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PUTTING THE DELEUZIAN MACHINE TO WORK IN PSYCHOLOGY
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PUTTING THE DELEUZIAN MACHINE TO WORK IN PSYCHOLOGY
CRITICAL AND CLINICAL BECOMINGS

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Introduction to this special issue

We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness: to define the moment of this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the realm of truth, before it was revived by the lyricism of protest. (Foucault, 2004, p. xi)

It should not be taken as surprising to start an issue of the Annual Review of Critical Psychology aiming to introduce the ideas of Gilles Deleuze, with a reference to Foucault. Quite on the contrary, English speaking scholarship seems to have found its way to Deleuze through the (in)famous assertion Foucault once made that “perhaps this century will be known as Deleuzian.”¹ Foucault saw in Deleuze’s project a philosophical grounding for his own work and, what is perhaps of more importance for the discipline of psychology, the philosophical foundation for a “non-fascist life” (1983, p. xiii).

Foucault’s prophetic announcement was made in his paper Theatrum Philosophicum (1970) where he reviews two of Deleuze’s books: Difference and Repetition (1994) and Logic of Sense (1990). Foucault saw Deleuze as the one amongst the multitude of philosophical rivals – “starting with Aristotle” (p. 344) – to have been able to effectively overturn the foundational Platonic orientation of Western Philosophy: identity. As

¹ Address for correspondence: m.nichterlein@bigpond.com
¹ Deleuze’s response was that Foucault was a terrible joker and that such a grand statement should be seen just as that: a joke… a joke made between friends to annoy their critics (1995, p. 88). For Deleuze, Foucault’s gesture was one of friendship rather than of self-importance
Foucault explains, instead of the ‘Ulyssean’ search for the purity and authenticity of essential identities – of an ‘ideal’ model – Deleuze’s overturning of Platonism “consists in displacing himself within the Platonic series in order to disclose an unexpected facet: division” (ibid). Rather than identity, what Deleuze proposes as the central concept to uphold within a metaphysical project is difference – a difference that is in constant process of differentiation (thus creating series, a moving identity if one wants to play with such an ‘image’... like in the cinematic image).

Such a displacement, such an overturning of the tenets of Western philosophy since Plato, has profound implications for the structure of Western society (and thus for the subjects it produces), effects that we are still in the process of ‘making sense of’. Psychology – in particular critical psychology – has started this process but much remains uncharted. The challenges are at a multitude of levels and, in line with its own claims, they are constantly shifting, requiring of the thinker – in this case, the apprentice of and in psychology – to think in a different way to that in which we have been trained, to think otherwise. It seems fair to say that these displacements force the apprentice psychologist to think through different constellations of problems and thus, to create new concepts for its discipline. Perhaps a simpler way to explain this is by noting that the move from identity to difference requires a move away from the representational forms of knowledge so pervasive in contemporary psychology into an engagement with a certain – different – kind of thinking the discipline. The emphasis here is important. More than the solution, a solution that often takes the shape of a true knowledge of a transcendent nature 2 – of what is true and what is false, a solution that emerges out of the framing of a question within a Cartesian cogito – it is the acute awareness of the thought involved in the positing of a problem that fascinates Deleuze. As he writes in Difference and Repetition: ‘a solution always has the truth it deserves according to the problem to which it is a response’ (Deleuze 1994, p. 158-9). Wasser explains Deleuze’s statement further: “[b]eyond the dualism of questions and answers, truth and falsehood, [...] Deleuze affirms the priority of a third register, that of problem-formation, a domain in which truth and falsity first acquire meaning and orientation” (2017, p. 49).

In yet another way to explain the same point, rather than adding to an increasingly problematic disciplinary edifice, what Deleuze provokes the discipline to do is to reconsider what has been taken for granted in the foundation and the structure of such an edifice. Not just a change of name but a change of game, engaging with Deleuze provokes us to question the disciplinary assumption of the presence of (static) entities

2 Here a nuanced distinction is required between transcendent and transcendental. This is a distinction that is central to the metaphysical shift that Deleuze invites us to make, between a static and predictable world and a world of intensities and difference. In Deleuzian circles, the former is to be problematised whereas the latter is frequently used positively to describe Deleuze’s method on conditions of possibility, as discovered experimentally by crossing boundaries. As will become clear through this issue, one way forward would be to argue for a transcendental psychology that seeks to avoid transcendent conclusions and grounds. (Thanks to James Williams for help in clarifying this point)
as foundational cornerstones of the discipline and the conceptualization of knowledge as representational. In particular, Deleuze’s project forces the attention to those elements that are often obscured through being taken for granted in either “common” or “good” sense.3

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive description of the transformations that this project calls forth but we can mention a few that strike from the beginning. Starting perhaps at a ‘concrete’ level, it invites a re-examination of psychology’s unit of analysis: the subject. I use ‘subject’ at this point in a generic sense to include variations like the individual, the self and subjectivity – that is to say with how we position ourselves in relation to our selves, to others and to the world in general. In its multiple manifestations, the psychological subject has been an unquestioned and foundational concept for the discipline, so much so that it is almost impossible to think of psychology without some reference to it. With or without an unconscious and either as soul or as brain (including a multitude of combinations in between) the individual has been, without doubt, the core unit of analysis to the discipline. Deleuze’s approach to knowledge brings with it a quite distinctive force to the field that displaces the subject, transforming it into a ‘modulation of sorts’, a modulation that is best considered as an after-effect of what ‘really matters’. Rather than a central unity, the subject is an epiphenomenon. Subjectivity is not an essence but it is best conceived as a product for consumption (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, see also Holland, 1999). More to the point, Deleuze provokes us to consider that we need to tread carefully in our disciplinary considerations when referring to the subject and that we should do so with a focus that is counterintuitive to our current considerations: rather than a centre, the concept of the subject is a dangerous detour or distraction. What is of substance instead – the dynamic that should be central to understand as perhaps a unit of analysis – is the workings of a complex machinery: the assemblage. It is in the machinations of the assemblage that the subject – as a subject – emerges as a meaningful ‘entity’. As a machinery, the assemblage is qualitatively and quantitatively different from the subject for it escapes the bounds not only of a rational mind but also of an individual body (brain included). The assemblage stands in a creative relationship to Foucault’s dispositif (Foucault et al., 1977)4 and it is the concept used in describing the Psy-complex. As Pulido-Martinez recently remarked ‘The psy-complex is delineated as an assemblage of diverse elements that frame and make possible the place and the operations of psychology in contemporary societies’ (emphasis added, 2014, p. 1598). Considerations on the psy-complex and on how it works to normalize psychological lives so as to generate docile bodies, recursively provide a fertile ground to start considerations as to

3 There is an interesting resonance here with R.D. Laing’s concern with the distortions that take place when one takes for granted ‘the obvious’ (1968).

4 Deleuze also wrote a paper on the dispositif (1988) for an international colloquium in homage to Foucault (one of the few that Deleuze attended).
the role of alternative understandings of what we can do with our subjective positions; what we can do with our selves so as to not only resist these forms but also affirm others.

These considerations on the self/subjectivity and a focus on the workings of an assemblage as perhaps a better unit of analysis for psychology are but two of the concepts that make Deleuze’s project, either on his own or in the company of Guattari, heuristic to critical psychology. We could add a number of other ‘Deleuzian’ concepts to the list, starting with ‘the rhizome’, ‘lines of flight’ and ‘the ritornello’. The first two of these concepts are becoming familiar in many critical psychological landscapes whilst the last, although not much used so far in the field, is the one that Deleuze once defined as perhaps his and Guattari’s main original concept (Deleuze and Eribon, 1991).

The idea of the refrain or ritornello is a central idea in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, plateau 11) and it articulates the way by which repetitions play a central role in the production of the realities and the lives in which we participate. The refrain articulates the mechanism through which the production of stable realities takes place. Starting with difference – and constant differentiation – the stability one experiences comes out of the repetition of certain themes – the refrain. As we stated elsewhere, ‘Deleuze and Guattari use the refrain across the realm of their metaphysics to account for the layers of composition present in chaomos [whereby] the emergence of complexity takes place through the repetition of motifs, repetition or constancy’ (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 105). The constancy that Deleuze calls forth is also problematized since it is not a static constancy but a constancy that also involves an opening to the new and to difference, thus a constancy that is constantly engaged in the process of transformation and of change.

In line with the previous considerations on the subject, van Heerden refers to the influence that Deligny’s work on the cartographies of autistic children had on this idea for Deleuze and Guattari. Troubled by the dichotomisation of subjectivities as normal and abnormal, Deligny’s cartographies were a way of tracing the movements performed by these children in their milieu. As she explains, ‘[w]hat we have here, then, is a method that considers subjectivity not only in terms of subjects but, also, in terms of milieu, thus rejecting the primacy of language for the formation and legitimacy of subjectivity’ (Gray van Heerden, 2017, p. 11). Engaging thus with the ritornello reminds us – once again – that Deleuze’s value to a critical psychology should not be limited to specific concepts but, more importantly, should aspire to traverse the entire disciplinary edifice. Not only

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5 Two exceptions are found in Gray van Heerden’s *The slightest gesture* (2017) and the edited book *Youth Work, Early Education, and Psychology* (Skott-Myhre et al., 2016).

6 This is the critical point that is made in the shift from the use of ‘refrain’ to ‘ritornello’ in recent translations and publications. This shift is to mark the connection that Deleuze and Guattari saw between this concept and Nietzsche’s eternal return. French language affords this play through phonological proximity: *ritournelle/retour éternel* (Ingala, 2018, p. 205, n. 17). Ingala’s chapter is a thoughtful introduction to the concept.

7 I may also add ‘rationality’.
is psychology’s unit of analysis – the subject, self – problematized, but also its method. Empiricism and a reliance in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies is problematized by Deleuze’s proposal in favour of something akin to what some in the discipline have called ‘deep empiricism’ (Stenner, 2008, 2009, Brown and Stenner, 2009). The challenge for the discipline at this level is to explore further this line of thought, in particular, the conceptual consequences together with the pragmatic effects that emerge from a focus on a thought that resists reification.

There is still at least one further level of analysis of the impact of Deleuze’s project on the discipline. A critical element for psychology in Deleuze’s thought lies in his admiration of Nietzsche, in particular, Nietzsche’s definition of the thinker as a diagnostician of sorts (Deleuze, 1986, 1990, 2006). It is well recognized that critical psychology questions the use of clinical diagnosis, especially in terms of the (often implicit) effect such practice has in the power dynamics within therapeutic relationships. Deleuze’s reference to the function of the diagnostician in Nietzsche distances itself from disciplinary (ab)uses of diagnosis in favour of an emphasis on evaluative and ethical processes. In line with his commitment to a monistic and immanent type of knowledge, a knowledge that resists both transcendence and dialectics, Deleuze resists static and unexamined descriptions of ‘good’ and ‘common’ sense (1994) inviting the discipline to focus instead on the untimely evaluation of the nuanced variations that present to human life, variations that articulate – using Nietzsche’s words (1886a) – either base or noble responses to the existential dilemmas immanent to the living of a life (Deleuze, 1986). From this Deleuzian perspective then, the therapeutic work of making a diagnosis is challenged at two levels.

Firstly, such activity is not about a (professional) judgement but about an evaluation of the possibilities of life that present to us as disciplinary subjects. A Deleuzian metaphysics honours Nietzsche’s claim that life is best understood in its tragic condition (Nietzsche, 1886b) and that one’s life is best measured by one’s ability to engage with this tragic condition in noble ways. The difference implied in this use of ‘diagnosis’ – a difference, as Bateson would say, that makes a difference (1973) – is that it forces the discipline to consider not only ‘the nature’ of the concept – or the condition – but also its effects. In other words, rather than learning ‘what to read’ out of a situation – to exert a judgement as to what is ‘natural/healthy’, ‘right’ or ‘normal’ – Deleuze emphasises the importance of questioning – engaging with the underlying problem as discussed above – so as to move beyond such normalizing practices, thus facilitating and promoting multiplicity. In this sense, the role of diagnosis is displaced away from its normative function to become a critical evaluative function that searches for and fosters the singular opportunities of life present in any circumstance.

Secondly, and perhaps of more importance to a substantive role for psychology in today’s society, for it reminds us that we are not talking about subjects but about
complex assemblages, Deleuze’s valuation of Nietzsche’s use of the diagnostic activity is due to the importance that Nietzsche sees in the assessment of the societal conditions of our times and the effects that such conditions have in the emerging subjectivities populating such social formations. Parker’s comments regarding the value of Deleuze to critical psychology are worth considering at this point. Reflecting on Foucault’s (in)famous quote, Parker writes that “it indicates that there is something of the nature of our contemporary reality that is at stake in the claim that the last century was ‘Deleuzian’, and for how we try to disentangle ourselves from the past as we move on in this twenty-first century” (2017, p. viii). Parker here confirms what Deleuze affirms when he states that the central task of any intellectual activity is not just critique but the actual involvement in the creation of what is to come (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991). In this sense, a final critical element in Deleuze’s thought, an element that is untimely in its provocation to psychology, is how psychology responds to the political responsibilities that, as a discipline, psychology has vis-à-vis its society. Here, Deleuze’s project questions mainstream psychology’s naturalistic and, what is more pernicious but intimately related, normalizing claims of representing human behavioural and cognitive ‘nature’, forcing it to open itself up to scrutiny in relation to the edifice it has constructed.

The gesture of this movement is elusive in its apparent liberatory undertones. We have already learnt from Foucault the lulling dangers of illusions of liberation and the importance of the critical distinction between these and what he calls practices of freedom (Foucault et al., 1984. p. 433, Foucault and Fontana, 1984, p. 452, see also May, 2006, p. 124, Nichterlein, 2013). Deleuze takes this position a step further and confronts us with the challenge that a tragic existence brings forth to our disciplinary subjectivities. To become a diagnostician in the way that Deleuze invites us, requires us to engage in a paradoxical movement where we are both defining ourselves within the discipline and society – and in doing so, to learn the language of ‘good’ and ‘common sense’ upon which our discipline has so painstakingly built itself – only to then learn to destroy or critique such an edifice. In this sense, more than ‘mindfulness’, we could learn a thing or two from the spiritual exercises required by Buddhist monks to put their minds to work in shaping highly complex sand mandalas only to then brush them away to start again somewhere else. The emphasis in this image is not on the beauty of the mandala but on what is required to move somewhere else. In this, the role of a diagnostician confronts us with the discipline’s untimely responsibility not to specific forms of society but to life in its vitalism. Not only in the shape of a specific human life but also to such a specific life in its relations within a far more diversified vital web on this earth.

And it is here that we reconnect with the point of considering the Foucaultian quote that opens this introduction. In line with this last element of evaluation and diagnosis, Foucault intriguingly states in Theatrum Philosophicum that the displacement exerted by Deleuze’s project constitutes a way ‘to increase its compassion for reality, for the
world, and for time’ (1970, p. 345). When Deleuze and Guattari, in admiration of Whitehead’s empiricism, wrote that ‘Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained’ (1991, p. 7), they were not only displacing the longstanding Platonic tradition that gives ideas a privileged explanatory position, but also they were making such concepts accountable in their participation in (human) life. Concepts are not representatives of ‘objective truths’ – of (unexamined and unaccounted) essences – but are elements that participate in the construction of the realities in which we live. It is from this perspective that talking about philosophical projects that ‘increase compassion’ make sense and it is here that the ethical element again becomes central. Questions like What is it that we do with our concepts? and What are the effects that these concepts have on the way we live our lives? become then critical elements in the conceptual and the existential landscape that we inhabit.

It is hard to overstate the critical effects of this displacement not only on to philosophy but also on to psychology as a discipline attempting to disentangle itself from forms of knowledge based on assumptions of a transcendent state of affairs. What Foucault is inviting us to consider – as he has done throughout his work – is to look at knowledge not just in terms of a (fantastic) objectivity but in terms of its (social) effects. If I started this introduction to this special issue of this journal using this specific Foucauldian quote, it was to remind us – readers and the discipline as a whole – that the concepts we (disciplinarily) create need to be scrutinized in terms of what they do to our relationship to each other and to society as a whole. Some might say that this has been an historical preoccupation of the discipline – thus nothing new under the conceptual sky. This is true, however, what Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault are asking us to do is to scrutinize these concepts not as ‘objective’ reference to identities but as tools we use in our relationship to each other as brothers and sisters on this earth. And here yet another critical point is being made since they are not talking about fathers, mothers or children – the familialism so imbued in our mindset, insidiously confirming hierarchical structures as essential vital organizations – but as equals. The search is for a perspective that frees itself from un(holy) anthropocentric claims to affirm anthropocenic – post-human – equals who are connected in their condition and who are attempting to live with each other in sustainable ways on this earth.

Foucault’s words on the madness of reason as we have understood it are sobering, reminding us that the abuses of human hubris have not been limited to the environment but also to the way in which we relate to each other. Deleuze helps us further in this diagnostic evaluation by making some comments on the modern condition. In perhaps one of his best-known quotes, Deleuze comments on the critical changes that the West has experienced through the horrors of the 20th century. He writes:

The modern fact is that we no longer believe in this world. We do not even believe in the events which happen to us, love, death, as
if they only half concerned us. It is not we who make cinema; it is the world which looks to us like a bad film. (1989, p. 166)

The modernity that Deleuze is referring to here is a specific modernity: the modernity that not only witnessed but profoundly experienced the horrors of WWII. As Deleuze and Guattari explain elsewhere, this is a modernity that had to learn to live with “the shame of being a man” (because even the survivors had to collude, to compromise themselves)” (1991, p. 107). As they go on to say:

It is not only our States but each of us, every democrat, who finds him or herself not responsible for Nazism but sullied by it. There is indeed catastrophe, but it consists in the society of brothers or friends having undergone such an ordeal that brothers and friends can no longer look at each other, or each at himself, without a “weariness,” perhaps a “mistrust” [...] Nor is it only in the extreme situations described by Primo Levi that we experience the shame of being human. We also experience it in insignificant conditions, before the meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies, before the propagation of the modes of existence and of thought-for-the-market, and before the values, ideals, and opinions of our time. The ignominy of the possibilities of life that we are offered appears from within [...] We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 106-8)

It is in this sense that Western civilization is living through ‘a bad film’, a bad film that we cannot resist. Deleuze clarifies further this film image with the comment that “the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to describe. [...] [A] new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted, they were seers”(1989, p. xi). This is a troubling situation for a thinker like Deleuze, a thinker who – as Derrida explains – “was doing” philosophy the most gaily, the most innocently’ (2001, p. 193); with the innocence of a child who looks naively and without guilt, engaging with life directly – without mediators – in ‘a kind of art brut’ (ibid).

This modern disbelief in life – this transformation of life into a commodity to be consumed rather than a life to be lived – is a central underlying problem in Deleuze’s philosophy and constructs the tragic condition that we are left to live. It also provides the frame for understanding the admiration that Foucault had for his project. For, perhaps more important that the displacement of identity for difference, it is the...

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8 And this shame, as they feel necessary to explain in a note, ‘is a “composite” feeling that Primo Levi describes in this way: shame that men could do this, shame that we have been unable to prevent it, shame at having survived, and shame at having been demeaned or diminished’ (n. 17, p. 225)
advances that Deleuze makes towards what Foucault calls a ‘non-fascist life’ that is of significant relevance in terms of a way forward to living a life. Foucault introduces Deleuze and Guattari’s first collaboration – *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) – as ‘a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time’ (p. xiii) because it attempts to address the conditions to facilitate an ‘art of living counter to all forms of fascism’ (ibid).

To conclude, If the work of Deleuze has much to offer to psychology it is not because of its elegant critique of modern doxa, but because of its emphasis on the creative element that is inextricably connected with an ethical life. In a modern world where banalization and triviality seems to be crowding all spaces of existence, Deleuze reminds us of the untimely task of populating this earth, the desert islands of our material contingencies, and making them sacred (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 10) through an affirmation of the possibilities of a life that have yet to be articulated. So, for Deleuze, critique is not sufficient as an intellectual task. If critique is of use is to clear the space for the articulation of a true alternative. Making reference to Parker once again, Deleuze’s project ‘put[s] together a different space for ‘becoming’ which might even make a claim to become a different kind of psychology altogether. In this way, Deleuze becomes a guide who is with us inside psychology but arguing against us from outside it, ‘outwith’ psychology all the better to be able to creatively transform ourselves’ (2017, p. ix).

Ultimately, the compassion that Deleuze is calling for is not the compassion so well known to traditional humanistic approaches – a type of charity for those who have experienced lesser fortune within an orderly world – but a compassion of believing and fostering a world that is yet to come, a world that rises out of the ashes of despair, shame and disbelief and affirms the infinite task of building Jerusalem as Blake would have said, of constructing a society of equals within difference.

