling and reassembling bodies. The illusion of the personal self as cause of desire is actually one of the effects arising from desire and its machinery. The illusion is part of the desiring-machines’ mannery, to use a neologism from ‘The Book of Machines.’

**Coming to terms with ‘Sauvages, Barbares, Civilisés’**

In writing about society and desire, Deleuze and Guattari present a history that is general in its scope, a history that applies to all peoples that have ever walked the earth. Their universal history, at first blush, is a fairly unappealing piece of work. It reads like a grand narrative, in the Western-supremacist tradition.

It is tempting, therefore, to treat the ‘universal’ history as an aberration in the authors’ work, and just disregard it – and that is certainly an option. But I choose to persevere with the ‘universal’ history. I take the view that there is no such thing as guilt by mental association, and therefore Deleuze and Guattari have no case to answer in relation to grand narrative. And I hope to have shown, by the end of the thesis, that my project is the richer for bringing the ‘universal’ history into it. Allow me, then, in the rest of this prologue, to lift the rug of the ‘universal’ history and peep at the tent-floor underneath it.

Like it or not, the ‘universal’ history looms large in *Anti-Oedipus*. It takes up the whole of Part Three, which is titled ‘Sauvages, Barbares, Civilisés’ (‘Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men’). The title heralds – put bluntly – the typology that the authors will use as the organising principle for the history of all peoples on Earth.

Deleuze and Guattari reach back into a remote field of scholarship to get hold of the typology: it comes from an early work in anthropology, which recalls the worldview of the

---


3 ‘Are there not more men engaged in tending machinery than in tending men? Do not machines eat as it were by mannery?’ (Butler, 1970 /1872: p 209). Butler poses these rhetorical questions, while distancing himself from them by means of prosopopoeia. Also, *Erewhon* was published as an anonymous work (but it was revealed as Butler’s work within his lifetime).

4 One can skirt around the ‘universal’ history, and use other devices to probe the working of social formations and desire. A case in point is Brian Massumi’s discussion of the socialisation of desire, in (Massumi, 1992: Part 2, ‘Habit’). Hardt and Negri, in *Empire*, follow a different eclectic path. They discuss current political themes, applying for the most part the Spinozist strands in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, without touching upon desire, or its forms of socialisation. *Empire*, as described in *Empire*, nevertheless happens to round out the schema of the ‘universal’ history (see p 62 below; also the remarks on Eurocentric history and social machines in ch 9 below (pp 176-177)).
European Enlightenment. The work is Lewis H Morgan’s *Ancient Society: or, Researches in the lines of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization.*\(^5\) Supposedly, there is a telos that causes the ascent, by the peoples of the world, through a series of ‘ages of Man.’ Morgan’s is an evolutionist account of human history, in which peoples pass through stages of cultural refinement. The stage that a given people is in, is determined by the people’s past and present material circumstances and its experience in developing and using technology. First, there is hunting and gathering, labelled the ‘savage’ stage. In the right circumstances, that gives way to basic agriculture, the ‘barbarian’ stage. The final stage is urban settlement with advanced agriculture, and this is the stage attained by ‘civilized’ peoples. Morgan’s work had a wide readership, and prompted Engels’s use of the same typology in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.*\(^6\)

Deleuze and Guattari’s work, as already discussed (chapter two of the thesis), contains a general critique of the notion of types. It therefore seems odd that the authors should give a key role in their work to any typology of cultural formations – let alone Morgan’s, with its quaint (not to say odious) nomenclature, its ‘stagist’ world view, and its Western-supremacist bent. How could Deleuze and Guattari square this move with their wariness as to the use of types, and with the care that they lavished on the choice of words?\(^7\)

There is another layer to the puzzle. While the authors do not retract outright what they have written in *Anti-Oedipus*, they do at a later stage come close to that. ‘Neither Guattari nor myself,’ says Deleuze in 1973,

> are very attached to the pursuit or even the coherence of what we write. We would hope for the contrary, we would hope that the follow-up to *Anti-Oedipus* breaks with what preceded it, with the first volume, and then, if there are things that don’t work in the first volume, it doesn’t matter. […]\(^8\)

The major break with the past is that the authors revise their views on Oedipal conditioning, seeing a need to broaden their critique to one that takes in all of psychoanalysis. Added to that, by 1980, they have become ill at ease with evolutionist accounts of history. A remark that sums up their 1980 view is this: ‘All history does is to translate a coexistence of becomings into a succession.’\(^9\) (I find it strange that they say nothing about their earlier use

---

\(^5\) (Morgan, 1877). Morgan, who was one of the founders of anthropology, carried out extensive field studies of kinship systems in different societies. He became a friend to North American Indian peoples, and a strong supporter of their struggles against European invasion and oppression. In 1846, he was adopted by the Seneca tribe, one of the six tribes in the Iroquois Confederacy.

\(^6\) (Engels, 1972 /1884).

\(^7\) The translators of Deleuze and Guattari’s *What Is Philosophy?* note that Deleuze carefully chose words for their etymological nuances; also, Deleuze found that sometimes the right choice of word for a concept is ‘an extraordinary and sometimes even barbarous or shocking word’ ((Tomlinson and Burchell, 1994: p viii); the words in quotation marks are Deleuze’s, and are quoted from (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987 /1977Fr)).

\(^8\) (Deleuze, 2004b: p 278). I should add that one often hears tell of the scandal about *Anti-Oedipus*, but that scandal has nothing to do with the Western-supremacist aspect of the book. It has to do with the book’s alleged fomenting of ‘mad’ or schizoid behaviour and its alleged incitement to reckless use of mind-altering drugs. Deleuze reveals how he feels about that twofold misunderstanding of *Anti-Oedipus* in (Stivale, 2003: ‘D as in Desire’).

\(^9\) *MP*: p 430; there are several disapproving remarks on evolutionist history, or (to be more precise) on evolutionist cultural anthropology, at pp 357-361 and 429-431.
of the famous unilinear evolutionist construct, drawn from the work of Morgan. To be fair, Morgan does allow that there can be diffusion of cultural traits by contact between peoples.)

It would seem by now that the ‘universal’ history is destined for neglect. It is well nigh impossible, today, to feel at ease with the wording that the authors use. ‘Savage’, ‘primitive’, ‘barbarian’, and ‘civilised’ are words that, at least as a scholar, one now uses sparingly, if indeed one uses them at all. I hear them not simply as terms that hark back to another era (like ‘phlogiston’, say), but as loaded, suspect terms. They are soiled because their scientific use, which is still a fresh memory, connects with the idea of manifest destiny and with a vain faith in modernisation. To go along with the use of the terms, is to seem blind to the oppressive colonial past and its ongoing legacy. In a similar vein, these days there is a distinct awkwardness about the terms, ‘the Asiatic mode of production’ and ‘Oriental despotism’.

And yet, the terms that are now highly suspect, were treated as valid in the European literature of anthropology, sociology, and philosophy, as recently as the 1950s through to the 1970s. And that fact does not really come as a surprise, when one considers the programs of economic ‘development’ and ‘modernisation’ that were being put forward in mainstream policy discourse throughout the West in those decades. ‘Backwardness’ of the Third World was the problem, as it was widely argued then (by Westerners), and ‘development programs’ were the solution. Such programs, it was said, would gradually provide access to prosperity on a global scale.

All the same, there is a defence that can be offered for the ‘universal’ history, as follows. If the ‘universal’ history is an offshoot of flawed and outmoded science, that is simply beside the point. It is in the nature of philosophy – so Deleuze and Guattari argue elsewhere – to borrow expressions and reported facts from the hard and soft sciences. Those borrowings are undertaken, not as part of science, but for non-scientific purposes. The borrowings form part of an empirical program, which is made up of experiments in creating concepts: this is a program of philosophical experiments. The purpose is to find out how the new concepts will be received, to find out whether they make a positive difference in the world. At no stage of

---

10 In Australia, scholarly work is still being pursued, with the aim of showing that the land’s indigenous people, as savages, had a small mental universe and were captive to base instincts. The example I have in mind is the historian Keith Windschuttle’s account of what happened when British settlers took Tasmania (Van Diemen’s Land) in the nineteenth century. After publication of his account in 2002, Windschuttle went on to win recognition by the state (of Australia) for his services to history. Other historians have produced detailed and extensive rebuttals of his work (Manne, 2003).

