

A Thousand Plateaus: 4: Postulates of Linguistics

Outline by John Protevi / Permission to reproduce granted for academic use

protevi@lsu.edu / <http://www.protevi.com/john/DG/PDF/ATP4.pdf>

March 23, 1999

I: "Language Is Informational and Communicational"

II: "There Is an Abstract Machine of Language That Does Not Appeal to Any 'Extrinsic' Factor"

III: "There Are Constants or Universals of Language That Enable Us to Define It as a Homogeneous System"

IV: "Language Can Be Scientifically Studied Only under the Conditions of a Standard or Major Language"

CAE = collective assemblage of enunciation

MA = machinic assemblage

AM = abstract machine

PC = plane of consistency

DT = deterritorialization

I: "Language Is Informational and Communicational"

- I. Elementary unit of language: order-word [mot d'ordre] (75a)
 - A. Semiotic co-ordinates of grammar
 1. Transcendent partitioning of phase space [of desiring-production or "life"] by molar categories
 2. = "giving life orders"
 - B. Preview of themes of plateau:
 1. Faculty of order-words
 2. Language not oriented to belief but to obedience
 3. Information as strict minimum for transmitting and obeying order-words
 4. Order-words as death sentences
- II. Status and scope of order-word (76a-79a)
 - A. Order-word not co-extensive w/ language, but is only a language-function (76a)
 1. First determination of language = indirect discourse:
 - a. from second to third party
 - b. In this sense language is transmission of order-word: social determinations of what is to be done
 2. Metaphors and metonymies only effects of language a indirect discourse
 3. Language a map [intervenes, actively constructs], not a tracing [representative] [cf. p 12 ATP]
 - B. Austin: relation of performative and illocutionary (77a)
 1. Types of presuppositions:
 - a. Implicit or nondiscursive presuppositions: relations between speech acts and statements
 - b. Explicit assumptions: relations between statements or an external act
 2. Types of speech acts:
 - a. Performative: what is done by speaking something [e.g., I commit myself by these words...]
 - b. Illocutionary: what is done in speaking [questioning, promising, etc.]
 3. Three consequences of speech act theory for linguistics
 - a. Language cannot be considered a code or as communication of information
 - b. Linguistics cannot shield semantics, syntactics, etc from pragmatics
 - c. Linguistics cannot maintain the langue v. parole distinction
 4. Contra Benveniste and subjectivism/communication (78a)
 - a. Cannot reach the order-word as key to language by grounding illocutionary by performative
 - (1) performatives can be defined w/o recourse to pragmatics
 - (2) e.g., Benveniste and self-referentiality
 - (a) this posits a pre-existent structure of subjectivity or intersubjectivity
 - (b) thus for Benveniste, language is communicational
 - b. Ducrot allows the reversal
 - (1) [the grounding of subjectivity in language]:
 - (2) performative must be grounded in the illocutionary
 - (a) illocutionary explained by implicit/nondiscursive presuppositions
 - (b) implicit/nondiscursive presuppositions explained by CA of enunciation
 5. Thus neither signifiacnce/information nor subjectivity/communication reaches the pragmatic level
 - C. Definitions of order-words and of language (79a)
 1. Order-words: relation of word or statement to implicit presuppositions,
 - a. That is, to speech acts