Having these rather sweeping introductory considerations on Deleuze in mind, this special issue of the ARCP is dedicated to elucidating and articulating further these Deleuzian provocations to the discipline. As indicated, the field that emerges out of a Deleuzian critique is as large as, if not larger than, the discipline of psychology or any other discipline, so there is a significant challenge in the preparation of this collection. For pedagogical purposes, this special issue has been organized in terms of the considerations offered by Deleuze in *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991) on the interplay of philosophy, science and art. These foundational distinctions made by Deleuze are adopted as a framing structure for the encounter between his work and the discipline.

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9 In here Deleuze’s considerations on the task of an artist are worth mentioning: ‘In fact, it would be a mistake to think that the painter works on a white and virgin surface. The entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés, which the painter will have to break with’ (2004b, p. 11).
References


SECTION 1
PHILOSOPHICAL PROVOCATIONS
But art, science, and philosophy require more: they cast a plane over the chaos. These three disciplines are not like religions that invoke dynasties of gods, or the epiphany of a single god, in order to paint a firmament on the umbrella, like the figures of an Urdoxa from which opinions stem. Philosophy, science, and art want us to tear open the firmament and plunge into the chaos. We defeat it only at this price. [...] The philosopher, the scientist, and the artist seem to return from the land of the dead. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 202)

What is Philosophy? was published in France in 1991 and was the last collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari. In line with the earlier success of Anti-Oedipus and as its translators to English commented, it was ‘at the top of the best-seller list for several weeks’ (Tomlinson and Burchell, 1994, p. xvii). As they also clarified, more than ‘a primer or a textbook’, What is Philosophy? was a manifesto with a distinctive cry: ‘philosophers of the world, create!’ (ibid).

Yet, the cry that Deleuze was articulating was for a creation that was distinctively different to a similar cry that was starting to acquire momentum in a different part of the globe: Social Constructionism. Although there are a number of commonalities between Social Constructionism and Deleuze and Guattari’s project – in particular, the constructed nature of human experience – the differences are more significant, in ways that we are perhaps only able to appreciate now. Even when Social Constructionism was influenced significantly by the turbulent times that also shaped what was to be known as ‘French thought’ in some quarters and ‘postmodernism’ in others, the ‘French’ ideas of Deleuze’s project were going in a foundationally different, and critical, line to the phenomenological and pragmatic constructions of its American counterpart. In line with finer nuances within French thought itself, ‘Deleuze is noteworthy for his rejection of the Heideggerian notion of the “end of metaphysics.”’ (Smith and Protevi, 2018, par. 2).

As Deleuze himself explains in an interview: ‘I feel myself to be a pure metaphysician.... Bergson says that modern science hasn’t found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it would need. It is this metaphysics that interests me.’ (Villani, 1999, p. 130, in Smith, 2012, p. 406, n. 3).

What Deleuze’s project affirms is not the relativism that we now familiarly associate with words like ‘lenses’ or ‘storying’, words that emerges as perhaps ‘inevitable’
consequences of epistemic relativism. After more than 30 years\(^{11}\) of the increasingly hegemonic presence of Social Constructionism as perhaps the only alternative to an uncritical scientism within psychology, we are now having to contend with the darker aspect of such insights for it is in this milieu – where an emphasis on relativity is central – that we are left without decisive critical tools in front of ‘post-truths’ and ‘fake news’. Truth and the (post)human condition has lost none of its validity yet it requires a critical (re)consideration of our body of knowledge, a reappraisal – Deleuze would argue – in light of what we have learnt since the beginning of the last century in terms of the structure of the universe, in particular, quantum field theory.\(^{12}\)

As Deleuze states, the philosophy that he is in search of is one that ‘can perhaps be posed only late in life, with the arrival of old age and the time for speaking concretely’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 1). He qualifies this ‘old age’ but clarifying that ‘[t]here are times when old age produces not eternal youth but a sovereign freedom, a pure necessity in which one enjoys a moment of grace between life and death, and in which all parts of the machine come together to send into the future a feature that cuts across all ages’ (p. 1-2). The philosophy that Deleuze argues for is one that comes from a life (well) lived. As Bell explains:

> ‘A LIFE, however, is not a presupposed unity, the unity of the event in Leibniz’s sense; rather, it is a chaosmos, a transcendental field of divergent series. The problem for life, then, is to forge a unity, to bring about a determinate, individuated phenomenon. In short, the problem of life is a matter of learning, and a life well lived [...] is not a life of knowledge, a life in accordance with already established rules and ways of being; to the contrary, a life well lived entails extracting A LIFE from our lives as lived, the life that is the sufficient reason for all knowledge and determinate ways of being.’ (2016, p. 8)

Philosophy not as an intellectual and reflective exercise but as a constructive engagement with ‘living a life’; living a life in a way that affirms difference and differentiation within a complex ecology. Philosophy, in this sense, is not just epistemic but is also ontological and metaphysical in that, as an activity, it surrounds, constitutes and transcends us in its practice. In words that perhaps are more easily recognizable, philosophy is not ‘just’ a cognitive – or rational – exercise but a disciplined – inasmuch as it is thoughtful – yet experimental shaping of vital activity. This is so because, as Bell

\(^{11}\) I take Gergen’s *The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology* (1985) as the point of reference for this statement with an awareness that Gergen had earlier papers of relevance (e.g. 1973, 1978) and that, as a movement, it should also give recognition to Berger and Luckman’s *The Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (1966).

\(^{12}\) Bonta and Protevi make an incisive distinction between the types of sciences involved in the solo work of Deleuze – where the references are mainly to contemporary physics and mathematics – and his collaborative work with Guattari, where the engagement is not only with contemporary physics but also with biological sciences (complexity theory). (2004, p. 12)
clarifies: ‘[t]he reason thinking is experimenting, for Deleuze and Guattari, is because the determinate, individuated fact or state of affairs is not assured or predeterminate’ (p. 141).

It is in this sense that some talk about Deleuze’s ideas as an apprenticeship: rather than a philosopher as member of a disciplinary entity, the apprentice of philosophy is an ongoing becoming-philosophy. As a discipline, philosophy shapes its apprentice in the same way that such an apprentice shapes new concepts to account for the times they are living in. The triad: concept, conceptual personae and plane of immanence (that perhaps could be best described as ‘the times one lives’) is a holy trinity of sorts in Deleuze’s work, a trinity that will articulate itself in their examinations of other activities as well. As indicated in the introduction, for Deleuze there are no such things as entities grasped by one’s knowledge, but a thought that is foundationally relational and constructive: knowledge and subject emerge simultaneously within a certain plane. To conceive any of these elements without the others is a reduction of thought, a reduction that leads to reifications; to what Whitehead refers to as ‘misplaced concreteness’ (1978). Rather than language games then, ‘thought’ is a profound and continual engagement with the chaos of this earth, an engagement that – ultimately – articulates itself in the creation of lives.

In critical distance from traditional conceptualizations of disciplines – demarcations that not only define the limits of the knowledge studied but require of its subjects a certain docility vis-à-vis this knowledge – the discipline that Deleuze and Guattari search for is one that aligns itself with thought in its productive encounter in/with this earth. As they write:

Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object, nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 85, italics by the author)

The distinction between territory and the earth is central for Deleuze and Guattari and is extensively explained in A Thousand Plateaus (1987, see also chapter 4 in Nichterlein and Morss, 2017 and Brown in this issue), the territory is an active and creative delineation carried out by a living organism of its milieu. Territories are in constant (re)delimitation, they are a result of an active engagement with the earth. Human activity – such as the disciplines being discussed here – are possible territorial manifestations/articulations of such encounters. The earth on the other hand, is a material substratum that belongs to a very different order altogether. As Deleuze clarifies further, ‘the earth is not one element among others but rather brings together all the elements within a single embrace while using one or another of them to deterritorialize territory’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 85). In this sense, and as a
creative alternative to the Trinitarian traditions pertaining to knowledge in the West – of God, humans and the world – for them, the ‘(w)holy’ trinity is constituted by thought, earth and differentiation/individuation. This displacement away from God and a transcendental knowledge then carries forward the revolutionary thought not only articulated by Kant (1784)\(^{13}\) but already present, albeit in a much more incipient manner, by the Renaissance/Cartesian attempt to develop confidence in humankind’s ability to access knowledge directly on the basis of rational analysis and experimental approaches. In fact, Deleuze would argue that this critical and creative revolutionary thought is the condition for any great philosophy, where differences between them are in the nature of the problem posed. I will return to this point later.

The second part of What is Philosophy? explores the difference between philosophy and three other creative traditions of thought – logic, science and art – in the context of these insights. These are controversial distinctions (Bell, p, 141) where the absence of the social sciences has already been noted (Brown, 2012). For the purpose of this issue however, they have been accepted and the focus has been on exploring the different positions so as to identify how they help up to provoke our discipline to engage with Deleuzian thought so as to recognize the complex nature that psychology has to contend with.

This section focuses on Deleuze’s specific comments on the task of philosophy. In this, he is unambiguously decisive: ‘philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concept’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 2). An elusively simple statement that requires a whole – and very technical – book to elucidate is a suitable introduction to the complexity at stake, a complexity that starts at the beginning of his philosophical project – Difference and Repetition. In understanding the concept, perhaps the first distinction is that the concept is not an element in a linguistic activity.\(^{14}\) As Protevi explains, ‘Difference and Repetition conceptually works out a challenge to thinking of philosophy solely in terms of concepts as sets of signifiers. Rather, concepts are markers of problematic fields, and our encounter with those fields will affectively change us’ (2010). Concepts are better understood then as fragmentary wholes. They are ‘concrete assemblages’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 36) that emerge into and rummage around this earth. Concepts ‘are not pieces of a jigsaw but rather the outcome of throws of dice’ (p. 35). They are constructions that emerge out of an encounter with this earth and are positive – in the sense of being affirmative – responses to the task of living a life. It is in this sense that philosophy is creative at the same time as political, for concepts are not there – ready-made pieces of knowledge – but are active and emerging formulations of possible solutions to the complexity of living.

\(^{13}\) This has been a central concept for Foucault as I explained elsewhere (Nichterlein, 2013, chapter 6).

\(^{14}\) This point will be explored further in the next section when articulating the distinction between a concept and a proposition.
The challenge then is twofold. At one level, any process of learning – of knowledge formation – requires grasping the complexities associated with the productive and constructivist elements pertaining to any vital process. At another level, it also requires creatively wrestling with such forces so as to create viable solutions. Reproduction – of knowledge and of reality – is taken out of the epistemological throne it upheld since Plato, to give place to a more Bacon-like Pope, one that brings its name – ‘Innocent’ – to a fullness in its double play with ‘innocence’ so as to articulate the angst-ridden existential dilemma of knowledge and of life. In this gesture, Bacon stands closer to Munch’s cry than to the Velázquez original.

The qualities involved in this engagement with a materially problematic earth or, as Deleuze states elsewhere, the challenge of ‘populating this earth, the desert islands of our material contingencies, and making them sacred’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 10) becomes a central evaluative consideration. In this, Deleuze provokes us further. Referring to the legacy of Bergson in his philosophical approach, Deleuze states that ‘we are wrong to believe that the true and the false can only be brought to bear on solutions’ (1988, p. 15). He clarifies this saying that ‘it is the solution that counts, but the problem always has the solution it deserves, in terms of the way in which it is stated (i.e., the conditions under which it is determined as problem), and of the means and terms at our disposal for stating it. In this sense, the history of man, from the theoretical as much as from the practical point of view is that of the construction of problems. It is here that humanity makes its own history, and the becoming conscious of that activity is like the conquest of freedom’ (p. 16). In other words, not only are concepts not closed hermetically and hermeneutically and thereby opened to a multitude of solutions, but also there is a need to critically evaluate the quality of the problem posed. Deleuze explains this incisively in What is Philosophy?: ‘It is true that we cannot imagine a great philosopher of whom it could not be said that he has changed what it means to think: he has “thought differently” (as Foucault put it). [...] On the other hand, those who do not renew the image of thought are not philosophers but functionaries who, enjoying a ready-made thought, are not even conscious of the problem and are unaware even of the efforts of those they claim to take as their models.’ (p. 51)

15 Deleuze wrote on Bacon, and made reference to a series of paintings Bacon did, transforming Velázquez’s Innocent X into ‘the screaming Pope’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 53). For Deleuze, this transformation was possible because of the different position Bacon had of this portrait when compared to the one of his master, Velázquez. As Deleuze states, ‘Bacon harbors within himself all the violence of Ireland, and the violence of Nazism, the violence of war’ (p. 38). As Deleuze states, Bacon ‘wanted to paint the scream more than the horror’ (ibid), and he does so by ‘isolating [the Pope], of shielding him from view; it is rather the way in which the Pope himself sees nothing, and screams before the invisible’ (ibid). I cannot but wonder whether the transformation that Bacon does – from a Pope with a direct gaze to one that cannot see – is not one of protection from such horrors, but one of protest at the neutrality of the Pope in front of these horrors. Instead of a ‘neutral’ Pope, Bacon presents us with one that screams. There is a further transformation to be acknowledged: a Pope that cannot see, is a Pope dethroned. No longer, the head (the face) that leads, but one more of us – one like us – facing, ‘scream[ing] before the invisible’, struggling with rendering visible the forces to come.
This distinction between philosophers and functionaries, between autonomous thinkers and docile bodies of the State, is central to Deleuze and Guattari’s project and is intimately related to the distinction between immanent and transcendental planes of existence. Deleuze’s commitment to immanence is radical in establishing the creation of experience not as an ‘individual’ experience but as a vital exercise of thought that simultaneously produces both the world and the subject that experiences such a world. Here, the radicality of Deleuze’s project is in its critical engagement with phenomenology and hermeneutics so as to question the centrality of consciousness. It is in this sense that the displacement of the concept could also be described as a move away from closed and stable systems of signification into materially open emerging ones.

In turn, as Holland identified, this displacement brings forth a critical epistemological question: ‘how can thought operate in such a way that it thinks with the cosmos instead of about it?’ (Holland, 2013, p. 30). As explained elsewhere, ‘[t]he question of knowledge [then] is posed by Deleuze and Guattari as a problem that needs to honour immanence, an immanence that reminds us that, given the multiplicity present in life, knowledge is useless if it attempts to describe what is outside of its sphere of functioning. Knowledge needs to be part of – must be embroiled in – the assemblage from which it speaks and within which it serves certain functions. Knowledge then, like life, is not about static representations of a stable and ordered world. It is a strategic tool for active engagement [not only with the present but also] with an untimely future.’ (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 22-3)

This centrality of immanence helps us understand Deleuze’s admiration for Spinoza and constitutes a constant thread throughout his solo and collaborative work. As he explains ‘[i]mmanence can be said to be the burning issue of all philosophy because it takes on all the dangers that philosophy must confront, all the condemnations, persecutions, and repudiations that it undergoes [persuading] us that the problem of immanence is not abstract or merely theoretical’ (p. 45). What is at stake with immanence is the move away from transcendental forms of knowledge and of government in search of more enlightened principles of existence as equal manifestations of possibilities of life, not merely, but deeply inclusive of, the idea of us as brothers and sisters.

It is in Example 3 in What is Philosophy? that the centrality of immanence is perhaps best articulated. Deleuze starts this example by asking whether the ‘entire history of philosophy [could] be presented from the viewpoint of the instituting of a plane of immanence’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 44). In this historical search, Deleuze explains that philosophy has been affected by mirages, “illusions” that – through the search of Universals – restore transcendence. He clarifies further that there are three sorts of Universals that ‘are like three philosophical eras – Eidetic, Critical, and Phenomenological’ (p. 47). Eidetic is a Germans word coined in the 1920s from the
Greek eidētikos (pertaining to eidos: ‘form’) and, as Bell explains, Deleuze uses it to denote ‘the universal that becomes the object of philosophical contemplation [...] with its emphasis upon the contemplation of the universal essences or truths’ (2016, p. 82). Here, metaphysical claims are made through statements of a reality ‘out there,’ a reality that one engages with in a passive contemplation. The Critical and the Phenomenological are different and perhaps a step forward in this search, but they both in different ways are vulnerable to the trap of the illusory because, as Bell explains ‘[i]n the Kantian (Critical) and the Husserlian (Phenomenological) versions [...] immanence becomes immanent to a transcendental subject.’ (p. 83). The subject – not the plane – becomes the centre, and the creation is limited to concepts in their intimate (and ultimate) relation to a universal and unquestioned subject.16 Correct and reflective thinking then refers us back to universals and oppressive practices.

It is important here to recognize the value that Deleuze saw in revolutions, particularly, in what he called ‘immanent, revolutionary, libertarian utopias’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 100). What is Philosophy? makes a distinction between authoritarian and revolutionary utopias, describing the former as utopias that emerge with a transcendental project – with an ‘ideal’ regime that is considered a template to be reproduced. Alternative, revolution as an immanent utopia ‘is to posit revolution as plane of immanence, infinite movement and absolute survey, but to the extent that these features connect up with what is real here and now in the struggle against capitalism, relaunching new struggles whenever the earlier one is betrayed’ (ibid). Although doubts are expressed over the term, in this context, utopia ‘designated that conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu – political philosophy.’ (ibid)

It is in this complex context, and prior to moving to the differentiation that What is Philosophy? carries out between philosophy and other creative activities, that we can now (re)turn to psychology and interrogate its disciplinary practices in light of the transformations that Deleuze invites us to make. What is Philosophy? provides an interesting point of entry into such an exploration because it is a good example of a recursive – not reflective – commentary made, by the philosopher, about his/her own practice. The distinction between the recursive and the reflective is of importance since, instead of What is Philosophy? being an invitation to return to an essentialist framework for philosophy, it is a commentary that calls for action and transformation. In this it is a gesture that is in line with another recognizable Deleuzian maxim: ‘a commentary should act as a veritable double and bear the maximal modification appropriate to a double. (One imagines a philosophically bearded Hegel, a philosophically clean-shaven Marx, in the same way as a moustached Mona Lisa.)’ (Deleuze, 1994, p. xxi).

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16 The universality of the subject is only questioned through pathology: either, as the popular comment states, ‘the bad, the mad and the ugly.’
What is Philosophy? is also interesting for psychology because it is a commentary made by the philosopher in his friendship with a non-philosopher, a non-philosopher who was not only an apprentice of philosophy but also a clinician, thus a person who knew of the complexities of this ‘core’ psychological practice. In this friendship, What is Philosophy? genuinely talks to the discipline in critical ways, alerting us of the perils of becoming functionaries of the status quo.

In this ‘philosophical’ section, we will be exploring some critical concepts in Deleuze’s projects. Bruun Jensen’s paper - Gilles Deleuze in Social Science: Some Introductory Themes – opens this section with a comprehensive and engaging introduction to Deleuze oeuvre.

The next contribution to this sections, Brown’s paper – Deleuze, Spinoza and Psychology: Notes towards an ‘experience ecology’ – interrogates Deleuze’s admiration of Spinoza. As he states, ‘Spinoza stands between what would usually be considered as the birth of modern philosophy and the Western Enlightenment [looking] both backwards, in its concerns with establishing ontological principles, and forwards in its desire to mobilise philosophy as a challenge to a politics of domination and alienation’ (Brown, p. 52). As already stressed, the key concept is ‘immanence’ and Brown puts this concept to work in psychology by exploring ecological psychology as one of it operationalizations.

The last paper in this section is Alan Bristow’s Actualizing the Virtual: Deleuze, Temporality and Memory. Exploring Bergson’s influence on Deleuze, Bristow ‘offers a vital critical framework to counter the ‘double illusion’ at the heart of many accepted psychological theories on the nature of memory and the experience of temporality’ (Bristow, p. 67). In order to do so, Bristow also touches on other important concepts Deleuze took from Bergson – ‘actual/virtual’, ‘duration’ and ‘the three syntheses of time’ – and also explores some of complex connections that Deleuze’s work has with psychoanalysis.

We had hoped to have a chapter on the Nietzschean legacy on the work of Deleuze but, as many things in life, this hope had to be let go. Nietzsche is of importance for many reasons, starting from the fact indicated earlier that, in the French philosophical milieu of their times, both Foucault and Deleuze committed themselves to affirming Nietzsche’s ideas instead of exploring those of Heidegger, thus establishing a critical difference with their peers. Deleuze’s second book – after the one focused on Hume – was on Nietzsche. Nietzsche and Philosophy (Deleuze, 1986) still constitutes a key entry to both Deleuze’s and Nietzsche’s work and their importance to psychology. It is here that Deleuze first explores the tragic condition of living one’s life – one’s throw of dice – in noble ways, of being a diagnostician of culture, and where he also examines that mysterious concept of the eternal return of difference as a critical way to ‘search for new means of philosophical expression’ (Deleuze, 1994, p. xxi).
References


The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) wrote about innumerable things. Early in his career, he wrote about other philosophers, including Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza. He wrote books about the author Marcel Proust and the painter Francis Bacon. He wrote two books about cinema. And, in collaboration with Félix Guattari, he wrote the two main works Anti-Oedipus (1983) and A Thousand Plateaus (1987), which stretched across social analysis, linguistics, the history of warfare, psychoanalysis, geology and anthropology. It is no simple task to summarize this diverse, and divergent, body of work.