11 The discourse of programs to remedy backwardness in the nations of the Third World (or the global South) came under challenge in the early 1970s, from world system theory. That much is recognised in the remarks on the global ‘periphery’ at MP: pp 436-437. Still, throughout the 1950s-1970s, so-called Oriental despotism was an accepted subject of scholarly inquiry in Europe. Deleuze and Guattari draw upon such studies, and they cite some of them (ibid., pp 564-565, note 9). As regards evolutionist strands in anthropology, Deleuze and Guattari comment favourably on neo-evolutionist anthropology – which emerged in the 1940s and is still an active field – at pp 47-49 and 238-239 of MP. Neo-evolutionist anthropology has no recourse to the idea of progress, and it assumes that transition into new forms of human culture is a multilinear process. It stands opposed to earlier evolutionist social theory; and it stands opposed also to cyclical or ‘gravitational’ accounts of civilisation, as found in the works of Gibbon, or Spengler, or Toynbee.
that process in philosophy, does the borrowed material gain, nor does it confer, a scientific or pseudo-scientific stamp of approval.\footnote{\cite{Patton, 2000}: p 142, note 8, and references therein. See also Deleuze’s remarks on the need for two readings – an insider’s and an outsider’s reading – for any piece of scientific or creative endeavour, in \cite{Stivale, 2003: ‘N as in Neurology’}.}

I admit that the experiment that is the (re)telling of universal history, because it uses terms that are now clearly ill-chosen and offensive, is difficult to pick up. But there is still a chance of breakthrough, if one reads the ‘universal’ history with an eye to Deleuze’s writings on ‘differenciacion’ and differentiation. That is how chapter three proceeds.
3 Machines in the socialisation of desire

I’ mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente
a l’altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
non viste mai fuor ch’a la prima gente.


3.1 Chapter outline

During 1988-89, when taking part in the interviews that make up Abécédaire, Deleuze spoke of the things in Anti-Oedipus that he thought would stand the test of time. He described it as a beautiful book, unique in posing a concept of the unconscious as something that one does not read through the family delirium: one reads the unconscious instead through the world/cosmic delirium. Deleuze noted also that the book presents the unconscious as a site of production – a machine or a factory – rather than as a theatre where a work is interpreted. He had just confessed, in the interview, to having had certain concerns after the book’s publication, about its being read as an incitement of its readers to gratify their desires in a reckless way. Still, he had nothing to change, he said, in those two points from the book about the thinking of the unconscious. The remarks on Anti-Oedipus finish with Deleuze saying ‘he hopes that it’s a book still to be discovered’.13

The present chapter has the twin aims of taking part in the discovery of Anti-Oedipus, and presenting concepts that mesh with the work in chapters five through and eight of the thesis, dealing with active politics and cinema in the nineties. The concepts take some getting used to, so the chapter is lengthy and busy. In case the reader finds the chapter frustrating, I would suggest just skimming it, and/or reading the précis of it in chapter nine (pages 186-187), then going straight to chapter four.

To the task of discovering Anti-Oedipus I bring some of Deleuze’s writing of an earlier vintage. Of course, I bring to the task also the sister volume, A Thousand Plateaus, published eight years later than Anti-Oedipus, and going with it to make up Capitalism and Schizophrenia. More to the point, I work at the task of discovery through an encounter that would probably not have occurred to the authors of Capitalism and Schizophrenia. The main physical system that is laid out in Anti-Oedipus is a circuit, which serves as a kind of pump of

13 Ibid., ‘D as in Desire.’
all social-production. It is the circuit of inscription, witnessing, and memory-animation. Halfway through this chapter, that circuit meets the theory of automata.14

After this outline, the chapter is organised in five sections. Section 3.2 explains ‘differenciation’ and ‘differentiation’ as Deleuze uses those terms. The explanation is needed because difference/ciation is key to the creative use of the ‘universal’ history in Anti-Oedipus. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 discuss the ‘universal’ history, which I suggest is not a timeline, but a structure of an imbricated or tiered kind. Each of the present actual tiers is produced by one of the three ‘social machines’ described in Anti-Oedipus.

Section 3.5 broaches the topic of abstract machines, from A Thousand Plateaus, as they relate to the social machines. The combining of the two gives rise to a creative pragmatics within society. Ending the chapter, section 3.6 states how I situate the answering of the research question of the present thesis, as a task within that creative pragmatics.

3.2 Different/ciation

The point in the ‘universal’ history is to convey that human activity comes from an abstract space, the space of the event of rupture, or the space of differenciation. That space accommodates the work of assemblages that give matter, and give attributes of matter, articulated forms. The space, and within it the marshalling of matter and its attributes into this or that articulated form, can be seen in three major strata of the real: physico-chemical activity; biomolecular activity; and human affairs. Differentiation, in the present context, is the opening out, through a series of unfoldings, of the space of differenciation.15

The challenge in writing about different/ciation is to anchor the concept in tangible experience. To meet that challenge, I shall be giving examples and bringing out the main points through the examples. To begin with, in presenting differenciation, I make use of one example that comes from biology, and another that comes from economics.

14 Why do I suspect that the encounter involving the theory of automata would not have occurred to Deleuze and Guattari? In the Abécédaire interviews, ‘Deleuze says that he believes more in the future of molecular biology of the brain than in the future of information science or of any theory of communication’ (ibid., ‘N as in Neurology’). A little later in the same session, Deleuze laments the move to include the teaching of ‘accounting and information science’ in universities (though he has no objection to universities accommodating research in those fields). At ‘Q as in Question,’ there is a point where Deleuze speaks of the decline in regard for philosophy in the public sphere. He asks mockingly whether concepts could come from information science and from advertising: ‘[…] the concept proposed by information science, by computers, is quite hilarious, what they call a concept.’ Also, Deleuze and Guattari take the famous Shannon-Weaver model of the encoding and transmission of information, and argue for a new schema that turns the model on its head (MP: p 79).

15 ‘Differenciate’ is a French word that Deleuze’s translators carry across unchanged into English, because the English word ‘differentiate’ has too wide a range of application for the purpose at hand (Deleuze, 1994 /1968 Fr: pp xi-xii). My outline in this section of the two related concepts, differenciation and differentiation, draws on (Deleuze, 1994 /1968 Fr: pp 207-221); it also draws on passages in MP, which are cited at the appropriate points. The emergence of the three strata of the real, and the content of those strata, is discussed in MP: Plateau 3 ‘The Geology of Morals.'
Differenciation

Differenciation is the event of the becoming actual of any item that is singular, in the sense that the actual item differs qualitatively from what shares some milieu with it. In other words, differenciation is the actualising of a break within some flow (continuum), where the flow in the vicinity of the break serves as a lode of inchoate qualitative difference.

The actualising of the break is the work of an assemblage. What kind of assemblage articulates items? Consider, for example, living bodies and DNA. There are nucleotide strings, which are the basic structural units in DNA. The strings amount to a machine code that is set to work in an assemblage for articulating living bodies (inclusive of bodies’ stimulus-response systems). In this case, the assemblage deals with contingent events by using the machine code to break and re-couple actual flows of matter. The code-based breaking and splicing of flows of matter is what configures amino acid molecules into slabs of protein, and those slabs into body parts, and those parts into living bodies. The result is a complex array of differenced actual flows of matter and of impressions (stimulus-response states), forming a bio-web (ecosystem). The bio-web, in turn, is involved in the refurbishing of the assemblage’s code. The refurbishing of the code occurs through natural and artificial selection, inclusive of contingent events outside and within the code. Selection does that code-work by acting on the products that arise from the code.