- b. Not just commands, but every act linked to statements by social obligations
 - 2. Langage: set of order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a langue at any one time
- III. Precision of relation of statement and act as internal immanence of redundancy (79b)
 - A. Order-word is itself the redundancy of act and statement
 - 1. Order-words tell us what we must retain, expect, etc.
 - 2. Redundancy is primary: information subordinate to transmission of order-words
 - B. Two forms of redundancy
 - 1. Frequency: signifiacnce of information
 - 2. Resonance: subjectivity of communication
- IV. Collective assemblages of enunciation (79c-83)
 - A. Effects:
 - 1. Accounts for social character of enunciation
 - 2. Accounts for individuation of statements and subjectification of enunciations
 - B. Definitions
 - 1. Nominal definition: redundant complex of act and statement that accomplishes it
 - 2. Real definition: set of all incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies (80a)
 - a. Actions and passions affecting bodies
 - (1) bodies in widest sense [=any formed matter or substance of content]
 - (2) [=machinic assemblage; = social phase space for treatment of bodies]
 - b. Incorporeal transformations
 - (1) [=moving a body into another region of social phase space; = category of treatment]
 - (2) logical characteristics:
 - (a) attributed to bodies
 - (b) the expressed of the statement
 - (3) Examples: juridical [defendant/convict]; political [peace/war]; social [minor/adult]
 - (4) temporal characteristics:
 - (a) instantaneous
 - (b) immediate
 - (c) simultaneous
 - (d) precisely-dated
 - (5) more examples: social [love]; religion [communion]; political [hijacking]
 - C. Summary: order-words or CA of enunciation:
 - 1. designate relation btw statements and incorporeal transformations
 - 2. [=social machine regulating how bodies are categorized {which in turn regulates how they are treated}]
 - a. strange nature of instantaneous transformation (81a)
 - (1) Rousseau: transition from state of nature to society
 - (2) best illustrated by examples from political economy
 - b. Ideology confines statements to superstructure, but D/G show their productive effects
- V. Constant variation (always undergoing transformation) as characteristic of CA of enunciation (82a):
 - A. circumstances (regulating effect of statement) as internal to enunciation
 - 1. variables of expression: [regulating circumstances which control effects of statements]
 - a. Establish relation of language and the "outside"
 - b. Precisely because they are immanent to language
 - 2. Critique of linguistics: by looking to language constants (instead of variation of CA)
 - a. Ties statement to signifier and enunciation to a subject
 - b. Consigns circumstances to exterior; self-encloses language; makes pragmatics a residue
 - B. Order-word:
 - 1. Variable that makes word into an enunciation
 - 2. its immediacy gives it power of variation over bodies whose transformation it controls
- VI. Pragmatics: politics of language (82b)
 - A. "Transformational research": study of variation of order-words and incorporeal transformations
 - B. Examples:
 - 1. Faye's study of Nazi statements
 - 2. Lenin's establishment of avant-garde
- VII. Regime of signs or semiotic machine (83a)
 - A. Set of CAs of enunciation whose variables (=incorporeal transformations) are in determinable relations
 - B. Any one society has a multiplicity of regimes of signs; new order-words modifying these will arise
 - 1. Redundancy of order-words
 - 2. Indirect discourse: presence of order-word w/in word
 - a. Direct discourse is fragment of indirect discourse
 - (1) "I" is an order-word

- (2) my direct discourse is free indirect discourse running through me
- b. Faculty of order-words
 - (1) Instantaneous emission, perception, transmission of order-words
 - (2) Wide variability; power of forgetting
 - (3) Ideal/ghostly capacity for apprehension of incorporeal transformations
 - (4) Aptitude for grasping language as immense indirect discourse

VIII. Recap (84a-85)

- A. Order-words, CA, regimes of signs not = language,
 - 1. but they do effectuate its condition of possibility [superlinearity of expression (cf p 62 ATP)]
 - 2. That is, they fulfill the condition of possibility of language
 - a. [= select a set of incorporeal transformations from pool of possible transformations]
 - b. w/o them, language would remain pure virtuality [=pure set of possible speech acts]
- B. Collective assemblage not = language (as defined by constants)
 - 1. Rather, CA uses language constants for its actions
 - a. Thus different constants can have same use (French v English courts)
 - b. And same constants can have different use ("I swear" used in different circumstances)
 - 2. Expresses set of incorporeal transformations
- C. Linguistics must involve pragmatics
 - 1. To define how a CA or regime will select a set of incorporeal transformation [= effectuate c.p.]
 - 2. To define how a CA or regime will use linguistic elements in producing these transformations

II: "There Is an Abstract Machine of Language That Does Not Appeal to Any 'Extrinsic' Factor"

IX. Modification of bodies/incorporeal transformations as content/expression

- A. Content/expression as two formalizations (85a)
 - 1. Definitions:
 - a. Content has formalization: hand-tool pole: lesson of things
 - b. Expression has formalization: face-language pole: lesson of signs
 - 2. Content/expression is not representation
 - 3. Stoic theory: mingling of bodies vs incorporeal transformations
 - a. Incorporeal transformations = expressed of statements; attributed to bodies (86a)
 - b. This is not representation, but intervention, a speech act:
 - 4. CA of enunciation: speaks on same level as states of things/content
 - a. Same particle can be either body (content) or a sign/order-word (expression)
 - b. Thus the functional independence of content / expression is
 - (1) form of their reciprocal presupposition
 - (2) and continual passage of one to the other
- B. Precision of "intervene": contra idealism (87a)
 - 1. Movement of deterritorialization carrying away forms of content and forms of expression
 - 2. No primacy of content or expression re: deterritorialization (Examples: math; Scriptural crime)
 - 3. Circumstances or variables = degrees of deterritorialization
 - a. Variables of content
 - b. Variables of expression