Once one takes an interest in the philosophy of Deleuze, it is furthermore common to find it quite difficult to comprehend. Deleuze is often described as a ‘poststructuralist,’ a category usually taken to include a series of great French thinkers including Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), each of whom, in their own way, challenged the structuralism that reigned in the 1950s and 60s. Another characterization, used by Deleuze himself, is that he engaged in a philosophy of difference; an effort intended to unsettle a range of traditional convictions about thoughts and objects, epistemology and ontology, sameness and alterity, and much else. If Deleuze is difficult to read, it is not only due to the many technical concepts he develops, but also because his project is concerned with the transformation of deeply rooted patterns of thought.

Michel Foucault predicted that the 20th Century would once be considered ‘Deleuzian.’ It remains quite uncertain whether this will one day be the case. Even so, it can be observed that a wide range of Deleuze’s concepts and concerns have been taken up in a range of social sciences – in anthropology, sociology, in cultural studies and cultural...
geography, in science and technology studies and, to a limited extent, in psychology – sometimes directly, but more often indirectly.

This introduction is organized around a series of thematic discussions that connect Deleuze’s philosophy with on-going discussions in contemporary social science and cultural theory. The first section discusses Deleuze’s Spinoza-inspired conception of bodies and their affects as the central problem for philosophy. The next section introduces his quite heterodox understanding of materialism, a theme that I briefly connect to his views on the relation between the actual and the virtual. This discussion leads to a consideration of his contrast between major and minor sciences. I continue to examine Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of art as the exhibit of affect. I then consider Deleuze’s micro-political interpretation of power in relation to the famous analyses by Michel Foucault. This paves the way for a final discussion of the performative role played by the social sciences in relation to the societies in which they are embedded.

We do not yet know what a body can do

Today it is impossible to read many pages of social and cultural theory before encountering the concept of ‘affect’ (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). Among other things, affect indexes an effort to recuperate embodiment as a site of concern (cf. Connerton 1989: 101), and to break with the discursive orientation of much social theory in the 1980s and 90s (Massumi 2002, Blackman 2008). At issue, however, is not a return to the idea of a ‘natural’ body, since we have learned that the very idea of the natural is an effect of social, political and historical processes (e.g. Lorraine 1999). Even those actions and feelings that appear most ‘natural’ are also loaded with ‘unnatural’ bits of culture, power and discourse.

Though affect has connotations similar to those of emotion, the affective turn is not oriented towards any form of conventional psychology (see also Brown and Stenner 2009). In contrast with emotion, which is individually felt and socially expressed, affect is often depicted as sudden eruptions, which are experienced as such because the processes that generate them operate subliminally within bodies and imperceptibly between them. Affect reaches us via Deleuze and Spinoza.

In Spinoza: Practical Philosophy (1988) Deleuze defined bodies by their capacity for being affected. Bodies, rather than minds, take over the role as a “new model” for philosophy (17), and each body must be considered as a centre through which a series of actions and passions is expressed (Deleuze 1990a: 327). But while the focus is on each individual body and its heterogeneous expressions, this is no conventional individualism. For one thing, the concept of the body extends beyond humans, to include animals, plants and minerals. For another, Spinoza’s interest is in the distribution of affect across
bodies and in how new relations and possibilities for action emerge due to their reciprocal influences. Thus, guide dogs make it possible for blind people to navigate otherwise inaccessible urban spaces, chemical compounds alleviate pain or induce hallucinations, and digital platforms facilitate real-time communication that may lead to mutations in international relations.

A very similar idea has been central to actor-network theory, Bruno Latour’s relational anthropology. Like Spinoza, Latour (2004a) deployed the formula: the more you are influenced by other entities, the more you are able to act yourself. Without qualification, however, this is obviously a problematic formulation, since it is far from all influences that increase one’s capacity for action. To the contrary, many interactions with other bodies – from violence in the home to the destruction wrought by tornadoes – induce reductions in the capacity to act. They create what Spinoza called ‘sad’ affects.

The interaction of bodies is also central for Deleuze’s depiction of Spinoza’s ethics. Contrary to its usual meaning, this ethics does not revolve around the question of good and evil (Spinoza would hardly be impressed by today’s rhetoric about terror). What is relevant, rather, is to learn to distinguish good and bad encounters. At issue is the process of gradually learning that this particular body diminishes my capacity to act, while this one, over here, increases it.

Spinoza used this mode of thought in a surprising analysis of Adam’s fall from grace (Deleuze 1988: 31). In his 1664-6 correspondence with the Dutch grain trader and amateur theologian Willem van Blijenbergh, Spinoza insisted that God did not forbid Adam to eat the apple but simply revealed the bad consequences Adam would suffer if he were to partake of it. Eating the apple would generate a passive, sad affect, and diminish his capacity to act, since he would be evicted from paradise! In this analysis, the moral question of good and evil fades from view. Just like consumption of bad oysters is not a moral concern but a bodily one, since it can lead to stomach problems, Adam’s eating of the apple is also evaluated in bodily terms.

As this illustrates, Spinoza’s ethics has nothing to do with establishing a proper morality. No ultimate criteria allow us to determine what the good is. Instead, Deleuze’s Spinoza is very close to a Nietzschean conception of interacting forces (see Deleuze 1983, Nietzsche 1999, also Jensen & Selinger 2003). With the exception of very unusual circumstances, such as God’s unique capacity to ‘reveal’ to Adam the dire consequences following from his bite of the apple, we have no possibility of knowing in advance which relations will turn out to be good or bad. Accordingly, each of our existences appears as an unfolding experiment concerned with finding out which are which (Deleuze 1988: 40).

At stake is a double relation. On the one hand, the ways in which the body is influenced and modified by its many encounters is the only arbiter of the good and the bad. On the
other hand, however, our bodily experiences of particular affects can only guide our lives to the extent that they crystallize as ideas (Deleuze 1990a: 220). This is why what we call ‘mind’ is neither more nor less than the ‘idea’ we are able to form about the body. And, just like the newly born body is helpless because it has not yet been shaped by many bodily encounters, the freshly minted idea remains insufficient until it has gradually been modified and refined by many encounters and affects. At the aggregate level of society, Spinoza speaks of a collective refinement of ideas as ‘common notions,’ a term that designates the effort “to select and organize good encounters, that is, encounters of modes that enter into composition with ours and inspire us with joyful passions (feelings that agree with reason)” (Deleuze 1988: 56).

Deleuze’s focus, then, is on bodies conceived as expressive centres influenced and modified by other bodies and in turn influencing and modifying them. There is no ‘essence’ since the body is continuously shaped and modified by the many relations in which it becomes involved. Considered in terms of bodily affects, an oxen and a workhorse is closer to one another than a workhorse and a racehorse (Deleuze 1988: 124). A snail, a peacock and a child may all conceivably interact and change each other, but we cannot be certain how (Deleuze 1990a: 217). Indeed, in relation to any specific body, we must begin with the assumption that we do not know what its set of reciprocal influences and achievable modifications are. We do not yet know what a body can do but over time it will gradually exhibit its capacities (Deleuze 1990a: 226).

These capacities tend to appear much more undefined in the early stages of physical development than later on. Even aging bodies, however, are constantly transformed as they enter into new relations, from medical treatment to yoga or meditation, to the banal experience of moving outside habitual settings or coming across new objects. Moreover, the question of modification goes beyond physique, for at issue is also the possibility of abandoning old ideas and developing new ones.

Throughout their lives, bodies are thus transformed by all the relations they become part of. And if this is the case for the ‘individual’ body, a more extended perspective makes the point even clearer. If we consider the ‘human,’ the ‘robot,’ or the ‘planet’ as relational categories, we must conclude that we truly cannot know what they (or we) are capable of.

This experimental and relational approach furthermore forms the basis for what Deleuze calls Spinoza’s ‘new naturalism’ (Deleuze 1990a: 232), a quite peculiar, or, as I shall say, ‘unnatural’ materialism.
An unnatural materialism

Crudely put, what came to be known as the ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy, and cultural and social theory revolved around the insight that language, classification and discourse shape subjects, society, culture and power. It is impossible to get a glimpse at things as they are in themselves, since it is only through language that we are able to create any knowledge of things. Physical entities from genes to computers must necessarily be described in language for us to be able to relate to them, and thus our linguistic repertoires invariably colour material objects.

Nowadays, advocates of a return to, or a reinvention of, materialism often invoke a dawning realization of the limitations of these ideas. To be sure, it remains important to understand the multifarious and complex relations between language, power and culture. Yet, in a world where nuclear power and climate change show their teeth, it seems increasingly important to find new ways of relating to the force of things (Bennett 2004). This much is shared by the actor-network focus on ‘nonhuman agency’ (Latour 1993), by philosophical trends like speculative realism (Bryant et al. 2011) and by the new materialism affiliated with certain strands of feminist theory (Coole & Frost 2010, Alaimo & Hekman 2012). Common to these approaches is an effort to define things, objects and materials in more expansive and freer ways than has previously been the case (see also Pickering & Guzik 2008).

Now in many ways Deleuze was a dedicated materialist. His work overflows with discussions of materials and their capacities: the smith shapes iron that shapes wars; lightning creates relations between the sky and the earth; genetic mutations transform organisms. He wrote of humans, that they are “made of contracted water, earth, light and air” (1994: 73) and insisted that our material composition precedes our senses, and comes far earlier than our linguistic abilities. For Deleuze, language is itself a fundamentally material system (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 75-111, de Landa 1998: 183-257). At the same time, however, this materialism has a number of quite unorthodox traits.

Several of these characteristics relate to his favoured distinction between the ‘virtual’ and the ‘real.’ Here we must be careful, for Deleuze wrote of the virtual decades before the World Wide Web, and current understandings of ‘virtual reality’ are in some ways diametrically opposed to his concept. Rather than turning to Twitter or Facebook, we will have to pay attention to one of Deleuze’s favourite quotations by Marcel Proust (1871-1922), who said of the virtual that it is “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (Deleuze 1991: 96).

According to Deleuze (1991: 97), the idea of “realization” assumes a particular conception of the relation between the possible and the real. Obviously, not everything that is possible comes to be realized. Instead, the idea of the ‘possible’ operates as an
abstract limit to what can happen. This is the premise, for example, when scientists tell us what is physically or biologically possible. And this sense of possibility forms the backdrop to the very idea of what it means to be ‘realized.’ The philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whose work was very significant for Deleuze, criticized this idea of possibility, developing the concept of the virtual as an alternative. For Bergson, the emergence of new situations should not be seen as a realization of possibility, but rather as an actualization of the virtual.

Although this may sound like terminological quibbles these are radically different conceptions. While the realization of the possible defines a fundamentally ideal and passive relation, the actualization of the virtual is a material and creative process. A whole range of bodily materials or entities create complex relations that generate a final outcome. Since this outcome bears no similarity to an original form, one can speak of proper novelty. Rather than a general, abstract model, the virtual thus characterizes a material force field, the interactions and modulations of which generate realities. In yet other words, the virtual is a multiplicity that operates as the motor for what Bergson (1944) called “creative evolution,” an infinite process that creates the actualized pluralism of the world.

Common to the new materialism (and to some object-oriented approaches) is the idea that the social sciences – often accused of being too soft, fuzzy and discursive – must become better at learning from the natural sciences. At stake is a confrontation with the scepticism towards scientific explanations that has marked much social and cultural theory since the 60s. Thus, there are suggestions that social sciences can be strengthened with insights from neuroscience, biology, physics or mathematics (see e.g. Barad 2007, Grosz 2008). Moreover, thinkers like Manuel de Landa (2002) and Keith Ansell-Pearson (1997) have interpreted Deleuze on the basis of particular kinds of science. And certainly Deleuze was very interested in the natural sciences. Yet, his thinking remained resolutely independent of any particular scientific paradigm. Instead, his interest was to continue the ‘creative evolution’ of ideas in a movement – invariably also a transformation – from the sciences and into philosophy.

The orientation toward creative evolution explains why no practice, as far as Deleuze is concerned, can function as an off-the-shelf model for any other. Each and every practice has its own problems and must develop its own ways of dealing with it (Deleuze 1994: 105). For example, the capacity of flowers to live from water and light can be seen as their experimental solution to the problem of how to survive in the environments with which they have been provided. But the same can be said about plant biologists whose knowledge is the outcome of experiments that have gradually attuned them to the capacities of flowers. Both flowers and biologists are involved in risky, experimental processes. But since the concrete relations that compose their practices are
heterogeneous and the specific problems each needs to solve are entirely different, the risks and possibilities that pertain to each are necessarily singular.

And the same dynamics holds for the ecology of (human) knowledge practices. One encounters, for example, the argument that genetics or neurophysiology can provide psychology with its so-far-lacking properly scientific foundation. Or, one hears that mathematical modelling or big data analysis would make sociology or literary studies more rigorous. Yet, any attempt to import concepts originally developed to solve problems in other fields is liable to failure since it disregards the divergence between these practices and their respective problems. Were these suggestions really to be implemented, the main consequence would likely be to stifle the creative evolutions of the recipient fields.

It might indeed be pointless to aspire to any kind of ultimate explanation. As in fractal imagery, every time an adequate explanation appears to have been found for some phenomena, novel problems immediately begin to repopulate the field. Or, in Deleuze’s (1994: 106) more colourful language: behind the masks, there are always “further masks ... and so on to infinity.”

Here, he has recourse to a figure, the masquerade, which connotes representation, and the symbolic. Yet, this only serves to make his materialism even more unnatural. For extended ‘to infinity,’ rather than depicting a distinctly human activity, the masquerade becomes a generic descriptor of how all phenomena operate. Indeed, it is precisely because there is no end to the masquerade that no scientific discipline can claim to hold the master key to ‘material reality.’ For this reason, one becomes neither more nor less of a materialist by exchanging the concepts of social science for those of molecular biology or nuclear physics.

Deleuze (1994: 75) wrote about human subjects that: “underneath the self that acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject.” Within the subject there is always a multiplicity of other ‘selves’, ‘mini-mes,’ which is not a metaphor for biological mechanisms but rather implies the existence of multiple thinking and acting agents operating under the radar of human consciousness, together producing the subject. And for Deleuze this is not unique to human subjectivity, as indicated by the approval with which he quotes the author Samuel Butler’s (1835-1902) description of corn:

> even the corn in the fields grow upon a superstitious basis as to its own existence and only turns the earth and moisture into wheat through the conceit of its own ability to do so, without which faith it were powerless (Butler [1890] in Deleuze 1994: 75).

Formulations such as these make abundantly clear that Deleuze’s materialism is altogether different from conventional social science dualisms, including subject and
object, culture versus nature, and human versus thing. *Both* objects (corn) and subjects (humans) are *both* matter and mind, in their very different ways.

Within the realm of this distinctly unnatural materialism (unnatural, precisely because it fails to comply with standard dualisms with which we normally think the material), we are far from the linguistic turn’s insistence that, unable to reach things in themselves, we will have to make do with ‘perspectives’ on them. It is not at all that perspectives do not matter. It is rather that, in a situation where even *corn has perspectives* (indeed *superstitions*!), the dichotomy between the thinking, language-using subject and the inert and mute object is unmoored.

For the same reason, however, we are *equally* far from any new materialist aspiration to bring the ‘natural’ insights of the sciences home to ‘culture.’ What is brought into focus is rather the reciprocal but differentiated processes that create the relations, which we conventionally name ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ or ‘nature’ and ‘culture.’ But then what image of the sciences does this entail?

**Sciences, minor and major**

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari offered a series of complicated arguments about the relation between the State and science. This emphasis, however, does not imply that they were science *critics* of the kind who denounce the sciences for having institutional blind spots, or for being racist or sexist. Instead, they proposed a distinction between two co-existing forms of science, each with its own relation to the State and to power. An ‘eccentric’ ‘nomad’ or ‘minor science’” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 361) is contrasted with ‘royal,’ ‘state’ or ‘major science.’

While major science is built on a “theory of solids treating fluids as a special case” (361), the model for minor science is hydraulic, taking flows and fluxes as its point of departure. Referring to Lucretius’ famous depiction of the *clinamen*, “the smallest angle by which an atom deviates from a straight path,” Deleuze and Guattari observe that minor science always operates in the element of becoming and heterogeneity. Moreover, whereas royal science, aiming to extract “constants” and always in “search for laws,” has a legalist underpinning, nomad science, which follows the connections between material forces is experimental (369). Exemplifying the royal approach, the architect lays out a metric plane *on paper*, while the Gothic master builder who erects cathedrals by working *directly* with material forces exhibits nomad traits (368).

It is not random that these two kinds of science are also called minor and major, for their relationship to the state is not at all equal. Since the *modus operandi* of the state is control, it is incumbent upon it “to maintain a legislative and constitutive primacy for
royal science” (367). To the eyes of the state, minor or nomad science – averse to law-like regularities and obsessed with flow and becoming – always appears pre- or sub-scientific. It is not that the state aims to quash or eradicate the minor sciences, however, for it also needs their insights. Instead, the minor sciences are kept subservient to the major sciences, which are thereby enabled to continuously appropriate and modify their contents. While minor science takes an interest in rivers due to their chaotic vortices and turbulent flows, major science immediately sets to work on making dikes and embankments to control these forces (363).

But again, this is not to say that Deleuze and Guattari simply dismiss major science. Instead, they insist has each kind of science has its own mode of operation and its own form of creativity. Furthermore, these are, to an extent, complementary. Thus, whereas minor sciences “confine themselves to invent problems whose solution is tied to a whole set of collective, nonscientific activities,” the development of these solutions is premised on royal science managing to fit the problem “into its theorematic apparatus and its organization of work” (374). Despite their affinity for, and tendency to celebrate, the nomad and the minor, Deleuze and Guattari are explicit that it is “not better, just different.”

This brief corrective takes on additional importance once we fast-forward to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) final work What is Philosophy? since the analysis there appears almost diametrically opposite to the one just outlined. At this point, we can read that while philosophy has the creation of concepts as its object, science communicates through functions (117). And although philosophy and science both works on the virtual (or “chaos”) their orientations are presented as entirely different, philosophy aiming to give to it conceptual consistency, while science strives to actualize it (118).

Shocking to the admirer of A Thousand Plateaus, it seems as if the nomad sciences have all but vanished, the whole field taking over by royal science. Moreover, as Isabelle Stengers (2010: 39) observes, the admonition to not mix the creations of science and philosophy “sounds like a biblical prohibition.” It is certainly also very different from science and technology studies’ ethnographic descriptions of the actual, messy practices of science (e.g. Latour 1987, Pickering 1995).

As Stengers’ argues, however, it would be a mistake to interpret this change as a belated, conservative retrenchment. Instead, she suggests that the discussion in What is Philosophy? can be understood as Deleuze and Guattari’s response to the realization that science is now threatened by forces against which it lacks resistance (Stengers 2010: 40).

But, it will be objected, billions of dollars go into scientific advancement every year; white-coated scientists constantly appear in the news. In what possible way can science be seen as under threat?
Here we must first note that, in modern times, science has indeed been extraordinarily successful. And this success cannot be dissociated from its access to resources, made available due to its contribution to state projects. As Stengers (2010: 4) further argues, it is also relevant that science has long encouraged an epic narration, according to which scientists gradually defeat superstitious practices thereby enabling progress.

According to this narrative, the power of science resides in its rationality and objectivity, often symbolized by the idea of a singular scientific method. Hence, it is no surprise that many scientists have strenuously resisted the empirical re-descriptions offered by science and technology studies (STS), which raised questions about the existence of any such general method, and, indeed, undermined the idea of a unique scientific rationality as such. This intra-academic quarrel, however, proved insignificant compared with later attacks by spin-doctors and oil companies, who, among other things, have sought to undermine arguments for climate change and environmental destruction, by systematic identification of all the non-rational elements involved in the making of these facts (see also Latour 2004b).

Along this historical trajectory, the current vulnerability of science is a consequence of the fact that the only claim to superiority it thinks it has – objectivity – appears increasingly illusory. Accordingly, scientists find themselves increasingly helpless against anti-science ideologues that keep poking holes in their rationalizations. In the same movement, science becomes an easy target for the advancing knowledge economy that has no need for rationality or truth, since it operates on a purely instrumental basis. What Deleuze and Guattari, and later Stengers, pinpointed as threatened is thus not science as a set of practices – these obviously do exist – but as a particular adventure of ideas (Whitehead 1933).