In general, differenciation entails an assemblage punctuating some flow, such that when the flow resumes, some new item in the flow is set apart qualitatively from what is external to it in the flow. Every break creates two new milieus, one of them around the item that is newly set apart, and the other internal to it. For each species that has outward-directed traits giving it a unique or determinate niche in some milieu, there is also a manner of cohering of the constituent parts, which is unique to, or determinant of, that species.

As a second instance of differenciation, take the production of wealth as it is conceived in classical political economy. The production of wealth, when treated according to the ideas of Smith and Ricardo, amounts to an assemblage that articulates items. What that assemblage (‘the’ production of wealth) does, first and foremost, is articulate labour. Stints of work at, say, bus driving get differenciated from stints at share trading, infant or elder care, waiting at tables, assembling sports shoes, and so forth. All of that differenciating is done through the assemblage that is the production of wealth as laid down by Smith and Ricardo.

Looking at ‘the’ production of wealth as an example of an assemblage brings out the following point. When something new takes root in human thought, things are actually happening around and beyond the thought. Thus, forming a bond with the idea, or discourse, of ‘the’ production of wealth, are two actual structures that are cognate to the idea. There is a structure, unfolding in time and space, of determinate labour niches: such and such job will exist at such and such workplace(s), for such and such interval of time. And there is the institutional structure that secures both the labour niches and the holding-together, at the required time and place, of human-style pegs (employees) for the majority of such niches.
The event of rupture that is the arrival of the idea, is also the arrival, or actualising, of those two ongoing structures, cognate to the idea.

In the example to do with wealth-production, the institutions that are involved include financial ones, notably private ownership of the means of production, and corporate stock. In addition to those, the institutions that are part of the assemblage include the nuclear family. And they include some of the social and state institutions that deal with ‘deviance’. In this context, vagrancy is an instance of deviance, and so is carving out your space in the world by squatting and gleaning (as autonomists try to do). Scamming may be deviant, or not, depending on who the scammer is, who they know, and how they scam. There is also the matter of deviant mental conditions: there are certain states of mind, which have to be properly modulated so that the assemblage that articulates labour can keep doing what it does. It is partly in answer to that need, that institutional regimes are put in place to govern treatments for social maladjustment and to govern alleviation of the symptoms of maladjustment. Examples include regimes that look after the therapeutic use of psychotropic drugs such as Valium, Prozac and Serepax; also, regimes for the control of recreational drug use.

**From content and semiotics to pragmatics**

There is a further step to be taken, in order to give a proper account of assemblages and differenciation. This step entails looking at the parallels between the above two instances of an assemblage, in biology and in economics.

Consider, on the one hand, the assemblage that is the genetic code and actual living bodies, and, on the other, the assemblage that is the idea of ‘the’ production of wealth and the cognate actual institutions, jobs, and workers. In terms of systemic roles, there is a relation of congruence between the genetic code and the idea (or the discourse couching the idea) of the ‘the’ production of wealth. In each case, the code/discourse forms the semiotic section of the relevant assemblage.

By the same token, there is a relation of congruence between, on the one hand, the living bodies produced according to the genetic code, and on the other, the institutions that have a hand in the division of labour, carving out the jobs and their pegs, workers for hire in those jobs. The panoply of actual living bodies is the content that goes with the genetic code; they are the content section of the assemblage that articulates them (which is the same assemblage that has the genetic code as its semiotic section). Likewise, the set of actual institutions that play a part in the division of labour, carving out the jobs and the hireable workers, is the content section of the assemblage that has the discourse of ‘the’ production of wealth as its semiotic section.

Throughout Deleuze and Guattari’s writings, assemblages that bring about differenciation are presented as a major genus of assemblages. A generic feature of the assemblages is their having the two aspects I have just illustrated: a semiotic section, which is a complex (or a sub-complex) of variables of expression; and a content section, which is
a (sub-)complex of variables of content. Significantly, whatever form of coupling holds together the two sections to form the assemblage, it is not a matter of the semiotic and the content sections mimicking, reflecting, or ‘doubling’ each other. The adhesion between the two sections is a matter of intercutting. Content and expression have the capacity to reach into each other, and neither section can be wholly and cleanly detached from the other. How that intercutting of content and expression comes about is pursued below, under the heading ‘Grammar in motion’ (page 60). For the present, it suffices to make a brief observation, which is best brought out through the example from economics.

In the mainstream discourse of political economy, it is the financial institutions that appear to cause jobs to be created; they are seen as producing a wealth of available livelihoods to be taken up by individuals. (When talk turns to what is to be credited with the feat of the modern division of labour, the protocol is that one does not mention, at least not up front, the roles of the nuclear family and the institutions that deal with deviance.) It seems plain, then, that people owe it to the financial institutions – which are seen as producing the livelihoods and thereby sustaining human life itself – to submit to the toll those institutions impose for simply being there.

As in the case of classical economics, so in other cases of an assemblage that brings about differenciation, there is a rational account of conditions and patterns of action seen as content. The semiotic section provides a ‘just so’ story for the content section. To be more precise, the semiotic section marks out effects and presents a quasi-cause for those effects. It gives the corporeal goings-on a sense, a meaning, a logic, and it portions out the degrees of consequentiality and eventfulness across those goings-on.

Thus, the kind of semiotic work that is being done in the assemblages puts paid to the notion that signs simply stand in for referents. The presence of signs – indexes, icons, and/or symbols\(^\text{16}\) – is not in dispute. The point is that the signs are implicated in a semiotic undertaking or calling that is far more complex than representation.

The calling is **pragmatics**. It comprises two kinds of moves: there are moves that place in variation variables of expression along with variables of content; and there are moves that ward off such placing in variation. Sense, meaning, and logic are among the elements in play, and so are consequentiality and eventfulness. Pragmatics is a matter of an assemblage’s asserting – and whilst the asserting can be direct and cutting, it is now overwhelmingly an indirect, phatic affair – that things are so.

The effects of pragmatics can be either active or reactive, either negative or positive. The phrase, ‘just so’, hints at the multitude of things semiotics can do in the sphere of things and qualities – from framing (in all its senses), to illocution and perlocution, and détournement and culture jamming. It is a phrase evoking the work that is done by

\(^{16}\) Index, icon, and symbol are three categories of signs – see note 28 below.
statements that effect incorporeal transformations, and by so doing, intervene in the world of corporeal things and qualities.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Differentiation}

A concrete way of approaching the definition of differentiation is via the first of the two examples already given, namely the assemblage comprising genetic code and living bodies. Operating together as an assemblage, the genetic code and living bodies tease out problems of actualising biotic paths in any given ecology. To differentiate, in general, is to tease out distinct problems with creative effect; or, what amounts to the same thing, it is to open out a part of the space of differentiation.

As the DNA/bodies example shows, differentiating can be an impersonal process. The assemblage does not have to implicate, as its agent, a creature having an intentional stance in the creative process. But in some cases, the assemblage does implicate a personal agent, being a person (or a group of persons) acting with an intentional stance. Deleuze and Guattari single out three such instances, in Europe, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. These are instances of differentiation in which thinkers, by working on a new idea, have helped to bring about a differentiation in the social field. That is to say, in each instance, the idea is instrumental in changing the way societies hold together, and the way each individual in society holds together. The thinkers responsible for the three ideas are Luther, Smith and Ricardo, and Freud.\textsuperscript{18}

Luther’s idea of religiosity allows the experience of religiosity to break away from being felt only along the path of subordination to the church. Though Luther then pins down religiosity, insisting that it is the life lived devoutly according to the Scriptures, he has already opened up a line of fracture. He has shown Europe that keeping to a path of unwavering subordination is not the essence of religiosity.

Similarly, the idea of the production of wealth as expounded by Smith and Ricardo takes the experience of wealth-producing into new social territory. Prior to that idea, wealth-producing was not experienced in its own right; instead, there was the experience of taking part in meaningful traditions in the manner that was proper to one’s fixed station in life. Smith and Ricardo are quick to bind the new experience of wealth-producing to an appropriate socially defined object. One produces wealth by functioning as an entrepreneur or by taking part in the labour force – added to that, in some accounts, is working to reproduce the labour force. And yet, with all its talking up of entrepreneurship and labour force attachment, the work of Smith and Ricardo has exposed a line of fracture. It recalls the work of Luther, by showing that wealth-production has potential to cast itself adrift from particular social structures in which – for the time being – it is pinned down.