X. General conclusions as to nature of assemblages (88a)

- A. Components
 - 1. Horizontal axis: segmented
 - a. Machinic assemblage of bodies
 - b. Collective assemblage of enunciation
 - 2. Vertical axis: sides
 - a. Territorializing sides
 - b. Cutting edges of deterritorialization
- B. Examples:
 - 1. Kafka
 - 2. Feudal assemblage

XI. Errors: (89a-91)

- A. Base/superstructure: to think content determines expression by causal action (89a)

1. Critique of ideology (89a)
2. D/G's position: (90a)
 - a. Two segments of an assemblage
 - (1) MA relates to intermingling of bodies (primacy over tools and goods)
 - (2) CA relates to regimes of signs (primacy over language and words)
 - b. Relate to each other in respect of quanta of deterritorialization: (thus primacy of lines of flight)
 - c. Thus an assemblage flattens its dimensions onto a plane of consistency w/
 - (1) Reciprocal presuppositions
 - (2) And mutual insertions
- B. Linguistic independence: adequacy of form of expression as linguistic system (90b)
 1. Language as fulfilling expression;
 - a. relegating content to reference and pragmatics to exteriority
 - b. Erecting abstract machine of language as synchronic set of constants
 2. D/G critique: not abstract enough: remains linear
 - a. True abstract machine: = diagram of an assemblage; rhizome model
 - b. Interpenetration of politics and language

III: "There Are Constants or Universals of Language That Enable Us to Define It as a Homogeneous System"

XII. Structural invariants: necessary for scientific status of linguistics

- A. Types of invariants
 1. Constants: phonological, syntactical, semantic
 2. Universals: phonemes; syntax; signification
 3. Trees linking constants
 4. Competence
 5. Homogeneity
 6. Synchrony

- B. Interrelations of each factor at each level

XIII. D/G: real question is abstract machine [=singular set of variables put into continuous variation]

- A. Chomsky / Labov debate illustrates key issues (93a)
 1. Chomsky: invariants necessary for science
 2. Labov: investigates lines of inherent variation
 - a. neither assigned to another system [another language]
 - b. nor placed outside the system [politics]
- B. D/G take up concept of continuous variation, even beyond Labov (94a-)
 1. Line of variation is virtual
 - a. Place into variation: build continuum of possible transformations of a variable
 - b. Should not be confused w/ continuity of a variable [fact of gaps in parole?]
 2. Constant or invariant defined by function as a relative center (95a)
 - a. Example of music (95a)
 - b. Objection/response (96a)
 3. Generalized chromaticism (97a)
 - a. Placing elements in continuous variation
 - b. Bears on voice, speech, language, music simultaneously
 4. Style (97b): procedure of continuous variation: an assemblage of enunciation
 - a. Stammering w/in own language
 - b. Language becomes intensive, a pure continuum of values and intensities
 5. Placing in variation as method (99a)
 - a. [=Constructing the plane of consistency to allow new creation]
 - b. Line drawn is agrammatical, asemantic, etc
 - c. That is, it reveals constants as imposed selections from virtual line of potential choices
 - d. [=rejection of reference points: p 104]
 - e. Tensor: causes language to tend to the limits of its elements, forms, notions
- C. Singularity of abstract machine of language (100a)
 1. Virtual-real
 2. Optional rules varying ceaselessly with each variation

3. Diagram of an assemblage: selection from its BwO: its phase space: its pool of possible combinations

IV: "Language Can Be Scientifically Studied Only under the Conditions of a Standard or Major Language"

XIV. Scientific model of linguistics same as political model of making a major language (100b)

- A. Scientific: extracting constants from variables
- B. Political: language is homogenized, standardized: becomes a major language
 - 1. Forming grammatically correct sentences: prerequisite for submission to social laws
 - 2. Nul n'est censé ignorer la grammaticalité
 - 3. The unity of a language [langue] is fundamentally political [NB: misleading translation]