In this light, the argument in What is Philosophy? can thus be understood as an appreciation of the varied creative achievements of science, which had little to do with objectivity in the first place, accompanied by a gesture of friendship extended during a time of crisis. As Stengers suggests, this gesture has two complementary aims. On the one hand, it invites the creation of a new image of science that does not rely on the tropes of heroic progress or universal reason. The sciences might then become recognizable as a differentiated and multi-faceted ecology of knowledge practices independent of any overarching or integrating principle. On the other hand, Stengers proposes, there is also an encouragement of scientists to come to terms with the fact that science has historically contributed to the destruction of many other practices. Recognizing this is prerequisite for dealing properly with the problem raised at the end of What is Philosophy? of how to improve the conditions for fruitful reciprocal relations between scientific and extra-scientific practices, including, as we shall now see, those of the arts.
Art: making affects perceptible

In the encounter with foreign constellations of bodies and the ‘signs’ they generate, the philosopher is forced to think, writes Deleuze (2000: 97). Such thought-provoking constellations can be found anywhere— in the destructions of a Japanese tsunami, an inexplicable look in the eyes of a lover, or in the observation of a new particle— but it is the special role of art to actively create such constellations (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 175-176). Hence, it is not coincidental that Deleuze wrote two books on cinema, and dedicated works to the painter Francis Bacon and the authors Marcel Proust and, with Guattari, Franz Kafka. Indeed, in the context of arguing for a general transformation in the use of the film media in the 20th Century – from a focus on movement to a focus on time – Deleuze (1986a, 1989) developed a general taxonomy of signs and images.

Film directors from Sergei Eisenstein and Luis Buñuel to Jean-Luc Godard and Pier Paolo Pasolini created new kinds of images. Along similar lines, the writer is described as one who “invents unknown and unrecognized affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 174). As Deleuze and Guattari further wrote in What is Philosophy? art makes “perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become” (1994: 182). In turn, this forces the philosopher, and, let us add, the social scientist, to use their own conceptual means to make sense of the ‘imperceptible’ forces that art makes available for inspection.

Although art takes innumerable forms, Deleuze thus maintained that they have a “common problem” (2003: 56): The question of how the forces of the world can be captured and exhibited. Given this definition, it is clear that art as political commentary is wholly uninteresting to Deleuze and Guattari, who indeed asserted that contrary to “bad novels,” art has nothing to do with “the opinions held by characters in accordance with the social type” (1994: 188). Moreover, art neither represents nor mimics, or symbolizes, reality. Instead, artists experiment with using cameras, words, or paint to make imperceptible affects available in another form.

Accordingly, the primary problem is never to ‘get a good idea,’ which can be transferred to metal, paper, or linen. The problem rather, is to cleanse oneself of the conventional ideas that always threaten to take over one’s whole field of attention. As Deleuze wrote (2003: 86)

It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface. The figurative belief follows from this mistake. If the painter were before a white surface, he — or she— could reproduce on it an external object functioning as a model. But such is not the case. The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he
begins his work. They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it.

An important dimension of this cleansing, then, is to prevent the artistic reproduction of pre-formed conventions or ideas, which the artist has absorbed from his or her surroundings. For Deleuze and Guattari, this problem is connected with the question of expression, since, in line with Franz Kafka (1883-1924), they see symbolic and metaphorical representations as main vehicles of stereotypes and ready-made clichés.

Someone might, for example, metaphorically write of a person behaving, or being treated, “like a dog,” to indicate his servile disposition. In contrast, Kafka exclaimed that: “metaphors are one of the things that makes me despair of literature” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 22). Nowhere in his stories does one find anyone described as “like” something else. One might, however, encounter Gregor Samsa (Kafka 1996), who actually becomes a bug. The Kafkaesque fascination, then, is with metamorphoses rather than metaphors. Resonant with Deleuze’s never fading captivation with bodily encounters, it experiments with making visible affects and intensities made possible by altered bodily states.

As this further suggests, Deleuze’s conception of art entails a general critique of understandings of representation that have traditionally informed aesthetic theory and the philosophy of art. Within these approaches are lodged forms of evaluation that measure quality in terms of its conformance with an ideal model. At bottom, the question remains whether art is a good or a bad copy of a static and extant reality (1990b: 254). But since art is a singular domain in its own right, this evaluative criterion is misguided (Deleuze 2003: 2, 91). Indeed, it is as a singular domain that art gains the capacity to challenge or transform existing conventions, including the very idea of the ‘true model’ as a relevant aesthetic criterion.

In What is Philosophy?, Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 164) wrote that art is about extracting a “bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.” Thus, Kafka’s work is described as a “literary machine” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 18). What the literary machine produces and exhibits are the non-human or more-than-human affects that the protagonist K experiences among the bizarre bureaucrats that inhabit The Castle (1988 [1926]) and elsewhere.

Deleuze and Guattari further argue that Kafka developed a minor literature (note the conformance with the distinction between major and minor science). His literature was minor, among other things, because as a Czech Jew from Prague, he wrote in German, a language not his own. After encountering the previous image of art as the elicitation of more-than-human affects, this may come as a surprise, which is unlikely to diminish once Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 16-18) assert that minor literature always has a
collective value, and that it is, indeed, always political. They continue to maintain, however, that Kafka’s minor literature cannot be explicated with reference to his social ‘type.’ The situation is indeed rather the opposite: it was necessary for Kafka to set up “a minor practice of major language from within” (1986: 18), and it was this experimental requirement that enabled him to give the novel a new, minor form. Accordingly, Kafka’s work does not illustrate the ‘problem of the minorities’ in conventional political terms.

Although we now speak of a ‘Kafkaesque bureaucracy,’ K, the identically named protagonist of The Castle (1988 [1925]) and The Trial (1998 [1926]), is indeed far from a typical ‘revolutionary.’ Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 82) describe him as an “an engineer or a mechanic who deals with the gears of the machine”, a “jurist or legal investigator who follows the statements of the assemblage.” His ideal library, they write, would “include only texts for engineers or machinists or jurists” (1986: 83). Rather than filling a role pre-determined by his social identity, they suggest, Kafka’s shows the process – at once scary and humorous – through which K becomes part of “a polyvalent assemblage” (85) that holds together changing configurations of technical, erotic, linguistic, social and juridical elements.

An important characteristic of minor writing is that it does not aspire to become major at a later point. At each point, its vitality is articulated through the hidden or unperceived. On this background it is more than a bit ironic to consider Kafka’s current iconic status within the canons of critical theory. When the experiences K undergoes in The Castle or The Trial are interpreted as a metaphor for modern alienation and dehumanization in general, he is precisely turned into a majoritarian figure.

Rather than offering critique, artists contribute along with others to the previously mentioned establishment of Spinozist ‘common notions,’ which Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 216) would indeed characterize in What is Philosophy? in terms of the question of how the divergent practices of art, science and philosophy might “join up in the brain.” Obviously, this image of the brain has little to do with either individual cognition or subjective genius. Instead, it designates a form of emergent collective intelligence (perhaps a ‘hive-mind’ in today’s social media parlance), a heterogeneous assemblage of interacting bodies generating capacities beyond themselves.

Power: we must be egyptologists

What does it mean to have power? Who has power in society and how did they get it? How is power maintained and reproduced? How are power relations changed? For obvious reasons, these are important questions for the social sciences. Thus, it is relevant to consider Deleuze’s notion of power. Bodies are defined by their capacities
to act, and these capacities vary depending on the constellations of which they are part. But since these constellations are emergent and transformable, it becomes untenable to analyze power in terms of unchanging institutions, classes, gender, or race.

Here we find a close alignment between Deleuze and Foucault’s (1991) analyses of the microphysics of power. There are also obvious links between his view and that of actor-network theory, since the early Bruno Latour (1986) depicted power as the consequence of network relations between human and nonhuman agents. Thus, power, like society itself, emerges from continuous negotiations, which involve many other elements than people, their interests and discourses.

In the slim *Foucault*, Deleuze (1986b: 82) wrote that power is like a “mole that only knows its way round its network of tunnels.” As a mole, power “comes from below,” operating “on the basis of innumerable points.” In a famous formulation, Foucault (1990: 89-91) had stated that an adequate analysis of power demands that we “cut off the king’s head.” He was indicating the necessity to dispense with a substantive conception according to which the ‘king,’ prime minister, or CEO would ‘hold’ power in smaller or larger quantities. In terms of a microphysics of power, it is rather the case that the power ‘held’ by any person is an effect of the relations that create and maintain their position within a network. If these relations break or change, something that happens with great regularity, even the king may quickly find himself powerless.

Though we can examine power relations empirically, we cannot know *a priori* what they are. Sometimes power is created through flows of money, while at other times it may be generated in discourses or by visions. At yet other times, it may be the effect of technology, the forces of nature, or perhaps ritual and magic. But no matter how open-ended, this series still misleads to the extent that it suggests an either-or relation: either economy, or knowledge, or technology or… Reality is even more complex, because constellations of power do not respect such divisions, and are furthermore subject to change over time. As in the case of bodies and the ideas to which they give rise, Deleuze’s analysis of power thus avoids the assumption of any fixed position or hierarchy. One should never assume that power is always to be found in the same place, or that it will always take the same form.

Deleuze is particularly interested in what he calls Foucault’s ‘diagrammatic’ method. Since our perceptual abilities slide into our languages and concepts (Deleuze 1986b: 66) and vice versa, what we are able to see and what are able to say is invariably tied together. Perceptions, rather than naturally given by our sense organs, are “complexes of actions and passions, actions and reactions, multisensorial complexes” (1986b: 59). Foucault, he argued, drew virtual ‘diagrams’ – epistemes – that mapped these changing configurations of power and knowledge; perceptions, words and things. These diagrams were thus images of historically variable ways of “of saying and seeing” the world (Deleuze 1986b: 48). Contrary to some interpretations of Foucault, there is never any
identity between knowledge and power, and the latter can never be reduced to discursive effects, since “visibilities will remain irreducible to statements” (49).

Deleuze (2000:4) wrote that: “everything that teaches us something emits signs.” This covers not only text messages from friends, but also signs emitted from a rare plant, toxic mines, or train networks. Such signs can take innumerable forms, and are received in a multiplicity of ways – with nausea and dizziness, or with irritation, exuberance, or anger. If, therefore, we want to understand the relations between what we can see and what we can say, what we can know and how we can act, we are obliged to find new ways “to break things open” (Deleuze 1986b: 52), a formulation that strikingly resembles Bruno Latour’s (1987) later call to ‘open the black-boxes.’ If one has been trained to decode language, the injunction to ‘open things’ may not seem very intuitive – perhaps even very problematic. Yet, Deleuze (2000: 97) insists that the passions that drive people to act are shaped by encounters with the most diverse objects. Thus, the study of the microphysics of power demand that we explore, and learn to analyse, the multiple ways in which things – from rivers to stocks to CO2 – influence and modify peoples’ passions.

In a formulation directed at Marxism, Deleuze (2004: 264) wrote that ideology is a matter of “smoke and mirrors.” However, the only real illusion is the notion of illusion, which means ideology, itself. For neither Foucault nor Deleuze (1986b: 54) does power operate behind peoples’ backs. To be sure, power is an effect of relations, which can be unpacked. But as there is no screen and no mirrors, there is no hidden logic. For the analyst of power, the detective is therefore a bad model. Instead, Deleuze (2000: 92) suggested that: “we must be Egyptologists.” Face to face with what initially appears as meaningless scribbles, that is, the social scientist must patiently learn to decipher the hieroglyphs of power. But though this may be a daunting task, there is no reason to assume that the signs cover over a conspiracy.

Conclusion: extracting a little thought

In What is Philosophy?, Deleuze and Guattari (1994, see also Stengers 2010) aimed to specify the characteristics of science, art and philosophy. The social sciences didn’t appear in the discussion (Brown 2010). And although the large trans-disciplinary works Anti-Oedipus (1983) and A Thousand Plateaus abound in references to society and culture, anthropological, historical and psychological observations were there detached from their original intellectual contexts and used only as ‘input’ for the ‘creative evolution’ of philosophy (Jensen and Rödje 2010: 1-37). Accordingly, just as we are unable to find ready-made answers to social inquiries in the handbooks of natural science, we also cannot turn to Deleuze with the hope of finding the problems of social science solved in his philosophical writings. But they can be opened up, enriched, or
redefined. As I have tried to indicate here, whether one is interested in understanding bodies and their affects, materiality, knowledge, art, or power, Deleuze’s thought has a lot to offer.

Rather than a set of hierarchical structures, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 30) gave us ‘rhizomes’ as an image of the world’s complex, entangled relations. Due to the difficulty of delimiting objects and contexts, the aspiration to analyse ‘rhizomes,’ – decentered networks, assemblages – creates methodological problems. We simply cannot know in advance which things are related to which, and how, or why. Taking this ‘indeterminate’ starting point seriously has been fundamental for actor-network theory (Latour 1993), which shares Deleuze’s ambition to describe and conceptualize complex patterns of people and things (see also Mol 2002, Jensen & Gad 2008). The ‘radical empiricism’ of these approaches offers refreshing alternatives to any kind of scientism or positivism and to any kind of social constructivism or discursive idealism.

It must also be emphasized, however, that Deleuze’s approach to the empirical is at significant variance with social science, even in the forms otherwise most resonant with his ideas, like Latour’s actor-network theory or Andrew Pickering’s Mangle of Practice (1995). Where the latter use ethnographic and historical methods to trace the changing relations between people and things, Deleuze drew on a massive set of secondary sources from history, anthropology, linguistics, and psychology, not to mention several natural sciences. But in contrast with the social, cultural or psychological questions that one way or another motivates the social scientist, Deleuze used this material exclusively with a view to creating philosophical concepts. Accordingly, it requires a certain tact and finesse to feed Deleuzian concepts ‘back into’ social science (see e.g. Strathern 2017).

Since the American feminist theorist Judith Butler (1990) wrote Gender Trouble, cultural and social disciplines have become increasingly attentive to the ‘performative’ effects of discourse. Everyone now knows that discourses not only describe phenomena but also shape them. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987: 77) “theory of the performative sphere,” however, reaches further than discourse. Preceding Latour’s actor-network theory, the new materialism, and object-oriented philosophies, it extended agency to nonhumans, from plants to technologies or from animals to minerals. Rather than arguing that bodies are shaped, not to say determined by discursive representations, their performative theory thus proposed to see even representations and discourses as bodies with varied, initially unknown, capacities for being affected and modified (1987: 86). To understand them, we have to constantly move back and forth between the “constant noise” of words and the “silent order” of things (1987: 87, see also Gatens 2000).

Since even representations are bodies that interact with other bodies, we cease to be located within an epistemologically defined ‘perspective.’ Instead, we find ourselves situated within practical ontologies, where worlds are made and re-made in encounters that do not respect divisions between nature and culture, object and subject, or
discourse and materiality. We are in the midst of on-going ontological experiments. Transformation is the order of the day, since it is impossible to find any system not subject to “continuous variation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 103, see also Jensen 2012, 2014).

A performative consequence of this image of ontological transformation is that the effects of (and for) social and cultural inquiry are also unpredictable. They will also gradually show, as our own descriptions and analyses interact with other materials, agendas or problems. This is probably one reason why one finds in Deleuze no attempt to build a full-fledged theoretical system analogous to the efforts of a Hegel, a Kant, or a Luhmann. Instead, one finds sets of concepts, which are expected to behave rhizomatically, spread unpredictably, and make surprising connections. If you do not like one chapter, wrote Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus, then move on and see if you can find something interesting in the next. Concepts, after all, are neither more nor less than tools with which to experiment.

An event, Deleuze (1990b: 220) wrote, can be understood as a machine for the extraction of a little thought. At once humble and open-ended, this is an appealing image with which to end. Social scientists, too, can experiment with extracting from the event a fresh little thought. It would have to be a thought, obviously, attentive to the unpredictability of bodies and their affects. The ability to extract such little thoughts would not at all be insignificant.

References


Introduction

The work of Gilles Deleuze has much to offer contemporary thinking in psychology. As the papers in this volume show, the restructuring of what are usually taken as ‘topics’ for psychological analysis into genuine ontological and epistemological concerns leads to a profound questioning of how we think about the nature of ‘the psychological’ and the ways it can be studied. As Paul Stenner and I claimed in *Psychology Without Foundations*, the encounter with Deleuze does not so much provide a new grounding for the discipline, but instead calls into question the very idea of premising psychology on a clearly defined notion of ‘substance’, whether it be mind, body, brain, society, conversation or some judiciously defined amalgam of terms. The psychological is everywhere – in the sense that we cannot extract if from the myriad processes through which it is continuously enacted – and nowhere in particular, because it is not a ‘thing’ that has a simple location in some place or other.

Placing the psychological within the philosophical tradition of ‘process thinking’, via Deleuze, is initially destabilising. It invites the immediate retort that, if psychology cannot adequately define its subject matter in advance, then it surely has little right to make a legitimate claim to be a discipline, particularly at a time when neuroscience and behavioural economics are gnawing away at both ends of the intellectual terrain. But breaking up established thinking is just one part of the Deleuzian project; it is always accompanied by the positing of a new set of concepts and enquiries. In a quasi-dialectical fashion, deterritorialization cannot be separated from reterritorialization (see Williams, 2013). To that end, there is an equivalent task of developing and honing a
different series of ‘images of the psychological’ and corresponding conceptual vocabulary that runs alongside the Deleuzian critique of extant psychology.

In this paper, I want to offer the example of ‘ecological psychology’ as one area where the dynamic of critique and reconceptualization through Deleuze can be considered. Here using the proper name ‘Deleuze’ is somewhat misleading since, as I hope to show, what is named is a point of intersection between a philosophical body of work and other intellectual currents, coming from practices as diverse as anthropology, biology and theatre. My argument is that as psychologists we are mistaken to imagine that Deleuze can provide us with the philosophical resources that we need to think through our own disciplinary problems. To do so is to both underestimate the complex relationship that Deleuze has to the canon of philosophy, along with the highly specific nature of ‘philosophical problems’, and to the more general problem of the relationship between practices that Deleuze and Guattari open up in What is Philosophy? (1994) What is needed instead is to recognise that Deleuze serves as both irritant and catalyst to psychological enquiry.

Deleuze as philosopher and nonphilosopher

Throughout his life, a considerable proportion of Deleuze’s writing consisted of his unique exegesis of other philosophers, most notably Bergson, Nietzsche, Leibniz, Hume and Spinoza. Whilst his engagement with Bergson effectively bookended his work, forming the basis for some of his earliest essays (see Deleuze 2004) and the crucial theme of the virtual and the actual, developed best in Cinema 1 (1986) and Cinema 2 (1989), and which he was still picking over in Immanence: A life (2001), published months before his death. But in purely quantitative terms, Deleuze spent more time writing directly on Spinoza than on any other philosopher. Spinoza was the subject of Deleuze’s secondary doctoral thesis in 1968 (1992), and the ‘Christ of Philosophers’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 60) became a repeated point of reference thereafter until the very end – ‘The transcendental field thus becomes a genuine plane of immanence, reintroducing Spinozism into the most elemental operation of philosophy’ (Deleuze, 2006: 386).