\textsuperscript{17} Deleuze and Guattari discuss incorporeal transformations as part of their commentary on linguistics, in Plateau 4 of \textit{MP} (page references are given in note 42 below).
The third instance of differentiation is Freud’s idea of desire, which removes the experience of desire from being felt only in relation to the specific objects that are socially sanctioned as desirable. Certainly, Freud claims that civilisation depends on the pinning down of one’s experience of desire to one’s function as a properly adjusted part of the nuclear family. That claim gives rise to the institution of psychoanalysis; but the claim also exposes a line of fracture in the institution, through the insight that desire (libido), by its very nature, seeks autonomous expression.

In each of the three instances, the teasing out of a problem regarding a field of experience (religiosity, wealth-producing, desire) causes a renewal of the social field. There is a change in the way societies hold together, and in the way each individual in society holds together.

The experiment that is Deleuze and Guattari’s universal history consists in attempting to connect the line of fracture exposed by Smith and Ricardo with that exposed by Freud. That connection, should it occur, would cause a further renewal of the social field.

3.3 Social machines one and two

Production and the big question of economies and societies; and ethics

For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘universal’ history is a way of presenting acts of production, or synthesis. Their premise is that production is bound up with the working of desire, and with the more or less beaten tracks of memory. Here, as in all of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, desire is stripped bare. One shears it of its romantic connotations and humanist trappings. Desire is conceived as an impersonal force that acts within matter – namely, the force that produces intensities and produces the consumption of those intensities.

The ‘universal’ history is best treated as a pragmatic work. It is an experiment, which probes how economies and societies form and how they last, given that desire is the impersonal force just mentioned. Putting it another way, the experiment messes with the big question that was asked in classical political economy, the question as to the wealth of nations. The experimenters take that question, and they allow the work of Freud and his interlocutors to inflect it. In doing so, the term ‘social-production’ is used, to re-open ground that the term ‘wealth-production’ elides. The big question, inflected, is this: Given that there is an impersonal force, namely desire, which produces and metes out intensities, how does social-production happen?

The question is then, in effect, a cue for the act of dissecting and naming particular ‘social machines.’ The procedure is to expose the detail of assemblages that work on, and in,

---

18 The three ideas are discussed at A-Œ; pp 270 and 299-300. Regarding the parallel between Smith and Ricardo’s creativity and that of Luther, the authors attribute that insight to Marx, and cite a passage in Grundrisse.

19 See p 8 above.
desire. The assemblages work desire into a structure with socially differenciated parts: for instance, the desires of males, females and eunuchs, with those desires transected by tribe, caste (rank), or class, and by sexual orientation. The structures serve as means of propagating formations, which reside stably in desire, giving rise to a society. Brian Massumi calls such a structure a *miraculating grid*\(^{20}\).

Now, in dissecting and naming social machines, the aim is to affirm something about one of their products, us. We are setting out to affirm that we are a people by no means destined for the embrace of classical political economy and a normalised psychic make-up. Putting it another way, the point in rephrasing the big question of organising economies and societies – and what amounts to the same thing, the aim in dissecting and naming social machines – is as follows. The point/aim is *for the organising to get done in such a way as to give freer rein to life’s creative power*. That assertion proceeds from an ethics, developed by Deleuze, which enables the passing of value judgments on uses of power.

There is no need here to go into the ethics in depth.\(^{21}\) The key point is this. *The more highly valued uses of power are uses that beckon life toward taking new forms, being forms which rely less than the precursor forms, on keeping part of life separated from what it can do.* The separating of part of life from what it can do always has a moribund air. It can come about, of course, in various ways: notably, through socially sanctioned mores giving rise to inhibition and repression; through stifling of education; through outright domination, with (the threat of) incarceration and forced labour, beating, humiliation, disowning, and so on; and through eugenics.

‘Universal’ history’s work has been under way for scores of thousands of years. Assemblages with workings made up of semiotics and corporeal matter are immanent in, and crucial to, human affairs. They give rise to the series of formations, armed with miraculating grids, which inhabit desire and form our socialised desiring-bodies. Each formation can be thought of as combinatory apparatus for the molar coupling and decoupling of flows of matter and attributes; which is to say, it is a contraption for capturing and releasing flows *en bloc*, in a more or less ordered manner – a social machine.

Viewed from where we now stand, the apparatus has gravitated toward one or other of three social protomachines: those machines are the pivotal or polar forms – as observed to date – of social machine. The three polar forms bear names that were chosen by Deleuze and Guattari, based on Morgan’s typology of cultures. One of them is the *civilised capitalist* machine. Its two partners to date – both in allowing economies and societies to start out and in seeing that they keep on going in some or other form – are the *barbarian despotic* machine and the *primitive territorial* machine.

---

20 ‘Miraculating grid’ is a term that comes from Brian Massumi’s essay, ‘Realer than real: the simulacrum according to Deleuze and Guattari’ (Massumi, 1987). Massumi reminds his readers that Marx described capital as ‘a miraculating substance that arrogates all things to itself and presents itself as first and final cause’. (The words quoted are Massumi’s, where he is paraphrasing Marx.)

21 Patton has given a comprehensive and succinct account of the evaluation of power, as proposed by Deleuze, in (Patton, 2000: pp 59-67). The evaluation itself forms part of the cultivation of power in relation to (human and non-human) life.
Social machine one, the ‘primitive territorial’ machine

One has to begin somewhere, and I take as my starting point the social machine that is notable for having enjoyed a long ascendency, the primitive territorial machine. In that machine (I shall call it social machine one), the working of society centres on a capturing of flows, also known as a ‘territorialising.’ The verb ‘territorialise’ relates to the French ‘territoire,’ earth marked out in some system of order. As Eugene Holland points out, the word also has associations with Lacan’s account of the marking of erogenous zones on the human body in early infancy, through care-giving.22

In social machine one, the capturing of flows is effected by way of the ceremonial daubing and/or cutting of flesh, and the ritual theatre, dance and gesturing of assembled bodies. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the whole affair as the rites of bodily marking. As they put it, there is a triadic schema of ‘a voice that speaks or intones, a sign marked in bare flesh, an eye that extracts enjoyment from the pain.’23 Thanks to that schema, bodies are inculcated with the rules of tribal and clan behaviour. ‘[M]an ceases to be a biological organism and becomes a full body, an earth, to which his organs become attached.’24

Before social machine one came into being, organisms of all kinds either lived without any memory of sensations and circumstances, or they operated from a purely feral memory of such things. With social machine one, life can do something else. The primitive territorial machine gives life a power to differenciate by forming itself into the human groups that are known as tribes and clans, or, in Australian usage (adopted here), mobs. A mob is a people that belongs to its country. A mob operates from a collective memory, which reverberates in the words intoned as part of the rites of bodily marking.

Nietzsche draws attention to such social operating systems, which he calls memnotechnics, in the Second Essay of On the Genealogy of Morals. Citing Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari present the culture of mobs (that is, tribal culture) as a system of cruelty, where

[… c]ruelty has nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind: cruelty is the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them. [...] It makes men and their organs the parts and wheels of the social machine. The sign is a position of desire; but the first signs are the territorial signs that plant their flags in bodies. And if one wants to call this inscription in naked flesh ‘writing,’ then it must be said that speech in fact presupposes writing, and that it is this cruel system of inscribed signs that renders man capable of language, and gives him a memory of the spoken word.25

22 (Holland, 1999: p 19).
23 A-Œ: p 189; ‘intone’ here connotes incantation. The authors’ highlighting of cruelty presumably has something to do with major themes in mid-century French philosophy (see the paragraph on ‘memnotechnics’).
24 Ibid., p 144.
Deleuze and Guattari insist that the pain and the cruelty in mob society are among its key traits. In that regard, they build on Nietzsche’s interpretation of the history of ethics as a history of cruelty. Deleuze and Guattari’s highlighting of cruelty in connection with society is symptomatic of the general attention given to such matters in French philosophy from the 1930s through to the mid seventies. One theme that was much debated in that period, is how it is that many human accomplishments, thought of as noble, have sprung from cruelty. A related theme was the tracing of reason to its origins in unreason.