XV. Given such political core of language, is major vs. minor language the proper distinction? (101a)

- A. Pouvoir [transcendent imposition] of constants vs puissance [immanent self-organization] of variation
 - 1. Dialect is not the right notion to distinguish minor languages
 - 2. Rather, minor languages distinguish dialects through their power of variation
- B. Two objections to identifying major/minor with dominant and dominated languages (102a)
 - 1. Chomsky shows how one can draw constants from a dialect
 - 2. Increased dominance of a language (becoming major) entails increased variation (becoming minor)
- C. Thus at most general level, Chomsky and Labov's positions change into each other

XVI. Thus there are not 2 types of languages (major vs minor), but 2 treatments of same language (103a-105a)

- A. Extract constants and constant relations from variables or place variables in continuous variation
 - 1. Thus constant is not opposed to variable, but to placing into variation
 - 2. This outlaws the use of langue vs parole as objection, since langue is search for constants
 - 3. Nondistinctive features have power [puissance] to place all elements of language in continuous variation
- B. Major / minor are two usages or functions of language (104a)
 - 1. Example of Kafka: making language stutter or wail
 - 2. Two tendencies of "minor" languages: impoverishment & overload
 - a. "Malevolent" interpretation of the linguists: poverty and preciousity
 - b. D/G's interpretation: rejection of reference points, dissolution of constant form: becoming music
- C. Becoming-minor of the major language: deterritorializing the major language (104b)
 - 1. Minor languages only in relation to major languages
 - 2. Becoming bilingual in one's own language
- D. Complexity of the concept of minority (105a):
 - 1. musical, literary, linguistic, juridical, political references
 - 2. Majority: implies a constant of expression or content serving as standard measure (White Man)
 - a. Man is in the majority, even if numerically the minority, because
 - b. Man appears twice: in constant (the standard) and in variable (the type) from which it is extracted
 - c. Majority assumes power/domination/standard measure, not other way around
 - 3. Minority = determination other than that of the constant
 - 4. Reversal:
 - a. majority = nobody / analytic fact; (no one fits the molar standard: [stability: Being])
 - b. minority = becoming of everybody (we are all molecular) (potentials; creation: Becoming)
 - (1) becoming-woman of all mankind
 - (2) becoming-minor of major language
 - 5. Distinctions
 - a. Minorities: objectively definable states; but also as seeds, crystals of becoming [bifurcators]
 - b. Majorities: [standard measure: black hole; molar attractor]
 - c. Becoming-minor: deterritorializing major: [entering plane of consistency; self-ordering zone]
 - 6. Figure of universal minoritarian consciousness: creation; continuous variation; becoming

XVII. Order-word: only "metalanguage" capable of accounting for dual usages (major/minor) (106a-110)

- A. Order-word (106a)
 - 1. Immediate or potential death
 - 2. Warning cry; message to flee
- B. Death-sentence: Death is everywhere: (107b-108a)
 - 1. As expressed of statement; incorporeal transformation death is both (107b)
 - a. ideal boundary separating bodies, their forms and states
 - b. condition through which subject must move in order to change form or state
 - c. Death is general incorporeal transformation attributed to all bodies re: forms and substances
 - 2. Because of reciprocal presupposition of expression and content, death is also attributed to bodies (108a)
 - a. Thus there are constants extractable from content

- b. That is, sharp contrasts of bodies arranged in binary trees
- C. Warning cry: flight (108b)
 - 1. Variables in continuous variation
 - 2. Incorporeal transformation as passage to the limit: to make death a variation
 - a. Language pushed to its limits
 - b. Bodies metamorphose contents; exhaust themselves to reach or overstep limit of their figures
 - 3. Major vs minor science
 - a. Major: extracting invariants or constants
 - b. Minor: pragmatic placing in variation
 - (1) smallest interval: freeing an intense matter or continuum of variation
 - (a) internal tensors of languag
 - (b) internal tensions of content
 - (2) reaching plane of consistency by an absolute deterritorialization: single matter:
 - (a) expression as incorporeal power
 - (b) content as limitless corporeality
 - (3) relation of content and expression changes
 - (a) no longer have two forms,
 - (b) but conjunction of cutting edges of |DT on single plane of liberated matter
 - (4) synthesizer has replaced judgment,
 - (a) creating a rhizome of intensities,
 - (b) "virtual continuum of life"
 - (5) bring forth question from another answer:
 - (a) line of flight in response to death-sentence:
 - (b) pass-words