Spinoza occupies a curious position in the history of philosophy. Born a generation later than Descartes) and dying roughly a century before Kant’s revolutionary Critique of Pure Reason, Spinoza stands between what would usually be considered as the birth of modern philosophy and the Western Enlightenment. In this sense, Spinoza’s work points both backwards, in its concerns with establishing ontological principles, and forwards in its desire to mobilise philosophy as a challenge to a politics of domination and alienation. Deleuze often conflates these aspects of Spinoza, in part by arguing that in Ethics, Spinoza deliberately constructed a text operating at multiple levels:
This is the style at work in Spinoza’s seemingly calm Latin. He sets three languages resonating in his outwardly dormant language, a triple straining. The Ethics is a book of concepts (the second kind of knowledge), but of affects (the first kind) and percepts (the third kind) too. Thus the paradox in Spinoza is that he’s the most philosophical of philosophers, the purest in some sense, but also the one who more than any other addresses nonphilosophers and calls forth the most intense nonphilosophical understanding. This is why absolutely anyone can read Spinoza, and be very moved, or see things quite differently afterward, even if they can hardly understand Spinoza’s concepts. Conversely, a historian of philosophy who understands only Spinoza’s concepts doesn’t fully understand him. (Deleuze, 1990a: 165-6)

I would venture that we are meant to grasp the fairly direct implication here that Deleuze is also describing his own philosophical aspirations. He is a philosopher who addresses nonphilosophers, and hence one whose work cannot be fully grasped as situated within the history of philosophy itself. But the converse is also true. There is much in Deleuze’s work that we nonphilosophers – by which I mean, those whose vocation lies outside the formal practice and institutions of philosophy – can ‘hardly understand’, since honing the purity of philosophical thinking is simply not our concern. This means that there are vast swathes of both Deleuze and Spinoza (and Deleuze on Spinoza) that appear to pass us by. For example, much of Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza is taken up with considering the significance of Spinoza’s substitution of the term ‘expression’, which Deleuze treats as something akin to ‘emergence’ or ‘supervenience’, for the medieval term ‘emanation’, which could be thought of as resembling ‘transmission’. The philosophical problem at stake here is fundamental. Cartesian dualism divides mind from body, but reunites them in relation to a third ‘master’ position – God – which is the formal, emanative basis on which the whole dualistic basis of personhood is constructed. Whatever we are is first in God. Spinoza, by contrast, sees bodies and ideas as dual aspects of a singular substance, which is famously referred to in Ethics as ‘God; or nature’. This holistic, all-encompassing substance is constantly modifying itself but, crucially, each modification is a development or emergent property of substance, such that whilst every being may be said to be ‘within’ God/Nature, they are irreducible to some pre-existing design or form. The significance of this is to replace the idea of a transcendent world of ideas, which stands above and beyond yet drives all human experience, with the idea of immanence and self-creation (or autopoiesis), where potentiality is already contained within the world itself. Put slightly differently, novelty and difference is a creative process undergone by the world with neither transcendent direction nor prior blueprint (see Bruun Jensen, this volume).

As the refusal to posit a conceptual or spiritual realm lying beyond the world of potential lived experience, immanence is a rich philosophical concept. It is also notoriously
difficult to develop adequately. Whitehead ([1929]1978), for example, had recourse to a doctrine of ‘eternal objects’ and thought it necessary to find a place for God within his process metaphysics (see Stengers, 2011), whilst Deleuze ultimately turned to Bergson’s notion of ‘virtuality’ as a means of resolving how a world can become other to itself when it has no outside. But what then is the psychological significance of immanence? Whilst psychology still struggles to fully wrest itself of dualism, it does not typically rely upon the idea of transcendence, with the possible exception of poorly executed use of genetics of evolutionary adaptation as explanatory ‘grand narratives’. We can articulate the problem better by turning it towards ecological psychology.

Person-environment relationships

Harry Heft’s (2001) detailed account of the lineage that runs from William James’ radical empiricism to JJ Gibson’s (1979) *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, by way of EB Holt, provides a compelling argument for seeing ecological psychology as an operationalization of the concept of immanence. James famously argued for ‘pure experience’ as a metaphysical starting point (James, 1906), an undivided flow of potential experiences that are immanent to the relations we have to the world. As Heft shows, James is not denying the existence of a material world, but rather proposing that the ‘conceptual orders’ through which we come to know the world, and thus have specific, discrete experiences, are extracted from the world itself. The dynamic lived relation between knower and known is primary and contains ‘more’ in terms of ‘latent structures’ of knowledge than are expressed by any particular given experience (see Heft, 2001: 54-57).

Translating this into psychological terms, we might say that as persons, we are already embedded in relationships with the world around us that dispose us towards particular kinds of experiences. Describing these person-environment relationships adequately then becomes the primary task of psychological analysis. Ecological psychology, in its various forms, offers a series of approaches towards such description. Kurt Lewin (1936), for example, develops ‘life space’ as a means of conceptualising the field of possible actions in which the person is situated. Gibson (1979) focuses on the perceptual relationship between the person and the affordances – or ‘behavioural invitations’ – of the environment. In both cases, there is a kind selectivity at work. We do not necessarily act upon, nor perhaps even grasp the range of potential actions that are available to us. The most basic psychological operation is that of reducing or cutting out the pathways to actions we wish to accomplish from the myriad others to which we are immediately disposed. In this way, we can see that a fundamental error in modern psychology has been to over-invest in the idea of representation – that mental processes ‘add’ to the
world rather than ‘subtract’ or ‘extract’ from a field of possibilities (a point already discussed at length by Bergson in 1908 in *Matter and Memory*).

But in making this claim, it can seem that we tacked too far back in the direction of a form of empiricism which sees the ideational as constituted out of elementary building blocks of perception. Gregory Bateson (1973) provides the modern form of Humean empiricism in his description of mind as the distributed system of organising ‘differences which make a difference’ (i.e. information). Although Bateson is working in a cybernetic framework that we would now call ‘open systems’, and with a notion of information that is far more dynamic than that which would be adopted in the standard model of cognition (see Nichterlein, 2013), this kind of approach does seem at odds with an elaborated theory of meaning, such as that associated with phenomenology. The solution proposed by Heft (2001) is to see ‘effort towards meaning’ as being a distinctively human activity that is enacted through symbolic elaboration of person-environment relations. This arises from the relative complexity of the human organism in comparison with other forms of organic life. So whilst meaning is latent within ‘conceptual orders’ grounded in the world, it remains the preserve of the human to accomplish this kind of semiosis.

This kind of operationalization of immanence in psychology then seems to arrive back at privileging of the human subject, and a return to something like symbolic representation as the principal conceptual tool to understand what makes us persons. Spinoza and Deleuze would then be something of a detour that brings psychology back to where it started, but with perhaps an increased awareness of the material grounding of psychological operations. At this point it is worth returning to a crucial, and oft-cited, aspect of Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza as an *ethologist*.

The worlds of animals and humans

As a kind of addendum to the publication of his secondary thesis, Deleuze (1988) published a short work on Spinoza, which elaborates on key terms from *Ethics*. In a brief final section of the book, Deleuze reflects on the then contemporary significance of Spinoza’s philosophy. In *Ethics*, Spinoza describes how ‘bodies’ and ‘ideas’ are two attributes of a single substance. The attributes are divided into ‘modes’, which corresponds to the elements of the world of experience. Deleuze offers the term ‘plane of immanence’ in place of substance, and then proceeds to draw out the implications of seeing ideas and bodies as two aspects of the same field – every body has its conceptual dimension, just as every idea has a material existence. The ordering of bodies in relation to one another is simultaneously the ordering of ideas. Thinking is not some abstract activity, but a physical encounter with the world (see Brown & Stenner, 2001). Spinoza grounds his theory of knowing on this intimacy of the physical and the ideational.
Embodied encounters that increase the organism’s powers to act and to feel are, at the same time, experienced as an expansion in the capacity for thought. If, for Descartes, the route to adequate knowledge was through reduction to the cogito, for Spinoza it is, by contrast, expanded out into our worldly encounter. We think as we feel. Thinking is part of an affective field.

Spinoza’s elaboration of this theory of knowing involves more subtlety and ethical nuance than can be described briefly (see instead Negri, 1991; 2013). What is relevant here is that Deleuze focuses on the term *affect* to describe both the capacity of the body for entering into relations with others and the transformations brought about in the body as consequence of such encounters. An organism can, Deleuze claims, be described in terms of its affective capacity. He then goes on to argue that this renders Spinoza as a forerunner to modern ethology:

> Every reader of Spinoza knows that for him bodies and minds are not substances or subject, but modes. For, concretely, a mode is a complex relation of speed and slowness, in the body but also in thought, and it is a capacity for affecting of being affected, pertaining to the body or to thought. Concretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. Affective capacity, with a maximum threshold and minimal threshold, is a constant notion in Spinoza ... Long after Spinoza, biologists and naturalists will try to describe animal worlds defined by affects and capacities for affecting and being affected. For example, Jakob von Uexküll will do this for the tick, an animal that sucks the blood of mammals. He will define this animal by three affects: the first has to do with light (climb to the top of a branch); the second is olfactive (let yourself fall onto the mammal that passes beneath the branch); and the third is thermal (seek the area without fur, the warmest spot). A world with only three affects, in the midst of all that goes on in the immense forest. (Deleuze, 1988: 124-125)

Deleuze recruits the work of Jakob von Uexküll, the Estonian biologist, as exemplification of how Spinozist thinking is retained in modern approaches to studying the environmental contexts of organic life. von Uexküll ([1934]2010) developed the notion of ‘umwelt’ to describe the perceptual world of an organism, such as a tick. The world of every organism depends on the reciprocal relationship between its sensory capacities and the affordances of the environment in which they dwell. So whilst many different species might co-exist in the same physical location, following von Uexküll, we may treat each species as having its own radically specific umwelt. As a consequence, we may see psychology as the study of the ‘human umwelt’ – on which see Shotter & Newson (1982).
It is at this point that we have to confront a major issue in Deleuze’s scholarship. When reflecting on his own intellectual practice, Deleuze, in no unproblematic terms, described his reading of philosophical texts as producing ‘monstrous’ readings that, whilst faithful to the letter of the text, deliberately transformed the work into something other (see Deleuze, 1990a: 6). But it is notably that nowhere in his writing (so far as I am aware) does Deleuze reflect in a similar way on his practice with regard to the nonphilosophical work he engages with. Like many of his contemporaries, Deleuze was concerned with literary and artistic practices, albeit at the ‘high’ rather than ‘popular’ end of culture. And in doing so, it has been repeatedly observed that rather than bring philosophical analysis to bear upon the practice in question in a crude explanatory fashion, he treats the engagement as an opportunity to ‘do philosophy’ through a different medium. However, this means that Deleuze is often very selective in what he takes as relevant. For example, whilst the Cinema books demonstrate Deleuze’s sustained and passionate knowledge of film and film-making, he has very little to say about the place of sound and music in the cinematic experience (see Warde-Brown, 2017). When it comes to his use of non-philosophical material from other disciplines, this selectivity is greatly increased. As Bruun Jensen & Rödje (2009) describe, Deleuze’s use of anthropological material, especially in A Thousand Plateaus, demonstrates a very limited grasp of the history and concerns of that discipline, to the point of bringing into question the legitimacy of the use of the examples themselves. This is particularly acute in the case of those disciplines that fall between the cracks of the triumvirate of philosophy, art and science, which Deleuze & Guattari (1994) proclaim as having responsibility for generating knowledge of concepts, affects and percepts respectively, leaving little room for the social sciences (see Brown and Stenner, 2009).

Perhaps there is something of a quid pro quo here. If we are allowed not to ‘get’ the more narrowly philosophical side of Deleuze, then we must similarly forego his selective interest in other disciplines. But, as the use of von Uexküll above demonstrates, it is important to not to lose sight of the creativity of Deleuzian exegesis. von Uexküll does not treat the world of the tick as composed of three affects. Instead, he regards the tick’s umwelt as defined by three ‘marks’ or signs formed by odor, temperature and the hairiness of other animals. Marks/signs serve as ‘carriers of meaning’, and, as such, are crucial to the way the organism navigates its umwelt. For von Uexküll, ‘anything and everything that comes under the spell of an environment is either re-directed or re-formed until it becomes a useful carrier of meaning or it is completely neglected’ (2010: 144). By this, he means that selected qualities of a thing or an organism are transformed into ‘perception marks’ that are meaningful within the umwelt. But these marks have a relationship to what von Uexküll calls ‘effect marks’. For example, a rock lying on a path can appear as an obstacle, but picked up and thrown at a menacing dog, it signification becomes that of defence or weapon. The elements of an umwelt are then continuously being shaped by their signification as perception and effect marks.
These semiotic aspects of von Uexküll are selectively avoided in Deleuze’s interpretation, despite these being of central significance for interpreters of his work as varied as Thomas Sebeok (2001) and Jaan Vaalsiner (Vaalsiner & Gertz, 2007). Deleuze is, of course, highly versed in semiotics, as his reading of Proust (2000) demonstrates. But the lack of a discussion of signs in one of the most well cited of Deleuze’s illustrations of affect creates some difficulties. It overshadows the careful separation of concepts, percepts and affects that is already present in other aspects of Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, and which becomes decisive in later works such as *What is Philosophy?* Affect can then appear to be something of a universal medium in which more precise psychological questions about the structuring of experience become washed out. In particular, the duality of ideas/affects and minds/bodies that is at the heart of Spinoza’s metaphysics becomes rather lost. This means in turn that in order to get a theory of meaning out of this work, we may be tempted to return to a position close to that of Heft in arguing the human umwelt consists of not only infinitely more affective dimension, but also in a unique capacity for symbolisation. To avoid this we will have to dig a little harder into Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza and add in some other supporting work.

‘A tree of will which walks will return’

Any theory of meaning involves discussion of one or more of three related domains: language or conceptual system (meaning relative to a set of propositions), an actual state of affairs (meaning relative to a referent) and subjectivity (meaning for someone). Whilst it seems obvious that a coherent theory of meaning ought to encompass all these domains, the endless paradoxes that result from such attempts have given rise to many of schisms in modern philosophy, not least the analytic/continental division. In particular, following Frege, the referential aspect of meaning (i.e. the relationship between a proposition and its supposed referent) does not appear to serve as an adequate anchor, since propositions change their meaning considerably whilst remaining attached to the same referent, and may even refer to non-existent objects. This results in a distinction between the *sense* of a proposition – the thought that the proposition expresses – and *reference*, as the object to which a proposition is about. We might think of ‘sense’ as a kind of ideational tissue that spans the various domains of language, world and subjectivity, without being reducible to any one.

In *The Logic of Sense* (1990b), Deleuze explores the structure of sense through considering its paradoxical relationship to non-sense (specifically, the writings of Lewis Carroll and Antonin Artaud). For Deleuze, sense is an ‘event’ that emerges between propositions, the states of affairs to which they refer, and the subject who is discursively situated by what the proposition expresses. Sense is an ‘incorporeal event’ that is
extracted from states of affairs, but which, nevertheless, cannot be rendered distinct from them. For example, the sense of the proposition ‘the time she scared away the vicious dog’ is neither located in the language naming the event, nor in the physical acts to which it is attributed, nor for that matter ‘within’ any subject who might articulate that proposition. Sense is something else, a kind of relation that inheres across description, act and person. It is both of the world, and a transformation of that world. To return to von Uexküll, we might say that in acting upon a mark/sign, a sense is expressed that cannot be localised to either the umwelt, the conceptual schemas through which it is understood, nor to organism who engages with mark/sign.

To gain a better grasp of what sense might mean in this context, it is worth turning towards Antonin Artaud (for a more detailed account see Brown & Stenner, 2009: 86-108). In a varied and uneven career spanning the first half of the twentieth century, the French cultural provocateur Artaud turned his hand to film acting, poetry, theatrical production, literature, magic, painting, ‘performance art’ and radio plays. The arc of this work could perhaps be summed up best as the attempt to destroy the referential function of language in order to push towards an encounter with ‘pure sense’. His work starts with reasonably conventional poetry and ends with performances marked with atonal music and language transformed into howls. But throughout Artaud returns to the same problem – what is expressed by language eludes the meaning of the proposition. For Artaud, the search for sense requires the recognition that language itself is a kind of ‘body’. Thus dissecting language in the pursuit of sense becomes, at a certain point, indistinguishable from a work performed on one’s own body, which is in turn part of undoing one’s self. The problem, as Artaud sees it, is that language, bodies and selves secrete forms of order within themselves – which Artaud refers to as ‘organs’ – that sterilise and domesticate the experience of sense. Pure sense would then be to arrive at experience where distinctions are no longer operative – words strike the ear as bodies, subjects are no different to walking trees of will, the body is an expression of life that can feel and connect beyond the narrowness of ‘being human’. The phrase that Artaud uses for this desired experience of pure sense is ‘body without organs’ (Artaud, 1995: 307).

The body without organs, as pure sense, is of a piece with James’ notion of pure experience. It is the mixing of thought, world and person that serves as the matrix for particular kinds of experience. The psychological significance of this concept is that it denotes a field that includes but also extends way beyond immediate person-environment relations, but which is nevertheless essential to grasping the nature of those relationships. Lewin (1997), for example, came to recognise that life space could not adequately described, in either discursive or mathematical terms, without positing how it opened out onto a broader field of non-psychological forces (which he confusingly termed the ‘psychological field’) which shaped life space. For example, in his wartime work on food choices, Lewin insisted that it was not possible to explain why
persons would be prepared to eat particular foods without detailing the broader social, industrial, economic and agricultural forces that resulted in the person being confronted with particular kind of choices (see Lewin, 1997). Whilst Lewin went further perhaps than any psychologist has to date in making these forces part of a psychological vocabulary, he ultimately held back from recognising that these were not separate fields, but rather a single plane of experience composed of entangled relations. Acknowledging the immanence of the ‘psychological field’ (i.e. broader social forces) to life space makes it possible to renew Lewin’s vision for a psychology that overcomes the dualism of person and environment.

With regard to ecological psychology, the equivalent move is to recognise that the umwelt which an organism experiences has a relational composition that extends way beyond immediate perceptual, conceptual and affective experience. For example, the world of von Uexküll’s ticks is shaped by deforestation to increase grazing space for cattle, as part of the global drive for profit maximisation in the agribusiness. And our human umwelt is simultaneously being reshaped by the increasing efficacy of bacterial life that is directly related to failure of existing antibiotics due to their over-use in this same industry to accelerate the breeding period of cattle and fowl from birth to knife. These broader forces are not external to the psychological. We cannot begin to describe particular experiences without situating them in relation to this extended field that lends sense to experience without need for neither bounded subjectivity nor clear referent.

It is here that Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza has its greatest value. Following Massumi (2002), we are used to treating the term affect as a way into experience that bypasses semiotics. In doing so, affect is typically used to refer to embodied entanglements that exceed subjectivity and the overcoding effects of signification. But in Spinoza affect and meaning stand in equivalent relation to one another. If meaning is what emerges from the ordering of ideas, then affect plays a similar role in relation to the ordering of bodies. Our semiotic and embodied life is lived across these dual registers (or ‘attributes’ for Spinoza). Neither Spinoza nor Deleuze is offering affect up as the ‘royal road’ to grasping experience as non-subjective and a-signifying. What they are pointing to instead is a philosophical and, to some extent, practical epistemic strategy. If the ordering of bodies and ideas are grounded in a singular substance, then our efforts to create ‘efficacious’ order in one register should be automatically reflected in the other. However, as Spinoza shows in his critique of Descartes, establishing what counts as ‘adequacy’ with regard to ideas alone – the epistemic strategy which dominates western philosophy – is fraught with technical problems. By contrast, affect, as the increase or diminishment in our power to act, provides a golden thread by which we can begin to order and expand experience through experimenting with relational encounters. An increase in our affective capacities, is, for Spinoza, both ‘joyful’, and, simultaneously, an extension in the ‘adequacy’ of our ideas. When Spinoza declares that ‘no one has yet determined what the body can do’, this is not a rallying call to abandon meaning, but rather a
strategic choice to use affect as the medium through which to expand and enrich our knowledge of the world. Knowing what the body can do is the route to better knowing, and, ultimately, the kind of grounded wisdom or ‘blessedness’ that Spinoza see as coming from recognising the world’s immanence to our own being.

The implication of all this for ecological psychology, and for psychology more generally, is with the doubling of the affective and the semiotic. Rather than treat these as distinct domains of experience, the challenge is to see how fluctuations in our affective capacities ‘show up’ simultaneously as emergent orders of meaning. In doing so, we may follow the strategy of Spinoza and Deleuze in attending to embodied encounters, not in the effort to overcome meaning, but precisely in order to grasp its emergence. And, crucially, we need also to orient towards the third term – ‘sense’ – as the means of thinking the duality of affect and meaning. Bodies and ideas are not united in a subject, but instead in the emergence of an incorporeal event that is expressed simultaneously in both an affective and a semiotic register. Sense and sense-making is often treated as the outcome of individual or collective efforts to make order out of the disorderly – the ‘aha!’ moment of sudden realisation and clarity. Yet we may think of it, on the contrary, not as something added to the world, but rather as the ‘actualisation’ or ‘concrescence’ of a specific experience that is already of the world, albeit as a ‘potential’ or ‘virtual’ set of relations.

Experience ecology

I want to conclude by discussing a concept that articulates some of the issues we have worked through in the operationalization of Deleuze and Spinoza in psychology. Over the past ten years, I have worked on a number of studies with Paula Reavey and other collaborators which have explored the lived experience of mental health service users who are detained within medium-secure psychiatric care (see Brown & Reavey, 2015). One of the issues we have encountered is that during the course of detention, service users develop ways of relating to self that transform their past experience. We have seen this most markedly around sexuality and personal relationships. Service users report that they come to view their sexuality as displaced or ‘amputated’ during their passage through the secure care system (Brown et al, 2014). This arises through their exposure to discourses of ‘risk’ that dominate secure care. The expression of sexual desires is prohibited in secure care, and, to compound matters, service users are routinely directed to self-policing their own sexual desires, which are seen as ‘unhealthy’. This has clear implications for their longer term journey towards recovery, especially in cases where service users are detained during early adulthood, with the result that they resume their life within the community having missed out on a crucial period in their development of their capacity to form intimate relationships with others. This is...
especially problematic given that it is well established that the capacity to form meaningful intimate relationships is associated with recovery from episodes of poor mental health (see Cromby et al, 2013).