The voiced component and the tangible marks (including gestures) in the rites of mob society are non-signifying signs. They do not form utterances made up of signifiers with referents. Instead, the ritual of bodily marking, with incantation and witnessing, is a practice of coding. The signs are non-verbal cues (‘indexes’). They serve as an emblem, and reminder, of ancestral belonging, with all the cognate injunctions as to physical and spiritual attachments to the living earth. There are injunctions, for instance, concerning the harvesting and preparation of food; also the walkabout; the treatment of guests; matters of filiation and alliance, which in turn govern sharing and exclusion; and the handling of retribution for violations of the code.

The rites of visual signs with aural accompaniment are the business of a mob. The business animates bodies and their parts with a direct cueing effect. No mediating takes place in this cueing: no meaning is represented, nor is any meaning conveyed or received. Though the rites involve inscription (marking), the aural is not caught up in any process of translation into writing. There is a circuit of inscription, witnessing, and memory-animation, a circuit whose path is body, index, senses, body. This is a way of life that is attached to country (attached to earth). Its circuit is the bodily marking, and the witnessing and fixing of that in the memory, and the cueing of bodies, in given circumstances, either to act or to abstain from acting.

Social machine two, the ‘barbarian despotic’ machine

For mob society, there is always the possibility of some disruptive force altering the function of the society’s coding. The potential effect of the disruption is to co-opt that

---

26 Ibid., Second Essay, especially s 3.
27 Bogue provides some background concerning the focus on cruelty in mid-century French philosophy (Bogue, 1989: p 2).
28 An index is a cue that operates in a milieu where there is no re-presentation, ie no separation of things into an order of symbols and an order of referents. The term comes from Peircean semiotics, which distinguishes three main types of sign. An index is a thing customarily associated with something, as smoke is a sign of fire. An icon is a thing that is tied to something by resemblance, such as a road sign for falling rocks. And a symbol is a thing that is related to its referent only by convention, as with traffic lights, or with words.
occurrence of coding, or ‘exapt’ it, so as to give it a new role.\textsuperscript{29} In social machine two, or the barbarian despotic machine, coding acquires the role of signifying.

The move of coding into a signifying role – patched in, as it were, on top of the original non-signifying role of coding – is called overcoding. The overcoding is suited to the making and keeping of written records. Specifically, it is suited to the keeping of a tally of ancestral lands with their complement of bodies, chattels, and encoded obligations. On the basis of those written records, an imperial system of taxation or tribute comes into existence.

As to the imperial force that brings about the overcoding, though for the sake of brevity it goes by the name ‘despot,’ it can take different shapes in different societies. Still, in every case, it institutes a central position of receipt for the tribute that the chain of coding and overcoding exacts from the populace. A portion of the tribute is used for the upkeep of an administrative cadre.

The triadic figure of voice, bodily marking and the witnessing eye, from social machine one, is still found in social machine two. But the overcoding – writing – turns inscription and voice into tentacles possessed of a new power. With the onset of writing, the word in all its forms – whether spoken, written, read aloud, or read silently – is coloured by its newest use, which is the preserve of the literati: bureaucrats, priests, and patricians. Thus, writing inaugurates the ‘standard’ language. As part of the same transition, the segmentary parts within mob society (which are produced by the subordination of females to males, and deference to elders) are slowly eclipsed by a new set of segmentary parts: castes. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

[Inscription] has aligned itself on the voice and has become subordinated to the voice, enabling it to extract from the voice a deterritorialized abstract flux that it retains and makes reverberate in the linear code of writing. In short, graphism in one and the same movement begins to depend on the voice, and induces a mute voice from on high or from the beyond, a voice that begins to depend on graphism. It is by subordinating itself to the voice that writing supplants it.\textsuperscript{30}

From that point on, language will have two distinct modes of use, which Deleuze and Guattari call ‘major’ and ‘minor,’ cutting across all the strictly grammatical moods (indicative, subjunctive, and so on). Language in its major use consists in utterances that respect the caste system, observing the standard/non-standard linguistic distinctions. Language in its minor use consists in rogue utterances. It finds ways to unsettle the proper linguistic distinctions, and denaturalise them. The minor use of language is not a matter of the outright flouting of convention. It is a matter of twisting the linguistic distinctions in ways that will discompose the listener, reader, or audience, which it may do either with or without antagonising them. I have earlier touched upon that general effect, noting that there can be shifts in the pattern of what-flows-where through our bodies and on our tongues, and

\textsuperscript{29} The verb ‘to exapt’ is a neologism from biology. It conveys the idea of new forces taking over part of an existing structure. Consider some biotic exaptation – birds’ wings, for instance. Birds’ wings (and their precursors, pterosaurs’ wings) are exapted forelegs.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{A-Œ}: p 202.
utterances that cause the poles in the field of predicates to migrate. A minor use of language
does not have a settled speaker or author, because it sets in motion what Deleuze and Guattari
call ‘blocks of becoming,’ which engulf its source.31

3.4 Social machine three

The socius

Social machines are automata at one remove, a fact that I mention here because it assists
in looking into the working of social machines.32 When Alan Turing founded the theory of
automata in the 1930s, the breakthrough was his concept of a universal machine. A universal
machine is a machine that does the work of ‘any computing machine whatever.’ It subsumes
computing machines that were hard-wired for given tasks. A universal machine has a boot
cycle, in which a set of instructions, or program, is loaded in the computer’s data storage
device, or memory unit. With a set of instructions loaded in the memory unit, the machine is
said to have been programmed. The machine can be programmed to emulate – to pass itself
off as – any one of a vast array of possible computing machines that are purpose-built for
specific tasks. In short, a universal machine is a programmable computer; these days, it is
simply called a computer (the ‘programmable’ goes without saying).

A computer has its memory unit, into which programs (software) and other data are
loaded, and where they are stored. A social machine has a universal or ‘blank’ part that
evokes the computer’s memory unit: it is a virtual surface, called the socius. The socius is
actualised, at a given time and place, as some surface that bears inscriptions, serving as a
trace of the socialised desiring-body. (The inscribed surface is a miraculating grid.) If social
machines were computers, the re-actualising of the socius would be the loading of new
software into the memory unit. In other words, the re-actualising of the socius is the booting
of a social machine – though the analogy is not perfect.33

31 MP: pp 238 and 293. See also (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986 /1975Fr); (Colebrook, 2002b: pp 103-
123, especially pp 115-116); and (Bogue, 2003b: passim). Bogue remarks that a language in its minor use
is, like Yiddish, a language ‘in continuous flux, […] traversed by great migrations, a medley of whim and law,
an amalgam […] with no standard speech, a field of forces that is less known than intuitively understood’
(ibid., p 97).

32 Patton makes the point that there is a certain type of virtual multiplicity that acts in assemblages of matter and
signs, much as software acts in computer hardware (Patton, 2000: pp 44-45). My discussion of the socius is
one way of developing that point.

33 The analogy is not perfect because the socius is a virtual surface. At no time, and nowhere, does the socius
exist as an actual blank waiting to have a set of instructions loaded into it. In that respect, the socius differs
from a computer’s memory unit, which does exist as an actual blank wherever and whenever the computer is
not booted. (In the comedic novel Being There, by Jerzy Kosinski (Kosinski, 1970), the body as tabula rasa
(a blank) is incarnated as Chance, the gardener. The character is played by Peter Sellers in the 1980 movie
adaptation, which was a box-office hit. Chance’s saying, ‘I like to watch,’ became a by-word for the cathartic
release of the fear that television and video could mesmerise and enthral the public, with lasting and perhaps
haywire effects.)
In mob society, or social machine one, the inscriptions borne on the socius are the ritual bodily markings in the circuit of body, index, senses, body. Those are inscriptions on the living earth, on the country whose mob (the complex of bodies attached to country) performs the rites. So, social machine one has the earth as its socius, or to be more precise, the social machine that is in play, wherever the socius is actualised as the earth, is social machine one.

In the case of social machine two, or the barbarian despotic machine, the socius is no longer actualised as the earth. Consider social machine two as it functions in the ancient empires – Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, China, Meso-America, the Mediterranean. Primitive inscription has been taken over by markings on the imperial seals, tablets or scrolls that are maintained by the administrative cadre, under the aegis of the ruler or ruling caste. On that surface, inspectors symbolise in writing what they find on their rounds, and counter-check it, thus keeping tabs on all things having to do with the continuing exaction of imperial tribute. (English gets the word ‘control’ from the Latin verb, *contrarotulare*, to check against the *rotulus* or scroll.)

The surface inscribed under the aegis of the ruler is social machine two’s actualised socius. The surface – be it the seal, the tablets or the scrolls – is considered as an extension of the (body of the) despot. The marking of the surface, in effect, takes up the ancestral ties and injunctions of mob society, which are memorised in a coded and unwritten form, and on that code-bound base it superposes the writing process. That move exapts the ancestral ties and injunctions, prising open the circuit of body, index, senses, body. The freed production – it is in free flow in that it is detachable from the earth, where it had been bound by the earth as machine-one’s socius – is straightaway recaptured through the corresponding entry on the scroll/despot, or despotic socius. On being recaptured, or reterritorialised, the production is assessed, and the part of it that is owed as tribute to the imperial treasury gets skimmed off.

In machine-two society, the revenue thus collected is spent in part on current consumption. For example, some of the revenue stream ends up in the hands of the bureaucrats, priests or other complicit castes, who consume it. The remaining part of imperial treasure is amassed as a stock of wealth, comprising infrastructure and machines, general stores, precious goods, and coin. In addition, merchants conducting cross-border trade arrange their finance in gold, in coin, and in kind. Those two forms of capital, imperial treasure and merchant finance, exist as it were in a closed sphere. They have little capacity to mix with the other holdings of wealth and liability in machine-two society.

The lower castes in machine-two society are enmeshed in a bodily investing process. Among the lower castes – that is, the common people – things that are recognised as

---

34 Instead of focusing on the seal, tablets or scrolls, I could have focused on the face of the despot, in the spectacle of punishment of offenders against society, where the prisoner lives or dies at the despot’s command. That spectacle of cruelty plays an important part in social machine two’s overcoding process. A prime example is the spectacle of the gladiatorial contest in ancient Rome. Another is the Inquisition’s auto da fe. The imperial tax-collecting mechanism and the spectacle of cruelty are two sides of the same coin.

35 In machine-two society as a whole, consumption is kept in an equilibrium of sorts. Helping to achieve a stable result, there may be sumptuary laws. Largesse, in the form of charitable works and/or public spectacle
qualitatively different are seldom viewed as if they could be valued in some common coin. The investing that is done by the lower castes, even where it involves money changing hands, still follows tradition. And there are rich traditions involved: traditions that connect bodies with the play of the elements. When bodies and implements connect with land, when they connect with minerals, with vegetation, with livestock, with all manner of materials, and with each other, they tend to follow culturally handed down lore. Though it is a hard way of life, it is leavened with its own brightness, which takes many forms, including humour, and the songs and the festivals that mark the multiple rhythms of labour. Money is peripheral to the way of life of machine-two’s lower castes. Money has little sway, because those castes’ way of life is bound by received patterns of connecting, such as patterns of generosity and reciprocation where guests or kin are involved.

Social machine three, the ‘civilised capitalist’ machine

For machine-two societies, as for those of social machine one, there is a transformative event, which once again consists in the onset of a new practice of inscription. At some point, the lower castes begin to take it for granted that many things recognised as qualitatively different will be inscribed with valuations in a common coin.

The change in attitude may appear to be a matter of picking up a new habit, simply because the habit boosts efficiency in the exchange of goods and services. But in fact, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, the inscription of monetary values on all manner of goods and services does not arise from a cash nexus occurring solely in the sphere of exchange. The habit of inscribing valuations in a common coin takes effect only when that new mode of inscription enters the sphere of wealth, where it proceeds to unravel the way of life of the lower castes. The bodily invested way of life comes undone, with pressures emerging on the common people to switch from investments that are inalienable, to ones that are alienable.

Expressed in Marx’s terminology, the transformative event is the tipping of the balance from one generally held view of the role of money in the life of the common people, to another. First, money had the mundane role of a lubricant assisting in the mutually beneficial exchange of goods (C-M-C). Here, C-M-C is shorthand for the practice whereby some consumer goods (C) are exchanged for money (M), with the money that changes hands being just a means to a non-monetary end (C). The money is simply the sellers’ means of converting their temporary holdings of one type of consumer good into other consumer goods that are of greater use to them.

At some point, there is a tipping-over of the general view, to the idea that money can beget money, via goods (M-C-M). M-C-M is shorthand for the transformation of some holdings of money into consumer goods, with the turning of money into goods in this case taking a new form: the factoring of money into the producing of goods. That is to say, money (M) is turned into goods (C) expressly in order to create an opening for the

(imperial pomp, and ‘bread and circuses’, including of course the spectacle of cruelty), also have a significant role in maintaining equilibrium.
appropriating of surplus value, with the overall aim being to amass greater holdings of money (M) and keep repeating the process. Marx sums up the M-C-M transformation – which he calls the *self-valorisation* (selbstverwertung) of capital – by stating that capital is:

[...] value which can perform its own valorization process, an animated monster which begins to ‘work,’ ‘as if its body were by love possessed.’

The change in the socially accepted role of money amounts to this: with M-C-M, industrial capital – that is, money that uses production of goods and services as its means of accumulation – makes capital the new ‘despot.’ Social machine three arrives, with its own mode of inscription, which consists in the marking of values (accounting values, selling prices, buying prices) against all manner of goods and services, under the aegis of industrial capital. Thus, social machine three expats the machine-two (despotic) system for producing and exchanging goods and services, and that includes the coin of the realm being coopted into its new use in social machine three.

In social machine three, or the civilised capitalist machine, labour is for hire, and will migrate at the call of sufficiently marked differentials in wages and conditions. Tradition, once the prime investing force in life, is now an ornament. Thus, labour is ‘deterritorialised’ – social machine three undoes the coding and overcoding that social machines one and two put in place. As part of the same transformation, sources of pleasure that are not commercially produced and commercially traded goods, are slowly eclipsed by those that are. That includes sources of positional gratification, where the thing that entices, and pits one against others, is the prize of being ‘in’ and ‘cool’ in the manner of one’s choosing. So caste fades away: every individual can aspire to upward mobility, and furthermore, each to her own preferred version of which way is now up.

And aspire to upward mobility we must. It is not that we are innately bound to pursue upward mobility. Rather, it is as creatures of Oedipal conditioning, that we are bound to do so. With the deterritorialising of labour, there is a decline in traditional networks of support; a once robust web of generosity and reciprocation is now in tatters. So society comes to rely on a new institution. Enter the nuclear family. One of the effects is that people become adapted to the ‘normal sexuality’ of Oedipal conditioning. Desire gets traced onto the Oedipal triangle. And once that has happened, it becomes second nature to covet what we imagine is somebody else’s position of enjoyment. Envious desire becomes an inescapable condition of life, affecting even those who are not trapped in it, since (as they are reminded all too often) they are not properly adjusted. The bind of Oedipal desire is as important to the functioning of the economy, in capitalism, as are wages and profit.

---

36 (Marx, 1976 /1867Ger: p 302). The text quoted by Marx is the refrain from Brander’s song about a cellar rat, which is sung just before Faust and Mephistopheles appear in the cellar in Goethe’s Faust (Part I, ‘Auerbach’s Cellar in Leipzig,’ line 2126 et seq).

37 The socius is actualised as capital at the moment when capital ceases to work in alliance with feudal systems of production (ie guilds, town corporations, and monopolies), and ‘becomes filiative capital when money begets money’ through industrial entrepreneurship (A-Œ: p 227).