We have evidence that the kinds of ways that service users come to understand their own sexuality and sexual agency during detention persist when they return to care in the community. The experiences that occur during detention structure how service users think and feel about themselves when they leave secure care. To put this in the terms described previously, the shift from one umwelt to another seems to involve carrying across a learned embodied relationship to oneself that goes beyond a shift in discursive or semiotic frameworks. It is simultaneously a different ordering in embodied relationships and in the capacity to feel in specific ways. Here ideas and bodies really do seem to be two aspects of the same thing. A service user may no longer be formally considered to be a threat to themselves or to others, but the idea of that threat ‘inheres’ in a very intimate way in how they feel about their life and their desires.

The historian of medicine, Edward Shorter (1992), once offered the idea of a ‘symptom pool’ to describe the way that psychosomatic symptoms appeared at particular historical moments. For example, hysterical paralysis dominated the way the persons expressed non-organically derived distress at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, whereas debilitating fatigue is now the primary symptom reported by persons who have not (yet) received a diagnosis of physical illness. Shorter suggests that there are discrete number of ways of experiencing oneself at any given time and place. We want to build on this to say that this holds for forms of experience more generally. How we feel and relate to ourselves is embedded in a field of possible experiences that has a specific sociocultural determination. Events of sense are expressed with particular intensity in specific places and times, in the way that Deleuze and Guattari (1988), following Bateson (1973), suggest. In this way, the human umwelt is not a given, but is rather a shifting field of experience that is both radically specific – in that our capacity to feel in particular ways about ourselves is related to the practices in which we participate – and generalised in ways that are difficult to map – for example, through the transmission of sentiments and bodily practices across diverse media.

We have developed the concept of ‘experience ecology’ as a way of indexing particular kinds of experience to the domains in which they are cultivated and expressed. Risk, for example, is a complicated discourse with its own history, but which is made relevant in complicated ways in secure settings. Risk is not just a way of making meaning out of the immediate environment, it is also inscribed into social space in the form of signs/marks that act to shape actions, such as in the design of furniture, walls and doors. As such, risk is also felt as much as it is understood, since it inheres in the way that relations between bodies are organised. The ‘sense’ of risk then inheres across discourses and bodies and gives rise to certain kinds of subjectivities, but it emerges from the broader
field or experience ecology. This ecology stretches way beyond any given hospital or other given social space. In the same way that Lewin insisted that understanding food choice needed to map the relationships between agriculture, markets and homes, so the experience ecology of risk needs to attend to complex relationships between medicine, law, social welfare, communities and housing.

But there is something more within the ecology. It is here that Deleuze’s notion of ‘plane of immanence’, James’ ‘pure experience’, Bateson’s ‘plateau’ and Artaud’s ‘body without organs’ converge. The field of forces out of which particular experiences are actualised also goes beyond any particular experience. It opens up onto experiences that are as-yet-un-actualised, experiences that are currently ‘impossible’, in the sense that they are not part of the grammar of self-relations that are pointed out by signs within the experience ecology, but which nevertheless are beginning to emerge, or at least becoming imaginable. There are experiences of voice hearing, for example, that involve novel relationships between hearer and heard, speaker and what is spoken, that depart from current understandings of mental health and bring with them new understandings of sensory experiences that are not shared by other people. As psychologists, our role is to act as cartographers of extant experience ecologies, but we also have a responsibility towards engaging with the emergence of the un-thought, the experiences-to-come, towards life in the making.

References


INTRODUCTION

Deleuze’s reflection above provides an opening for this paper which shall examine how his philosophical system offers a vital critical framework to counter the ‘double illusion’ at the heart of many accepted psychological theories on the nature of memory and the experience of temporality. If memory accounts for one of the fundamental components of an individual sense of self, and likewise, if the perceived passage of time is intimately bound up with any idea of consciousness, then a critical approach that upends our understanding of such essential psychological categories seems worthy of further exploration. In examining this complex and at times counterintuitive system this paper will also serve to introduce various concepts and ideas that form a major cornerstone to Deleuze’s overall philosophy. It is hoped that such an introduction will assist newcomers in gaining an appreciation of Deleuzian theory in general. I will touch upon the interrelated notions of the ‘actual/virtual’, ‘duration’, and ‘the three syntheses of time’ whilst demonstrating how these engender a unique appreciation of the past, as well as our ability to recall it through the use of memory. Put in Deleuzian terms, this initial overview will attempt to make accessible the difficult operation Deleuze constructs

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detailing the way in which the virtual - that aspect of reality that is 'real but not actual, ideal but not abstract' (Deleuze, 2004, p. 260) - becomes actualised through consciousness.

Providing a critical introduction to Deleuze’s thought on the nature of temporality and memory will undoubtedly require an engagement with his work on Bergson (2011) as well as elements of his much celebrated text Difference and Repetition (2004). It is from these two texts that the paper shall draw the majority of its commentary. However, in order to provide an additional level of relevance to the discipline of psychology, I wish to demonstrate how Deleuze’s system of thought is indebted to certain aspects of psychoanalysis both in terms of his conceptualisation of the ‘virtual’ and the so-called ‘passive synthesis of time.’ Although Deleuze’s ambiguous relationship with psychoanalysis is well known, I shall argue that the psychoanalytic component to these elements of his thinking potentially opens up a bridge to the disciple of psychology, despite psychoanalytic theory increasingly existing only in a critical psychology domain. Essentially, the aims of this paper are two fold; to introduce some vital concepts within Deleuze’s philosophy that offer a critical alternative to mainstream psychological theories on memory and temporality, and secondly, to emphasize the impact of psychoanalysis on these aspects of his thought.

Bergson

If we wish to tackle Deleuze’s thoughts on the nature of time, memory and his ‘actual/virtual’ distinction then it is with Henri Bergson, and Deleuze’s reading of him, that we must begin. Bergson’s thought unquestionably represents an important foundation to Deleuze’s overall philosophy. Deleuze situated Bergson’s work in a kind of ‘counter-history of philosophy.’ Along with other thinkers such as Spinoza, Hume and Nietzsche, Bergson represented for Deleuze a thinker “who seemed to be part of the history of philosophy, but who escaped from it in one respect or altogether” (1987, p. 14-15). Certainly, Bergson’s system of thought has largely been neglected within the second half of the twentieth century although his work including his 1896 book, Matter and Memory and his 1907, Creative Evolution were much more widely known in the early decades of that era. Deleuze’s tactic of revitalising a marginal philosopher was a common theme to his overall philosophical approach and in Bergson he found theoretical value in his reflections on memory, temporality and what Bergson termed ‘duration’ (durée) and ‘intuition’. I will briefly examine these Bergsonian concepts whilst demonstrating how Deleuze adopted them, altered them, and ultimately located in them the means to assist the construction of his framework detailing the distinction between the ‘actual’ and the ‘virtual.’
Intuition, for Bergson, denotes a method for thinking which does not get caught up in the normal movement or flow of conscious states that make up our lived reality; a flow that tends to be experienced in a spatial fashion. For Bergson, the mind is much better suited to rational investigation and making judgments based on one’s experience. It is less well able to enquire into various metaphysical problems or abstract philosophical concerns. Essentially, Bergson reasons that when the mind attempts to perform such abstractions it has a tendency to base analytical enquiry in the flow of different instants, images and sensory moments which are situated within mental space. In so doing, such inquiry loses philosophical precision. Bergson, therefore, provides a strict philosophical method for thinking in non-spatialized terms. As Deleuze states, “Intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method, one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy” (2011, p. 13). And it is this fully developed method that essentially provides the means for thinking not in terms of space, but rather in terms of an internal temporal dynamic at work within concepts or objects themselves that creates differences in kind rather than in degree. This temporal logic is something Bergson names duration. Intuition, simply put, is then the method for thinking in duration. Duration and space form a dualism for Bergson and Deleuze emphasizes the differences between the two when discussing the process of division. Deleuze writes;

when we divide something up according to its natural articulations (as with proportions and figures that vary greatly from case to case), we have: on the one hand, the aspect of space, by which the thing can only ever differ in degree from other things and from itself (augmentation, diminution); and on the other hand, the aspect of duration, by which the thing differs in kind from all others and from itself (alteration). (p. 31)

Deleuze offers us the example of a particular object, a sugar cube, in order to tease out this difference. The cube has a spatial configuration, yet if we only apprehend it in these spatial terms we will never be able to grasp it in terms of anything other than in differences of degree as we separate it from surrounding spaces comprised of other objects. If we think in terms of the ‘rhythm of duration’ which is a particular way of being in time, we can appreciate how the sugar cube through the process of dissolving, for instance, reveals how it differs in kind not only from other things or objects, “but first and foremost from itself” (p. 32). Duration provides for the ability to think about differences within and between objects that accord to a temporal logic of transition, change or indeed ‘becoming’. If the mind, as Bergson believes, has a difficulty in attending to its own dynamics which accord to a spatial logic, then by thinking in terms of duration, or rather by adopting the method of intuition, we can become attuned to this and crucially move beyond it.
Intuition is then a deliberate attempt at self-reflective awareness of our own consciousness. We will note that it is intimately bound up within the related notion of duration which in turn reveals to us internal ‘differences in kind’ as opposed to just ‘differences in degree.’ Deleuze writes that “Intuition leads us to go beyond the state of experience toward the conditions of experience” (p. 27). In effect, this intuitive method allows one to comprehend the means by which experience is structured and ‘step outside’ the spatialising habit of the intellect so as to perceive the immediate sense data of experience prior to the formation of concepts. For Deleuze, concepts and objects always come to us already predetermined by the logic of space and their related differences in degree. The twin concepts of duration and the method of intuition allow Deleuze to escape the usual confines of conscious mental life and theorise an understanding of time that does not get trapped within this passage of successive instants and spatial flows. This reorientation articulates a radical attempt to approach questions of consciousness and time. By building on Bergson’s insights, Deleuze is attempting to subvert the very means by which consciousness operates in order to interrogate the spatio-temporal arrangement of consciousness itself. It is worth holding these concepts in mind as we move onto Deleuze’s ontology of time and memory which, likewise, offers a valuable alternative to many widely held psychological assumptions.

Memory and temporality

Deleuze’s relationship to time and memory is famously complex and alters over the course of his career. If we remain with his earlier work on Bergson (2011) for the moment, we gain an insight into Deleuze’s novel appreciation of the relationship between the past and the present. In keeping with our reference to duration, Deleuze asserts that we are too accustomed to situating thought in terms of the present. As a rule we generally believe that a certain present only becomes past once it is replaced by another particular present. Deleuze problematizes this widely withheld conception when he asks, “How would a new present come about if the old present did not pass at the same time that it is present?” (p. 58). Essentially, Deleuze is indicating that any particular present must both be past and present at the same time. In his own words, “How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past at the same time as present? The past would never be constituted if it had not been constituted first of all, at the same time that it was present” (ibid). We are here touching on perhaps the most counterintuitive element to Deleuze’s approach to temporality; the past and present are in this sense coextensive, both have a similar ontological status. The past quite literally exists alongside the present which itself will be perceived to become past. This logic allows Deleuze to construct a conception of temporality which does not locate the past in relation to the present as a movement from one moment to another - a series of
successive instances in a linear movement of time - but rather a view which places the past and the present, in Bergson’s terms, as fundamentally ‘cotemporaneous’ (2002, p. 144). An examination of Deleuze’s thoughts on the importance of memory to this dynamic will help us better appreciate this novel conceptualisation of time.

It is often held that the past is only individually contained within memory. We have a sense perhaps that the past is no longer ‘real’ and can only be accounted for based on our recollections of previous events, images or sensory moments. However, Deleuze is explicitly stating that contrary to this, the past actually exists alongside the present moment. Questions that we might ask ourselves as a result may, therefore, be ‘where is this particular past preserved?’, ‘Where does it reside?’ Deleuze’s answer would be to state that this form of questioning, or this specific way of posing the problem, is in itself a false problem and, moreover, when we unravel this problematic it will further reveal to us the nature of temporality and memory in their essence. Again, following Bergson (2011), Deleuze sets up a differential between matter and memory. His philosophical method of intuition enables him to situate the workings of the brain on the side of matter and ultimately objectivity whilst memory he states is of the line of subjectivity. It would be absurd in Deleuze’s thinking to mix these two lines by trying to conceive of the objective brain as a storehouse for subjective recollections. In reference to this false problem Deleuze writes that,

we are touching on one of the most profound, but perhaps also one of the least understood, aspects of Bergsonism: the theory of memory. There must be a difference in kind between matter and memory, between pure perception and pure recollection, between the present and the past, as there is between the two lines previously distinguished. We have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused Being with being-present. Nevertheless, the present is not; rather, it is pure becoming, always outside itself. It is not, but it acts. (2011, p. 55)

For Deleuze, the past is ontologically ‘real’, and our common misconception is to conceive of it, in some senses, as no longer ‘Being’ or having any ontological status. Just because it is no longer ‘present’ does not mean for Deleuze that has any less bearing on an ontological reality. This touches on the Bergsonian inspired insight (or intuited realisation) that as human subjects we find it very difficult to conceive of something that is not currently present as being still real. Perhaps a helpful way of approaching this is to reflect on the philosophical status a material environment has that is not immediately accessible to you via your present experience. The world that exists outside of the room from which you’re reading this paper for example. If you’re not immediately experiencing the street outside or the different rooms of your home, does it make them in any sense less real? The answer, I imagine, would be that the world outside of your
immediate experience still has ontological value, it still exists independent of your immediate perception as you are able to recollect it. For Deleuze, the past has a similar status. It still exists but is not perceived. Bergson (1946) provides another example to illustrate this still further. We are able to perceive a whole piece of music by recollecting past notes that still linger within the mind. From this, the piece takes on its full composition or form and we appreciate the work of art as such. If these past notes did not act on our present state then the musical work would appear as a series of disconnected sounds or fragmented notes. The past in this sense is still real, it still acts.

What Deleuze is suggesting here with his differential between ‘being’ and ‘being-present’ is that consciousness constructs events in two simultaneous ways, both as perception and as recollection. In a way, all events or instants are both perceived and, likewise, recollected. As is indicating, the first pertains to matter (objective) and the second to memory (subjective). To further complicate affairs, Deleuze holds that there are different modalities of memory which again accord to this differential between the line of materiality and that of subjectivity. Borrowing from Bergson, Deleuze (2011) identifies these as ‘pure memory’ as distinct from ‘habit memory.’ The first accords to a ‘line of pure subjectivity’, whilst the latter relates to the ‘line of materiality’. The line of materiality invokes the relation between the mind and the actual material world. This domain pertains to the ‘here and now’, the way in which the mind is situated in the world of matter. The second modality, ‘pure memory’, is situated in respect of the line of pure subjectivity. It differs from the line of materiality (‘habit memory’) as ‘pure memory’ contains all conscious events in their particularity. In essence, perception falls on the line of materiality whilst memory (in terms of how we may usually think of it) falls on the line of subjectivity. In effect, every instance or moment in time has two faces and is situated within psychic life in a dual fashion, both as memory and perception. With this in mind, we can now turn to Deleuze’s adoption of the Bergsonian schema concerning the ‘actual’ and the ‘virtual’ which speak to this double movement.

Actual/virtual

Deleuze’s conception of memory with its twin character enables us to gain a foothold on the nature of his actual/virtual distinction. For Deleuze all of reality, or better yet the ‘real’, has this double character. We should altogether avoid thinking of the virtual as being apart from the real (as in ‘Virtual Reality’ which is a technologically fabricated or fictional version of reality) but instead understand that it is just another manifestation of it. Finding a succinct definition of the virtual is difficult as Deleuze, just like with his reflections on time and memory, alters or adapts the concept over the course of his writing. We can state, however, that the virtual and the actual are coextensive properties to all of reality and the objects that constitute it. He states “The virtual is
opposed not to the real but the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual” (2004, p. 260). Deleuze’s proposition here indicates that the virtual is very much an important element to the real but that it is also one element situated against the actual. They are mutually exclusive categories but nevertheless co-dependent on one another which together comprise all of the real. We cannot have one without the other. Borrowing from one of his favourite literary sources, Marcel Proust, he states that the virtual is,

“Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract”; and symbolic without being fictional. Indeed. The virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension. (ibid)

Deleuze is stating here that all objects (material artefacts, bodies, etc.) have a twofold character. The actual object consists in the here and now, as it is perceived subjectively. The virtual object, on the other hand, contains all the variations of that particular object, the resonances that emanate from it in terms of its shape, size, colour and so on. Surrounding each object, for Deleuze, is an entire plane of other realisations and it is through delimitating a particular object that it becomes actualised. “Purely actual objects do not exist. Every actual object surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images” (1987, p. 148) writes Deleuze. He adds, “This cloud is composed of a series of more or less extensive coexisting circuits, along which the virtual images are distributed, and around which they run” (ibid). We will note here that when speaking of this distinction Deleuze refers to actual and virtual ‘images’, images that are joined in a form of circuitry. This use of the term ‘image’ strikes of our sensory ability to demarcate and construct objects as being distinct from one another. Important to note that for Deleuze an object does not have to be a material entity situated in a particular space but can just as easily be a perceived impression, or indeed a ‘repeated’ image of someone or something (Williams, 2011b). In terms of the use of the word ‘circuit’, Deleuze is drawing attention here to the reciprocal relation the actual and the virtual have towards one another. There is a consistent movement between both ontological levels and they mutually constitute each other whilst remaining fully independent.

The virtual, for Deleuze, is the space or domain that contains all manifestations of the objects that comprise the real. It is the work of difference (duration) within actual objects (matter) themselves and in this sense has a direct correlation with temporal transition or the process of becoming. This space is something that later comes to influence Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) conceptualisation of the ‘plane of immanence’ (1994) - a domain that contains all potential images of thought and un-thought. The key point to take away from this is that for something to be actualised (through our perception) it is necessary that the virtual elements to it be subtracted. Consciousness
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operates by delimiting or demarcating objects from their virtual realm. As one prominent Deleuzian theorist writes,

Bergson’s key argument is to point out that in order to pass from matter to perception or from objective to the subjective, it is not necessary to add anything but, on the contrary, only that something be subtracted. In other words, consciousness functions not by throwing more light on an object but by obscuring some of its aspects. (Ansell-Pearson, 2005, p. 1118).

The aspects that are obscured in this instance are the virtual aspects of matter or the objective. When they become actualised, they do so via our conscious perception delimiting certain characteristics of that given object. It is from this insight that Deleuze aimed to construct an overall ‘ontology of the virtual’. This ontology, much like many other aspects of his theoretical framework, shifts over the course of his career. Although very much aligned to Bergsonian inspired philosophy to begin with, by the time of Difference and Repetition, Deleuze starts to align the virtual with the Kantian notion of ‘Ideas’. For Kant (2007) an Idea has no material basis in the empirical world, yet it nevertheless exists and is brought into being through thought. This Kantian inflection to Deleuze’s system enables him to start to situate his philosophy as a whole within a tradition of ‘transcendental empiricism’.