38 *Idem.*
The link between social machines two, one, and three

It is worth spending a moment to tease out an aspect of inscription in social machine three. The manner of channelling flows in social machine three is related to its companion machines’ flow-plans. The previous section (page 54) pointed out that the linchpin of social machine two is the overcoding of flows. Overcoding entails an ascendency of writing over voice, and it links together two operations, both of which take place in a people’s collective memory. The move is to deterritorialise flows and then at once reterritorialise them. The machine-three form of inscription has to do with the latter stage of the overcoding move. Social machine three traces a capacity for loosening and realignment within the memory. As a result, the second stage of the overcoding move (the reterritorialising of flows) becomes much more supple in its mode of linking up with the first stage (the deterritorialising of flows).

With memory thus adapted, the lower castes’ obligations to pay tribute to the overlord, ultimately come to function in the same way as a tradable coupon on a bond. The reterritorialising that obliges bodies to serve in a regime commanded by some actual or imagined boss, is now a claim that circulates in exchange. As the claim changes hands, the underling passes in and out of teams and from one subordinate position to another. In sum, imperial tribute has been remade through the dismantling of overcoding and the altered use of the parts. The result is a highly flexible channelling of flows. The new process, which takes apart overcoding and takes over from it, is known as an axiomatic of decoded flows.39

The graphism just described can be thought of as a modernised memnotechnics. Its driving force is business entrepreneurship, and on that score, the socius is actualised, in social machine three, as capital. But the structure of social machine two still plays a vital role in social machine three. The despot of social machine two is still present in social machine three, though the despot no longer functions as the actualised socius (which is now capital). The despot is now present in the shape of the state, a sovereign law-giving and law-enforcement authority. Deleuze and Guattari use the term Urstaat, in order to underscore two facts. First, the despot in social machine two prefigures the state in capitalist social formations; and second, the state – as a ‘despot’ on the horizon – haunts mob societies that pre-dated actual despots or states.40 Thus, the Urstaat may be ancient, but it is also modern.

39 An elaborate account of the passage from the imperial system of overcoding to the modern state and the axiomatic of decoded flows is presented at MP: pp 448-460. The account relies heavily on the writings of the historian V Gordon Childe – notably, The Most Ancient East (1928; titled New Light on the Most Ancient East: The Oriental Prelude to European Prehistory in later editions), and The Prehistory of European Society (1962).

40 A-Œ: pp 217-222. Bogue notes that Deleuze and Guattari’s position concerning the Urstaat is in broad agreement with that of Karl Wittfogel, as presented in the historian’s influential work, Oriental Despotism (1957) (Bogue, 1989: p 96).

Deleuze and Guattari also discuss the means by which mob societies keep themselves free of centralised authority, ie how those societies keep at bay the Urstaat – the despotic ordering system – that hovers on their horizon. (It could be a would-be chief or king within their ranks, or a king from elsewhere, who leads or sends a marauding force to attack them.) The main source for the discussion of the Urstaat as such a threat is the work of Pierre Clastres, whose collection of essays on primitive (in my terms, mob) societies, published in 1972, is titled La Société contre l’état (Society against the state). See A-Œ: pp 148, 190, and notes 8 and 36 on pages 389 and 390 respectively.
and archaic. That is why state sovereignty is robust – it varies in its make-up both by geopolitical region and over time.

In capitalist society, the Urstaat or ‘megamachine’ works at a range of levels of the body politic. It works at the supra-state/global level, and from there it extends down to the level of the individual human body (as Foucault observes in his writings on governmentality). The capitalist state’s sphere of operation also takes in zones that serve as its frontier – that is to say, it takes in zones of precapitalist or extracapitalist society. The sphere of operation needs the frontier zones, because of the civilised capitalist machine’s appetite for the displacing of its own limits. The capitalist social formation has a restless way of working. Time and again, it will press deterritorialisation beyond previous limits, and then it will recognise new limits, only to exceed those limits in their turn. The present-day limits are of many kinds. Distance and exclusivity; connectivity and presence. Exposure and fame; stealth. Atavism; avant-gardism. Refined taste; crassness. Smartness; stupidity. Opportunism; moralism. Self-aggrandisement; self-abasement. And the list could go on.

3.5 Grammar in motion

From reciprocal presupposition to the investing powers and the abstract machine

Each of the three social machines singled out above belongs to the genus of assemblages that was looked at in section 3.2, viz assemblages that bring about differenciation. Between them, the three social machines give matter, and attributes of matter, a broad array of articulated forms: for instance, the forms of human biomass, ranging from ‘collective’ bodies such as clans, tribes, councils of elders, state cadres and civil institutions, to individual human bodies and body parts; the forms of technical machines and gadgetry; the forms of grammaticality or sense; the forms of logicality; and the forms of meaning, significance, consequentiality, and eventfulness.

41 My brief account of the Urstaat draws on four passages in Capitalism and Schizophrenia. The Urstaat, or megamachine, is discussed in AŒ at p 141 and at pp 217-221. It is discussed in greater depth in MP at pp 427-437 and at pp 455-473. To be precise, the non-homogeneity of state sovereignty is discussed at pp 435-437, and at pp 461-473 the authors discuss how an ongoing action of capture by the megamachine coexists with the opening of lines of escape from the megamachine, in the capitalist social formation. (‘Megamachine’ is a term that Deleuze and Guattari borrow from a 1966 article in the journal Diogène: ‘La première megamachine,’ by the US urban planner, architectural critic and historian, Lewis Mumford. Mumford’s reputation rests on his series of books, Technics and Civilization (1934), The Culture of Cities (1938), The Condition of Man (1944), The Conduct of Life (1951), The City in History (1961), and The Myth of the Machine (1970).)

42 In this list, the forms of grammaticality and the forms listed after that, are involved in making the ‘incorporeal expressed,’ which is a dimension of words and things. The corporeal and incorporeal dimensions of words, and of things, are explored in Stoic philosophy. The topic is discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in MP: pp 80-82 and 85-87.
It is through belonging in the wider class of assemblages outlined in section 3.2, that the three social machines have a power to come out of their box, and indeed to propel us (tangled up with them) out of their box. Here, the thing that comes into play is the generic configuring of the assemblages. The generic configuring allows us to explore whether the three social machines coexist with other vital social machines. Thus, one can explore the relevance of the three social machines to further renewal of the social field. In other words, one can consider the power that may be pent up in the three social machines, a power that is capable of actualising re-connected and re-conjugated parts within society. And of course, as stated above, the discovery and the reclamation that could flow from that probing of stored power are the object of Deleuze and Guattari’s universal history. Leave out the exploring, and the ‘universal’ history would amount to a ‘just so’ story warding off change. And that would not do: the exercise is intended to be eventful.

As already noted (pages 47-48), assemblages that bring about differenciation have two imbricated sections; one of the sections is made up of variables of expression, and the other is made up of variables of content. Neither of the two sections is master to the other. They can penetrate each other, a fact which places them in a relation of mutuality, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it, a relation of reciprocal presupposition.43

Thus, in social machine one, the earth (or country) and the rites of bodily marking, chants and witnessing, form a complex that is in a relation of reciprocal presupposition with mobs or tribes, with clans, with councils of elders, and, of course, with the forming of gender-age cohorts. Social machine two brings in a different semiotic section. It comprises the despotic socius with the markings and scenes it etches into memory, including the spectacle of punishment of offenders at the command of the despot, as well as the standard written language of the empire. That semiotic section, in turn, is in a relation of reciprocal presupposition with the bodies of social machine two: bodies as they are found in an imperial system. Without naming all of those bodies, the list runs from pre-modern corps of administration and armies, through to the institutions of slavery, indentured labour, fiefs, and so forth.