We can now come full circle by demonstrating how memory, and Deleuze’s take on temporal processes, accords to this virtual/actual circuitry. In fact, memory serves as perhaps the most accessible concept to gaining an appreciation on this fundamental dynamic within Deleuze’s thought. As Claire Colebrook states, “[m]emory is the clearest case of the imbrication of the virtual in the actual. The world encountered by my body, with all its sensible effects the world delivers, is ‘doubled’ by a virtual world” (2006, p. 80). Memory functions by recalling something, or some object-image, from the domain of the ‘pure past’ and thus actualising it so as to form an immediate perception of a past object. In this sense memory, or rather pure memory, which we will recall exists on the line of subjectivity, is brought into immediate sensory perception through the act of recollection. The pure past contains all possible pasts, all the potential pasts that could ever have been. By recalling it through memory, a certain past is revealed to us subjectively. As such, a highly specific past has been brought into being, it has been actualised via our recollection of it. The world, as Colebrook suggests, is multiple due to its virtual potential and memory reveals to us one of these possible worlds through our sensible appreciation of it. Ansell-Pearson assists us here again when he writes that “memory operates in terms of a similar virtuality, beginning with a virtual state and leading step by step up to a point where it gets materialized in an actual perception. Pure memory consists and can only subsist, in this virtual state” (2005, p. 1117). We can think of the act of remembering, therefore, as the means by which one particular version of the past is actualised in the present. From the entire expanse of the ‘pure past’ (the
virtual) our memory delimits or discloses one aspect of it (the actual) through the process of recollection. And as Deleuze states, “What Bergson calls “pure recollection” has no psychological existence. This is why it is called virtual, inactive, and unconscious” (2011, p. 55). The pure past or pure recollection, writes Deleuze, has no psychological existence but nevertheless is hugely significant for our sense of being. We can start to appreciate now how radical Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual is for the discipline of psychology. It argues for an entire domain of existence that conditions our very subjectivity whilst remaining inaccessible to consciousness itself. His use of the term ‘unconscious’ should alert us here to the similarities between the virtual and that domain of psychic life that Freud was so instrumental in formulating. In fact, one way we can try to understand the actual/virtual distinction and open up a bridge to the domain of critical psychology is via the concept of the unconscious. Although the notion of the unconscious immediately brings to mind psychoanalysis and Freudian theory with which Deleuze had a famously ambiguous relation (see, De Bolle, 2010), I want to suggest in these closing paragraphs that the virtual may allow for a re-appreciation of the importance of psychoanalysis to Deleuze’s overall philosophy. In order to do so, I shall firstly have to introduce one major component to Deleuze’s theory of temporality and subjectivity that we have not yet covered: the ‘three syntheses of time.’ This engagement with Deleuze’s tripartite structure (the passive synthesis of the living present, the passive synthesis of the pure past and the static synthesis of the future) will also assist us in appreciating how the virtual becomes actualised. I will then turn to the work of various psychoanalytically informed writers (Faulkner, 2006; Kerslake, 2007; Holland, 2012) to emphasize how the concept of the unconscious has a potential bearing on Deleuze’s ontology of time and memory.

The three syntheses of time

The first thing to note about Deleuze’s three syntheses of time, and his philosophy of temporality generally, is that he conceives it as process, or put more precisely, not time as a distinct process in and of itself but rather a series of processes that come to generate different modalities of time. Time, or perhaps ‘times’, are made up of these shifting synthetic processes. In many respects we can view time as being the product or outcome of these particular syntheses. It is in Difference and Repetition (2004) that we find the most complete and articulated overview of the interrelation between the three syntheses. What is vital to these processes is that they are completely interrelated and interactive. They fold back into one another and determine the others as dimensions of that original primary process. If we take the first synthesis of time, the living present, Deleuze goes to great lengths to demonstrate how processes in the present determine processes in the past and the future. This seems at first an odd conceptualisation.
However, if we recall that time is not for Deleuze a series of successive instants and that different time frames exist alongside one another, we can start to appreciate how one particular instant in a synthetic time process can impact on another.

Remaining with the first synthesis, Deleuze (2004) states that it determines the past and the future through a process of contraction. Through contraction, past events and future possibilities become actualised in the present moment. Prior to this they remained virtual in the sense described above, either as memory or future possibility. One way we can conceptualise this is through Deleuze’s use of the term repetition. For Deleuze, the present moment is conditioned by an experience of expectancy. Due to things that we have experienced as being ‘before’ we come to expect similar actions, events or processes in the future. For example, I can expect certain responses or behaviours from my friends or colleagues due to past meetings and discussions I have had with them. We expect things to be repeated either in terms of timetabled events or in respect of similar habits and traits that play out amongst people we meet or situations we find ourselves in. There is a general repetitive quality to our lived present which enables us to expect certain events to materialise in the future. In this way we contract prior events and expected future events into our lived present. Repetition is one of the fundamental ways in which we inhabit our lived present and, likewise, one of the ways in which the virtual becomes actual through this passive synthesis. Past and future are synthesised via an expected repetition. As Deleuze states, “Difference and repetition in the virtual ground the movement of actualisation, of differentiation as creation” (2004, p. 264). We will examine the role difference plays in relation to the third synthesis below.

The second synthesis, that of the pure past, similarly operates to determine the present and the future. Again to understand this, we need to suspend our commonly held notions of how time moves. This particular idea of the past runs in stark contrast to any idea of the past as being something that we can represent to ourselves (images, records, texts). The pure past is something that resists such representations and, furthermore, is operating on the present to make it passive to these determinations. Deleuze holds that the second synthesis accords to memory, the virtual domain that we discussed above, a domain that coexists alongside the present actual moment. To understand how the past can impact upon the present synthesis is to then appreciate how a specific virtual realm of memory can inform present temporal processes once it is actualised. James Williams – whose book length study on the three syntheses of time remains the most in depth analysis of this aspect of Deleuze’s philosophy – frames it as follows,

the being of the past is not the representations, records or codes of an active memory in the present. It is the conditions of possibility for all the different active memories, their differences, but also their connections, above all their connections with the passing presents that came before them – all of them. (2011a, p. 58)
In a sense, our recollection of a particular object or event brings into being one amongst an infinite number of possible virtual pasts. By doing so, it directly intervenes on our present understanding of that object or event. We will recall that the past and present are coextensive, just like the virtual and actual object. Whilst the present synthesis actualises possible pasts and potential futures via contracting them into the present moment, a similar dynamic is at work from the past that comes to inform the present due to the highly specific and singular way in which that particular past is actualised.

The last synthesis elaborated by Deleuze consists of the static synthesis of the future. Famously challenging and involving a novel reworking of Descartes’ and Kant’s reflections on subjectivity and determination, Plato’s thought on the nature of ‘forgotten knowledge’ and Nietzsche’s ‘eternal return’, it is formidably complex. At its heart is an undoing of any self or coherent subjectivity which is essentially shattered by all the possible manifestations it can take according to future processes. Again, we can turn to Williams (2011a) here who deftly summarises the difference between all three syntheses,

The third synthesis of time leads us to the future. This future, though, is not a dimension of the present or of the past. Replicating the move from the present to the past in the second synthesis of time, where the former became a dimension of the latter, in the third synthesis the past becomes a dimension produced by the future. This production takes place in the cut, assembly and seriation of time. In the cut, the subject is undermined by the self, but then the subject returns as the actor reuniting past and future in an action that symbolises them. (p. 94)

This third synthesis, or process of time, is able to impact upon the present and the past by remaining open or what Deleuze refers to as a form of ‘pure or empty time.’ Its ability to remain forever novel and unconditional means that it undermines the conception the subject has of itself as an essentially coherent assemblage of past and present symbolisations. In this sense, it radically disrupts the present offering a plane of pure possibility or series of different ‘becoming’s’ for the subject. Whereas the passive synthesis of the pure past and the passive synthesis of the living present operate on the one hand according to the logic of repetition, the third synthesis of the static future accords to the logic of difference. The future offers a cut or break from the expectancy of what has gone before and thereby remains radically open, a plane of pure potential, which as we noted above can also be denoted by the term ‘virtual.’ In truth, the processes of difference and repetition exist in all three syntheses and are not solely attributable to the past, present or future alone. I offer the above as just one means of understanding this synthesised process orientation of time. As Deleuze himself states, “The actualisation of the virtual always takes place by difference, divergence or differentiation” (2004, p. 264). All of which are applicable to the above three processes.
Unconscious

We have covered a lot of ground quickly in the above discussion on the interrelation between memory, temporality and the way in which the actual/virtual dynamic underwrites all of this. As stated, to close I want to refer to the unconscious as one way to apprehend this undoubtedly complex and counterintuitive theoretical framework. The reason for doing so is that it may assist in grounding some of these concepts in more familiar territory to the domain of critical psychology. Perhaps the first thing to note is that, as with all things Deleuze, his take on the unconscious is quite apart from standard interpretations. In fact, it originates in quite a different intellectual tradition to the one associated with Freud. Christian Kerslake (2007) shows how just as Freud was developing his own take on unconscious mental life, another intellectual movement was simultaneously theorising the unconscious albeit in a radically different fashion. This tradition he associates with Henri Bergson and Pierre Janet. Although Freudian informed notions of the unconscious have come to dominate, Kerslake situates Deleuze’s theorisation of the unconscious in respect of this counter tradition, a tradition which foregrounded time and memory as being far more important to unconscious psychic life than the Freudian emphasis on repression. Deleuze (2004), influenced by Bergson and Janet (as well as Eugene Minkowski), even goes so far as to suggest that the aetiology of many different forms of psychopathology is not necessarily sexual in origin but can be traced back to disorders of memory and one’s particular location within temporal processes. Any theory of the unconscious that is attributable to Deleuze has to reckon with this fundamental difference between these competing strands of thought.

That being said, there is one clear area where Deleuze (2004) explicitly references Freud following his elaboration on the three syntheses. It concerns Freud’s 1921 Paper, Beyond the Pleasure Principle with its specific focus on the role repetition plays within the unconscious. Already we see the crossover between Deleuze’s passive synthesis and psychoanalysis’ focus on past events which condition present mental life. They both foreground the importance of repetition. Freud’s claim in his 1921 paper that pleasure is an after effect of certain drives provides a moment of commensurability with Deleuze’s notion of the first passive synthesis. Even if we can explain an individual’s actions through an unceasing search for pleasure, the explanation presupposes the processes that have come to make up that individual. Deleuze’s term for such a process is passive synthesis; a synthesis that accords to the function of repetition as discussed above. Deleuze asserts that repeated passive processes come to make up bodies and
organisms and that they play a major role in the construction of subjectivity. Importantly for Deleuze, these repetitive actions cannot accord to the continued search for pleasure alone as, following Freud, pleasure will disrupt passive synthesis due to the excitation that results from it. In this respect Deleuze’s states, “The repetition of an excitation has as its true object the elevation of the passive synthesis to a power that implies the pleasure principle along with its future and past application” (2004, p. 121). There is something else beyond pleasure here, something that exceeds or is elevated above it, and by doing so implies its future and past application. Repetition, for Deleuze, cannot be accounted for in terms of pleasure alone and an elevation to another power is required. In so doing, the past as well as the future come into play. In this way, Deleuze is utilizing Freud’s insights on the role of repetition to highlight how the construction of subjectivity entails this temporal dimension.

Keith, W. Faulkner (2006) takes a different tack in demonstrating the possible use of Freudian theory to understanding Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual. Faulkner concentrates instead on Freud’s much earlier, Project for a Scientific Psychology (1895). In his 2006 study, Faulkner aligns Freud’s ‘partial-object’ not, as is usually the case, with specific body parts (for example the mothers breast) but rather with specific actions relating to that body part (e.g. the action of sucking the breast). In turn, he relates this to Deleuze’s (1983/1985) virtual ‘movement-image’. Faulkner reasons that from this form of action infants naturally develop ‘habit memory’ first because the infant’s very survival depends more on the ability to repeat actions rather than in recognising certain objects. We will recall that habit memory relates to the ‘line of materiality’. This first modality of memory originating from primary objects results, for Faulkner, in a version of the past that is material and thus, actual. This, however, gives way once the phallus is introduced within psychic life. According to Freud’s theory, the phallus comes to represent a fundamental loss whilst also organising all the erogenous zones into a coherent whole for the infant. It effectively subordinates all partial objects into a unified sense of self and instates the infant within a network of symbols, laws and culture as such. In so doing, the phallus effectively introduces a new conception of the past in to which all previous partial (virtual) objects are banished. From the infant’s initial autoerotic stage, the introduction of the phallus leads to the identification of a sexual object and represses those earlier autoerotic drives. This initial stage of psycho-sexual development, results for Faulkner, in the creation of the ‘pure past’, an undifferentiated virtual realm which is prior to the realisation of a coherent subject. In reference to this new found sense of coherent wholeness for the infant subject Faulkner writes,

This illusion of unity dramatically influences the synthesis of time: while we acquire a passing-present, we also encounter a bloc of pure past distinct from an actual past. When genital sexuality activates the “global ego,” the repressed pre-genital drives manifest themselves in this lost dimension of the past. (2006, p. 38)
Faulkner’s argument here offers one way of understanding how psychoanalysis potentially illuminates our understanding of how the actual/virtual operates and the way in which object relations essentially condition different modalities of memory and temporality. The phallus, argues Faulkner, is that which provides a virtual background into which the immediate objective material of the present passes.

In fairness, Faulkner expends a great deal more energy in making a psychoanalytic reading of the three syntheses pertinent beyond these comments related to object choice and the early psychosexual stages. I have touched upon this as just one possible opening onto the relevance of Freudian theory to Deleuze’s notion of time and memory. We have then the role of repetition and its correlate with passive synthesis, as well as the introduction of the phallus within psychosexual development as specific examples of where psychoanalysis, of a particularly Freudian variety, can assist in unravelling Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual. A third example comes from the work of Eugene Holland (2012) who draws on Deleuze’s use of Carl, G. Jung to again highlight one possible way we can approach the actual/virtual distinction via the unconscious. In this respect, Holland situates Deleuze much closer to the ‘counter tradition’ that Kerslake (2007) argues for. Jung and Freud’s disagreement over the role of the instincts (and their corresponding relation to the unconscious) famously set both thinkers on divergent intellectual paths. Whereas Freud’s theory largely retained a dualistic or dialectical character, Jung formulated instinctual drives in terms of evolutionary development which took multiple forms; forms he later came to conceive of as ‘archetypes.’ These archetypes, Holland identifies, were greatly influenced by both Bergson and Kant. In respect of Bergson, Holland writes that archetypes were conceived as “dispositions to act in order to satisfy urges, yet these dispositions are always socio-historically contingent and specific” (2012, p. 7). He adds that, “they combine instinctual intuition and emotional intelligence to varying degrees, and are therefore always to some extent unconscious” (ibid). The method of intuition here aligns itself to archetypal instincts and opens itself up to unconscious psychic process. With regard the Kantian influence, Holland goes on to argue that these archetypes are ‘ideas’ that structure our experience through ‘intuition’ as opposed to pure understanding. Our ability to (unconsciously) intuit ideas and thereby order our experience can be understood here via Jung’s Kantian-Bergsonian inflected notion of the archetype. This is of interest to Deleuze, and ultimately assists in appreciating the domain of the virtual, when we situate Deleuze’s comments in respect of Jung that the unconscious also holds a particular worth in formulating existential questions and can be conceived of as an “unconscious of problems” (Deleuze, 2004, p. 161 n. 17). By this, Holland explains that Deleuze finds Jung’s conception of the unconscious (as the storehouse for such existential concerns) useful in delineating the actual from the virtual. Archetypes, which are accessible only via intuition, by and large represent conscious solutions to unconscious questions. Holland writes that “in exactly the same vein, Deleuze will argue
that problems are unconscious and virtual, knowable only through actual cases of solution (in specific historical institutions and conjunctures)” (2012, p.7). The virtual can be conceived of here, in relation to Jung, as the unconscious well of archetypal images which through the method of intuition can be actualised to provide answers to deep seated issues pertaining to one’s self and place in the knowable world.

One last area that brings Deleuzian theory in touching distance of psychoanalysis would be via the structuralist reading of the unconscious associated primarily with Jacques Lacan. We should not forget that Deleuze was himself deeply influenced by structuralism and that the Lacanian concern for a Saussurean interpretation of Freudian theory potentially provides for moments of complementarity between both thinkers’ work. Again, Faulkner offers an understanding of the ‘actualisation of the virtual’ in specific relation to this structuralist reading when he writes, “In Freud’s work, we have seen that actualisation issues from a limitation upon this total structure; consciousness, as the actual, constitutes only a sub-structure of this greater structure” (2006, p. 135). We noted above how the actual is a delimited version of a larger whole. Here the same is being stated in respect of consciousness which is just one part of a larger unconscious structure. Moreover, Faulkner categorically associates this delimiting of the larger (virtual) structure with the processes of time. He adds,

> These sub-structures, of the actual, reveal themselves in the unfolding of time; this differentiation, which brings about the time’s passage, synthesises actual sub-structures from their virtual structure. This occurs in the Freudian transition from primary to secondary processes, which serves as one example of larger process of actualisation. (ibid)

Difference and repetition reveal the sub-structures of the greater unconscious whole and by doing so condition a sense of temporality. The virtual unconscious becomes actualised in the present conscious moment. The virtual past and unconscious mental life are, structurally speaking, aligned. The roles of difference and repetition, early psycho-sexual development, Jungian conceptualisations of the archetype as well as the structuralist reading of Lacan all provide entry points into Deleuzian theory on the actual/virtual (and associated understandings of temporality) via differing versions of the unconscious. We should note, however, that this wide range of authors and positions all operating with the concept of the unconscious reveals to us the decidedly varied and multifaceted nature of psychoanalytic theory. Although some may find the unconscious a useful analytical tool for picking apart or situating Deleuze’s theoretical reflections and insights, the risk of employing an overly vague notion of the concept could easily lead away from philosophical precision in favour of unhelpful generalisations. Psychoanalysis is undoubtedly a varied beast and one should be cautious in employing it to assist in understanding a theoretical system that contains
enough of its own intellectual challenges. I offer these entry points here as a means to establishing possible connections with the domain of critical psychology.

The opening quote to this paper drew our attention to an inherent problem with many theories of psychology dealing with the nature of time and memory. They do not, reasons Deleuze, account for the particular relation the past has to the present. Over the course of this paper we have seen that to rightfully understand this relation we have to unpack a whole set of interrelated concepts that effectively upend our taken for granted view on how time and memory operate. Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual, which provides the foundation to all of the above concerns, represents a striking challenge to mainstream psychology. Why? Because it effectively states that the past and memory are not in and of themselves psychological categories. To engage with them we have to move past the discipline of psychology and enter into philosophical speculation proper. As he states when commenting upon his major theoretical influence,

we must nevertheless be clear at this point that Bergson does not use the word “unconscious” to denote a psychological reality outside consciousness, but to denote a nonpsychological reality – being as it is in itself. Strictly speaking, the psychological is the present. Only the present is “psychological”; but the past is pure ontology; pure recollection has only ontological significance. (2011, p. 56)

For Deleuze, psychology alone is unable to provide the essential coordinates for navigating questions of temporality and memory. In order to do so, we must employ nonpsychological modes of thought. Ontology and philosophical speculation (as well as the nonpsychological concept of the unconscious) will comprise some of the essential tools for a critically minded psychology wishing to engage in these crucial areas of human experience.

References

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SECTION 2
SCIENTIFIC PROVOCATIONS
The philosophical concept proposed by Deleuze is distinctively different from logical propositions, which are core to the analytic philosophy that heavily informs current English psychological practice. This is not surprising since there is a strong connection between analytic philosophy and an orthodox understanding of science. As Bell indicates, ‘it is important to note that a primary motivation among the philosophers [Russell and Frege] who helped to shepherd analytic philosophy to its current position of dominance within Anglo-American philosophy was to develop a philosophy that could serve and further the interests of science” (2016, p. 188). The difference between a concept and a proposition becomes then critical not only to help to establish the difference between these two traditions but also to understand the difference between philosophical and scientific activity.

For Deleuze, the logical proposition tries to turn the concept into a ‘function’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 135), function being the focus of scientific activity. The critical movement in this interpretation of the concept takes place when a concept establishes ‘a relation of dependence or correspondence [...] so that “being human” is not itself the function, but the value of f(a) for a variable x’ (ibid). This reorientation displaces the concept out of its direct relationship with a chaotic material earth and turns its intensity into an extension of sorts. As Bell explains, analytic philosophy ‘ultimately attempts to ground philosophy in determinate state of affairs. [It] tends towards the reductionistic and the continual reaffirmation of common sense’ (2016, p. 189) and it does so ‘by turning to the discursive practices themselves, most notably natural language but also the languages of mathematics, theory and logic’ (ibid). We are here in the territory of linguistics and of the Sausurrean sign, that is to say, sign not in relation to a problematic existential dilemma but as a ‘structural entity’ organized around two elements: the signified to refer to a direct correspondence between a sign (the word ‘cat’) and a specific form (the animal ‘cat’); and the signifier to refer to the sign in its relation to other signs.

This displacement of the concept opens up the intimate connections that analytic philosophy establishes with science. This connection is further facilitated through the scientific ‘function’ occupying a similar position in the sciences as that occupied by the concept in philosophy: if the task of the philosopher is to create concepts, the scientist creates functions. It is important to stress that, for Deleuze, this difference should not be turned into some sort of dismissal or negative judgement towards science. Both – philosophy and science – imply significant ‘experimentation in the form of thought experiment [...] and, being close to chaos, the experience can be overwhelming in both’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 127). There is passion – a passionate engagement – and creation in both the philosopher and the scientist but their activities are different. ‘A scientific notion is defined not by concepts but by functions and propositions’ (p. 117) establishing a fundamentally different engagement with chaos. As Deleuze explains,
philosophy engages with the intensity of material chaos – attempting ‘to retain infinite speeds while gaining consistency, by giving the virtual a consistency specific to it’ (p. 118)\(^ {17}\) – whereas science does something different: ‘it relinquishes the infinite, infinity speed, in order to gain a reference able to actualize the virtual’ (ibid). Instead of attempting to grasp the infinite speed and complexity of chaos in order to articulate a possible life, science acts as a ‘freeze-frame’, a slowing down of the chaotic intensity of life so as to be able to define a limit. Not only so, but the slowing also affords the scientific thought to be ‘penetrate[d] by propositions’ (ibid) so as to transform matter into an actuality, a certain state of affairs; to transform matter into ‘thing(s)’. It is in this context that for Deleuze, the proposition is a concept that has already reduced its scope: it is a concept that has let go of its engagement with chaos so as to be able to frame its activities only in relation to a logical set, ultimately transforming the philosophical encounter into a tautological exercise of internal consistency.