Then, in social machine three, the semiotic section takes on the form associated with capital, with its drive to value an ever-widening range of things on the basis of the M-C-M dynamic. Here, too, the semiotic section is in a relation of reciprocal presupposition with the relevant bodies. Among those bodies are banks and other money-lenders; corporations; modern armies and police forces; nuclear and would-be nuclear families; schools; workplaces; labour hire shops; clinics; and detention facilities. As suggested by Deleuze, who draws attention to the control society that emerged after World War II, we can see that human bodies have been adapting, lab rat style, to the runs of society’s mazes and to the twirls of its treadmills. Thus, power that resides in the named institutions has been moving to a micro level. Many human bodies are now so conditioned by habit that we have, pumping through our veins as it were, the micro surrogates for schools, barracks, banks, white picket fences, and all kinds of clinic.

43 Ibid., p 87, and pp 88-148 passim.
The generic relation between the semiotic section and the content section (the bodies) calls for some explanation … how does the relation arise? The answer begins with the thought that there are ‘investments of words [or more generally signs] and organs according to a relation of reciprocal presupposition.’ If there are investments, there must be some investing power.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that there are two generic investing powers. One is the cutting edge of deterritorialisation, or the line of morphing, which constitutes the assemblage; any given assemblage has such an edge, which is its tendency to escape, time and again, from self-sameness or identity. (A cubist portrait, for example, brings out a line of morphing for faces. The line of morphing has a transformative capacity. Seen as a line on the (quasi-)plane of the face, it works as the facial axis of symmetry. Then again, seen as a line on the perpendicular plane, it works as the edge of the face in profile. The line of morphing works as neither properly the axis of symmetry nor properly the profile – it transforms both those features.) The second generic investing power is a capturing drive. It is a power bent on the sober work of reterritorialising, a power that can intercept, and can harness or at least restrain, the assemblage’s tendency to give self-sameness the slip.

The two investing powers form an abstract machine, and this is a key concept in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. The abstract machine, they explain, operates by matter, not by substance, by function, not by form. […] The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function – a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute.

The abstract machine prefigures the spewing forth of the content section and expression section from a lode of ‘unformed traits’ (real stuff suspended in a magmatic condition of particle-sign-ness). The abstract machine diagrams the concrete assemblage’s mode of distributing form between signs and things, that is to say, its mode of insinuating form into expression and into content.

It is worth quoting at length from Deleuze and Guattari’s account of the relation between an assemblage and an abstract machine:

We must therefore arrive at something in the assemblage itself that is still more profound than these sides [ie the expression side and the content side] and can account for both of the forms in presupposition, forms of expression or regimes of signs (semiotic systems) and forms of content or regimes of bodies (physical systems). This is what we call the abstract machine, which constitutes and conjugates all of the assemblage’s cutting edges of deterritorialization. […] The abstract machine […] makes no distinction within itself between content and expression, even though outside itself it presides over that distinction and distributes it in strata, domains, and territories. An abstract machine in itself is not physical or corporeal, any more than it is semiotic; it is diagrammatic […]. It operates by matter, not by substance, by function, not by form. But functions are

---

44 Ibid., p 147, italics added here.
46 Ibid., p 145.
not yet ‘semiotically’ formed, and matters not yet ‘physically’ formed. The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function – a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute.\footnote{Ibid., pp 140-141, italics in original.}

\section*{Creative pragmatics}

The concept of an abstract machine comes from the ‘universal’ history, and it also manages to pitch the ‘universal’ history into a state of ongoing ferment. That is to say, the concept of an abstract machine is an immanent cueing device, which the ‘universal’ history uses to mobilise itself.

The cueing works by shaking up and displacing that body of grammar and linguistics, whose focus is a supposed ground (or taproot) of invariance or universality in language. Take one currently influential account of language. In this account, there is a single core of deep structure that undergirds human language as language varies across cultures and subcultures that are spatially, temporally, or otherwise distinct. The account is due to Noam Chomsky, who originally devised it in the 1950s. It has many supporters, and it has been popularised in recent years by Steven Pinker, who calls the deep structure ‘universal mentalisese’.\footnote{(Pinker, 1994: p 82).} Proponents of the account look for, and they find, what amounts on their terms to evidence of an invariant structure in language. This approach to language is known as transformational-generative grammar.

The concept of an abstract machine disturbs the Chomsky-Pinker account of language. The abstract machine bypasses the supposed deep structure, by opening up a rhizomatous path of inflections of language. The path spirals not only through expression and content, but also through the lode of unformed traits, or particle-sign-ness. The concept of an abstract machine implodes the myth of that subterranean channel of expression where tongues are unified, that is, where translation shrivels to a non-creative and non-mutant procedure. (Translation software, for instance, is non-creative and non-mutant in its effects. And whilst in most cases it can competently translate sentences, it is not adept in translating the titles of books and films, or stanzas of nonsense verse, or the lyrics of pop songs. Whatever types of wordplay are gradually mastered by translation software, that mastering, by its very nature, will open up new spaces for inventive wordplay.) The concept of an abstract machine opens language to a pragmatics that arises within a regime of signs, and that places the regime of signs in variation. The pragmatics works on and on, as a nomad spiral that repeats a relay of two phases. Phase one is a \textit{pro tempore} transformational-generative grammar; it has a unifying effect. Phase two is a diagrammatic and machinic general dynamics of assemblages, which deals with parts bent on going their own ways.\footnote{MP: pp 141-148; the pragmatics is summarised in the diagram on their p 146. The relay discussed here is akin to the relay between the sciences and the arts, discussed in the first part of chapter 7 below (or see the précis, ‘Too much doubt, and never enough’, in chapter 9).}
The ‘universal’ history suggests that society comes with a mixed regime of signs – at least a three-way mix, since there are three or more social (proto)machines. Deleuze and Guattari’s account of social machines, as I have made clear in this chapter, provides not only an initial tracing of the mixed regime of signs, but also a transformational map of three pure regimes of signs occurring in the mixed regime. The tracing and the map provide an opening for work to be done on ‘the diagram of the abstract machines that are in play’ in the pure regimes of signs. Coupled with that task is a need to ‘outlin[e] the program of the assemblages that distribute everything and bring a circulation of movement with alternatives, jumps, and mutations.’

The present thesis is pragmatic, and it works within the phase of the diagram and the machinic assemblage (or ‘program’) – though of course it makes contact with the phase of the transformational-generative grammar. The thesis marshalls evidence from the 1990s on a question of further actual renewal of the social field. Any wholesale renewal of the social field would occur along a line of morphing that produced both a new diagram and a newly actualised socius (new software in the social machine). Short of wholesale renewal, there could be, so to speak, a patch of the existing actualised socius.

### 3.6 Conclusion

If *Anti-Oedipus* is a book still to be discovered, as Deleuze said in 1988, then its brush with the theory of automata in this chapter may play a small part in that discovery. At this point, just for a moment, I need to switch the idiom out of computers and into music. It is as if Deleuze and Guattari created a new tonal system for composing statements on a certain topic, the unconscious. The new tonal system is an effort to break and transform the dyad of the unconscious and Western ‘civilisation.’ Chapters four through eight of the thesis are a five-finger exercise I have written, using the new tonal system.

The concept of the ‘universal’ history, linked as it is with the three social machines, provides a framework for thinking about Hardt and Negri’s widely discussed concept of Empire. I have suggested in this chapter that we think of social machines as if they were programmable machines loaded with certain software, and executing such tasks as the software can handle. Running with that thought, one can see Empire as a contender for a filling out of the schema of the social machines in the ‘universal’ history: Empire would be a fourth social machine.

But Empire is not the sole contender for a role in filling out the schema. The active left’s politics of the 1970s through to the 1990s, as outlined in the next three chapters, suggest not one but two moves are afoot. The position is spelt out at the end of chapter six. Alongside what may be the first stirrings of Empire (a new actualised socius, ie new software for a fourth social machine), there is work going on around a bug in the existing software. That

---

50 Both the passages quoted in this paragraph are from *MP*: pp 146-147 (italics in original).
work, which relates to the Lockean social contract, is aimed at overcoming cynical opportunism. It is part of social machine three’s tortuous and drawn-out encounter with social machine one. The encounter between social machines three and one, as revealed in the remainder of the thesis, is in part taken up with the coding of a patch for the existing actualised socius.