Instead of a plane of immanence, science then constructs a plane of reference, articulating an opposite movement. The relation is no longer with the untimely intensity of the earth but with the careful construction of the parameters of a static territory, a specific actuality... a state of affairs. Yet, there is a nuanced point here that becomes critical for science. As Bell explains, using the work of Ladyman and Ross (2007), ‘the basic parameter that defines the plane of reference upon which representational claims regarding reality can be made is the “universal world structure.” This structure provides the foundational legitimacy and basis for the ontological scale relativity of the various sciences and for the patterns they track’ (Bell, 2016, p. 187). It is at this point that the full force of Deleuze’s metaphysical interests in the implications of a ‘new physics’ for scientific investigation are of critical importance, in particular for psychology and other social sciences. Coming to grips with the quantum claim that the underlying structure of the universe is not ordered matter but intense flows and that ‘things’ are emerging qualities, becomes critical to evaluate the tensions still existing between scientific paradigms and the effects that such tensions have in the (ab)uses of science in everyday life.

It is in this context, and against the commonly held notion that science provides objective knowledge, that Deleuze comments that the result of scientific activity is a certain ‘perspectivism’ or ‘scientific relativism.’ This relativism however ‘is never relative to a subject: it constitutes not a relativity of truth, on the contrary, a truth of the relative’ (p. 130). In line with the value Deleuze sees in repetition as central to the construction of stability, science not only freezes a plane into a certain state of affairs but it also (re)affirms its validity. In itself, this is perhaps necessary and for Deleuze and Guattari there is a need for a certain degree of predictability in life. Even if a necessary reduction,

\(^ {17}\) Bristow’s paper in this issue is a good introduction to how Deleuze uses the notion of ‘the virtual’
it has its risks. The validation of a specific plane, no matter how persuasive, does not exclude the possibility of existence of other planes of reference. It is here that the scientific perspectivism brings forth not truth but a certain selective blindness, a blindness that could even blind to itself, opening the possibility for science to be appropriated by fascist or other forms of deeply conservative process. This tension is further facilitated by the fact that the majority of the funding available for research is regulated by the State. This is of particular concern in the case of the social sciences where the increased ability of managing large sets of data is supporting the illusion of an increasingly unified plane of reference, where an apparently benign idea of ‘normality’ turns into a measuring stick for life.

Despite these ever-increasing difficulties, Deleuze is very clear that the alternative of dismissing or even demonizing science is worse. This is so because, as he indicates, the real enemy is not science but dogma and opinion in the guise of common and good sense (1994). The wrestling – the problematic engagement that is to be had – is then with rescuing science from a seductive and uncritical closure, it is in rescuing science from a type of narcissism that turns science into an exercise no longer done by brothers and sisters but by a sort of King Midas (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 32). This wrestling against closure has political effects for the discipline in that it protects against the domestification of the human condition in the name of normality, a normality that lies too close to the concerns we have these days with bio-power.

These considerations on the tensions inherent to science brings us then to look at some of the provocations that a Deleuzian understanding of science has on current psychological practices. Unlike other approaches in critical psychology that have chosen to dismiss science as much as it is possible, Deleuze invites us to have a more nuanced and constructive engagement with science. In line with Deleuze’s own concerns regarding the subtle differences between great thinkers and thinkers as functionaries, critical psychology needs to let go of the idea that ‘science is evil’ and reconnect with the scientific effort as part of the complex task with which the discipline has been endowed. Critically engaging with the shortcomings of an appropriation of its science by analytic/logical philosophy might prove to be a far more constructive pursuit than its current dismissal. After all, for Deleuze the critique is not against science but against an

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18 Deleuze and Guattari qualify the required structure: ‘you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality’ (1987, p. 160).
19 An insightful articulation of this point in the field of a ‘global mental health movement’ can be found in Bracken et al. (2016)
20 Bruun Jensen speaks in his paper on the impact that these threats had on Deleuze and Guattari’s change of orientation in their considerations on science between A Thousand Plateaus and What is Philosophy? (p. 39)
21 Take for example, the recently published Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology (2014) where the only entry related to science was Methodologism/Methodological Imperative, defined as a tendency that ‘overemphasizes methods and neglects ontological, epistemological, practical and political considerations.’ (Gao, 2014, p. 1176)
uncritical naivety vis-à-vis its tautological closedness. Here, the distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari between Major/State and minor science (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 see also Brunn Jensen’s contribution to this issue) becomes critical to help us work with the (ab)uses that psychology, in the name of science, perpetrates in everyday life (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017).

The papers in this section provide some valuable inroads within the discipline and in reengaging in a more nuanced ways with the scientific work of psychology.

Duff and Price-Robertson’s paper – *Deterritorialising the Psychological Subject (For a ‘People to Come’)* – employs Deleuze’s considerations on the subject to question ‘mainstream psychology’s endorsement of a humanist, pre-discursive subject’ (Duff and Price-Robertson, p. 93), in particular, the uncritical assumption of an ‘unitary subject as an ontological a priori’ (ibid). As an alternative, the paper advocates for a less individualised approach that includes both social and biological factors in the conceptualization of an emerging subject.

The second paper in this section Williams’ *Pragmatism after Deleuze and Guattari: the problem of method in What is Philosophy?* Williams has read Deleuze intensively and extensively and has worked in the implications of these ideas for a philosophy of signs (2016). This is the most philosophical paper in the collection, and perhaps it is also the most daring in its attempts to make inroads into a method to come for a critical science in psychology. Williams first explores the value of method for institutions in society and then identifies the importance of method when confronted with the dangers of chaos and or opinion, both forms of existential death (Williams, p. 123). With these critical considerations, Williams argues that ‘[t]he position of science within method should always be made uncomfortable’ (p. 126) so as to ‘minimise [...] its attraction to opinion and the loss of intensity’ (p. 123). In particular, Williams argues for method to be accountable to its existential limit by “show[ing] the twin risks of chaotic collapse and opinionated dogmatism at every stage of its expression and construction’ (p. 124).

The final piece on this section is Tucker’s *Deleuze, Simondon and the ‘problem of psychological life’*. Simondon is perhaps the only ‘full-on’ psychologist to have had significant relevance for Deleuze. Furthering the ideas explored by Brown, Duff and Price-Robertson, this paper explores Simondon’s core notion of ‘individuation’ as an ecological and affective process of sorts. As an alternative to traditional notions of individuation as a species-oriented activity – often associated with a certain genetic maturation – Tucker’s papers proposes that ‘[p]sychology can [be best] thought of as emerging through processes of movement and transformation that simultaneously grow “from the inside and the outside.”’ (Tucker, p. 127) and uses digital media to

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22 The reference is partly playful in its intention to highlight a difference with Foucault who also had studied psychology.
exemplify Simondon’s critical point that ‘[h]uman reality lives through technologies’ (p. 132).

References


Abstract

This paper builds on recent interest among critical psychologists in Gilles Deleuze’s thought to elaborate the ground of an emergent subject. We also consider the implications of this subject for novel modes of psychological practice. Our analysis proceeds from the claim that mainstream psychology’s endorsement of a humanist, pre-discursive subject is inadequate to the problem of explaining how subjectivity emerges and takes form. Deleuze’s conceptualisation of time and individuation suggests a way of overcoming this problem by accounting for the subject’s emergence within an immanent field of preindividual forces. This analysis also suggests ways of reconceiving subjectivity along less individualised, humanistic lines, drawing together social and biological factors in the work of explaining the subject’s emergence. In pursuing this analysis, we outline some of the possibilities and potential problems an emergentist subject may offer critical psychology. Ultimately, we advocate not for a completely Deleuzian psychology, but rather for greater engagement between the Deleuzian perspective outlined in our analysis and ongoing studies of the subject and subjectivity across the psychological sciences.

Keywords: critical psychology, subjectivity, Deleuze, assemblage, affect, time.
Introduction

As a peculiarly modern science of the subject, psychology in its diverse iterations typically proceeds from a humanist conception of the unitary human subject (Rose, 1999; Teo, 2017). Even in its more critical modes, the unitary subject establishes an ontological norm for the psychological sciences that critical psychologists can only resist (Brown and Stenner, 2009). Key to this hegemony is the conviction that mental functions, and their physical and neurological substrates, constitute authentic objects of scientific inquiry, or bare facts of phenomenological life. These objects are understood to exhibit a discrete and objectively verifiable set of characteristics that endure across social, cultural and historical differences (Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009; Hook, 2007). It is arguable that psychology requires such a conception of the subject (and subjectivity) in order that its referents might be made stable and objective (Brown, 2010). For psychology to function as a science alike other sciences, it must maintain an objective and defensible claim to a specific domain of subjective experience. William James (2007: 1) famously regarded this as the problem of “unifying the chaos … of diverse mental facts” such that a true “science of mental life” might be established. This is the common course by which the subject of psychology has been introduced to the natural and social sciences (Teo, 2017: 281-283). Of course, enduring critiques of this subject have been a mainstay of critical psychology (Hepburn & Jackson, 2009), although these critiques have not always resonated in the wider discipline. For how may a science of the psyche proceed in the absence of this subject? Does this absence not suggest the need for something like a novel psychology of multiplicities (see Nichterlein & Morss, 2017; Duff, 2014)?

This essay addresses each of these questions with particular reference to the work of Gilles Deleuze. We address this effort mainly to cognate developments in critical psychology (see Hook, 2007; Brown and Stenner, 2009; Blackman, 2012; Teo, 2017), although we hope that the implications of our analysis will have resonances for mainstream psychologists working on problems like memory, cognition, affect and emotion, resilience, trauma and mental illness (see Fox et al., 2009). Despite widespread interest among critical psychologists in the resources that continental philosophies offer to explore these problems, few have systematically explored the potential of Deleuze’s philosophy for problematising the psychological subject (for an exception see Nichterlein and Morss, 2017). Addressing this lacuna, our paper seeks to elaborate the ground of a Deleuzian subject, and to consider the implications of this subject for cognate inquiries across critical psychology (see Blackman et al, 2008; Tucker, 2012; Teo, 2017). Our analysis proceeds from the claim that mainstream psychology’s positing of the unitary subject as an ontological a priori is inadequate to the task of explaining how subjectivity emerges and takes form. We argue that Deleuze’s conceptualisation of time and difference offers a means of resolving this problem by indicating the terms of the
subject’s emergence within an immanent field of preindividual forces, signs and relations (Duff, 2014). This analysis provides a way of reconceiving subjectivity along less atomistic lines, drawing together social and biological factors in the work of explaining the subject’s emergent becomings. Pursuing these lines of inquiry, we outline some of the possibilities and potential problems a Deleuzian subject may offer critical psychology. Ultimately, we advocate not for a completely Deleuzian psychology, but rather for greater engagement between the Deleuzian perspective outlined in our analysis and ongoing studies of the subject and subjectivity across the psychological sciences.

The subject of critical psychology

In their efforts to decentre the unitary subject of psychological science, critical psychologists have mainly conceived of subjectivity as constructed and interpellated through texts, discourse, and mechanisms of power. The works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan have been especially important conceptual sources for these efforts (see Teo, 2017; Brown and Stenner, 2009). The attempt to ‘decentre’ or ‘denaturalise’ the subject – to question its status as an ontological and epistemological a priori – has tended to conform to Ian Parker’s (1999) widely discussed definition of the aims and orientations of critical psychology. Endorsing a novel analytics of power, Parker (1999: 13) describes critical psychology as a “systematic examination of how some varieties of psychological action and experience are privileged over others, [and] how dominant accounts of ‘psychology’ operate ideologically in the service of power”. The problem of subjectivity arguably lies at the heart of this definition. It is central to the privileging of certain varieties of psychological experience over others, to the role of ideology in the promotion of psychological norms, and to the ways these norms are promulgated and enforced in the course of psychological practice, including clinical practice most directly (see Teo, 2017: 284-287). Nikolas Rose (1998) argues that the ‘psy-sciences’ (of which psychology is a conspicuous example) are central to the organisation and expression of dominant modes of subjective experience, and the moral and social constitution of the subjects of this experience. This process of subjectivation is grounded in the identification and enforcement of normative psychological experiences that define the contours of a hegemonic, unitary subject. This subject measures the worth of human life, and marks the deviations from normality that are the hallmark of all psychological disorders (Duff, 2014). Following Foucault, Rose (1998) argues that the social and discursive processes that underpin the formation of the hegemonic subject are historically contingent, shifting over time and from one epistemic context to another. For this reason, all articulations of the human subject must be regarded as “the site of a historical problem, not as the basis of a historical narrative”
(Rose, 1998: 23). The human subject remains in and of history, and so it cannot provide the secure ontological ground for a natural science of the psyche.

Our purpose in reviewing this well-known account of the historicisation of the psychological subject is to remind readers of what is at stake in the effort to establish a critical psychology. Mainstream psychology endorses the human subject, and the discrete mental life that it leads, as the basis of a historical narrative in which human psychology is said to evolve in a social and historical context without itself ever becoming a product of this context. While psychological disorders might have their social and cultural sequela, the nosology of these disorders forever cleaves to a natural, biological and/or neurological bearing (Rose, 1998). Indeed, it is notable that those branches of psychology that historically have been somewhat suspicious of this neat separation of mind and culture, mentality and politics – psychoanalysis being the most obvious example, but also social and community psychology – have been all but disavowed in the recent effort to align psychology with the epistemological verities of the brain sciences (see Sampson, 2017; Parker, 2015; Teo, 2017). As psychology has progressively converged with these sciences, spawning the emergence of cognitive neuroscience among other disciplinary innovations, the “chaos of diverse mental facts” that William James observed at the birth of modern psychology has been increasingly reduced to the observable behaviour of discrete neural circuits (Sampson, 2017). Cognition, emotion, memory, pain, longing, hope and reason – all that apparently makes the human subject what it is, distinct from other entities – may now be mapped onto the activity of observable and localisable neural substrates. While social factors are often acknowledged in such accounts, they are typically relegated to the role of secondary explanations (Brown and Stenner, 2009). Even as the critique of humanism has reached its zenith across the humanities and social sciences, in which the notion of the historicised subject has become orthodox, cognitive neuroscience, and the brain sciences more broadly, have preferred the humanist verities of a natural subject secure in its biological endowments. We would add that the historically contingent subject of the contemporary social sciences has rarely featured in discussions of the autonomous brain of neuroscience. Neuroscience, in this way, renaturalises the subject with all the assurances of a positivist epistemology, while social scientists prefer to situate this effort within a discursive history of efforts to reify certain modes of subjectivity.

Critical psychology arguably finds itself at the nexus of these two discursive projects. On the one hand, critical psychologists have openly embraced the task of uncovering the social, economic and political practices and discourses in which the modern subject is made, seeking, in turn, to bring this work to the attention of colleagues working in other branches of the discipline, mostly in an effort to influence their clinical, diagnostic and methodological interventions (Parker, 2007: 5-7). Critical psychology thereby holds out the promise of greater engagement between psychologists interested in the social and historical mediation of subjectivity (or the discourses and practices in which the subject
is made), and other psychologists interested in the remarkable discoveries emerging in neuroscience and what they might mean for a novel science of human life (Shaviro, 2015). We are not convinced that these two projects are incompatible even as we concede how much ontological and epistemological ground lies between them. What if it were possible to account for the historical constitution of the subject in ways that incorporated political and discursive processes as well as biological and neurological ones? We acknowledge that various branches of psychology have attempted such a synthesis – biopsychosocial models of clinical disorder come to mind, as does work in embodied cognition, systems psychology and field theory – although we are not convinced that these efforts offer the conceptual nuance that we have found in Deleuze’s work. We wish to take seriously the insights generated in cognitive neuroscience, to accept the fact that subjective life emerges in neurological substrates, even as we would insist that these substrates reflect material and temporal processes that extend beyond brain and bodily boundaries. This is to call for an ontological account of subjectivity grounded in diverse social, material and affective forces as they are folded into the life of the subject. Such is the promise that recourse to Deleuze’s work offers critical psychology (Tucker, 2010). Deleuze’s thought offers a means of building on earlier analyses of the social and discursive constitution of the subject by adding fresh insights into the affective and material constitution of that subject. This is a subject that emerges in the folding of diverse forces. We will now briefly review how Deleuze develops this argument with particular attention to his 1968 work *Difference and Repetition*. In the final section we will consider some of the implications of this work for contemporary discussions of the subject and subjectivity in critical psychology.

**Subjectivation and the three syntheses of time**

The first challenge with any attempt to derive an account of the subject and subjectivity from *Difference and Repetition* is to establish the ontological ground of this account. For the Deleuzian subject, if we can draw one together, is not the ontologically stable, self-identical figure typical of more conventional treatments of subjectivity (see Mansfield, 2000: 143-146). It is also worth pointing out that Deleuze rarely uses the terms subject and subjectivity in this work, referring more often to individuation, life and/or becoming (Boundas, 1994). Without ignoring the importance of these distinctions in Deleuze’s work, central to our discussion of the implications of Deleuze’s philosophy for the psychological sciences is the thinker’s wholesale rejection of an essential, unitary subject defined by a finite series of qualities, properties or capacities (Brown and Stenner, 2009). Deleuze insists that the subject is not a coherent entity that ontologically and epistemologically precedes the things that happen to it, the events it participates in, or the relations it experiences. The subject cannot be the ontological ground of experience,
consciousness, reason or ethics, because the means by which this subject subsists prior to consciousness or experience is not, and likely cannot be, accounted for either in humanist or phenomenological treatments of the subject (see Nichterlein and Morss, 2017; Teo, 2017). For the latter, the subject serves as the necessary presupposition of experience and consciousness, even though the subject itself, and the means of its emergence and change, is never accounted for by way of these presuppositions. This is another instance of Deleuze’s favourable endorsement of Whitehead’s view that “the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained” (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987: vii).

The humanist subject, in other words, is an abstraction from experience insofar as the terms of its emergence are yet to be explained in accounts of this subject’s ontological bearing. This, then, is the ontological ground of Deleuze’s account of subjectivity in *Difference and Repetition*, in which subjectivity is treated as a temporal effect of immanent processes of emergence and organisation.

This is a processual subject, an emergent effect of an immanent “field” of pre-personal or “a-subjective” affects, relations, forces, signs and events (Deleuze, 2001: 25-27). The challenges this formulation presents to established psychological understandings of the subject, self, consciousness and identity are profound indeed, as we will elaborate in the next section. For now, it is important to be as precise as possible about the ontological move that Deleuze effects in his analysis of subjectivity in *Difference and Repetition*. In this work, Deleuze replaces the more familiar unitary subject with an immanent account of a subject’s emergence in the flux of time, affects and relations. Deleuze grounds this account in a close reading of the work of David Hume, Henri Bergson, Gottfried Leibniz, Friedrich Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant. Boundas (1994: 102-106) observes that each thinker provides Deleuze with concepts and orientations for theorising the subject’s ontogenesis, its “coming-into-being” (see also Grosz, 2017: 154-159). Each thinker provides Deleuze with unique insights into the “preindividual” field in which the “singularities” that cohere in the constitution and expression of actual, individualised subjects emerge and circulate (Boundas, 1994: 102). These singularities are “preindividual and prepersonal elements” – affects, events, relations, signs, forces and materials – in and through which the subject is “enfolded” as a distinctive “internalization” of forces (Boundas, 1994: 102). Widder (2012: 38) adds that these singularities are “molecular” or “virtual” entities that are “hidden” from subjective perception even as they are formally “constitutive of the actuality given to experience”. This insistence on the molecularity of the transcendental field in which the subject emerges is a critical condition of Deleuze’s innovative theory of subjectivation (Roffe, 2017). This theory contends that the subject emerges as an immanent expression of a prepersonal, transcendental field that is itself comprised of intensive, asubjective singularities.

Deleuze’s conceptualisation of time is central to this account of subjectivity, offering practical insights into the subject’s emergence, while also suggesting important
resonances for critical psychologists interested in the processual aspects of subjectivation (see Tucker, 2012; Brown and Stenner, 2009; Stenner, 2008). Deleuze (1994: 169) emphasises the temporality of subjectivity by prioritising the “form of time which runs through it”. The subject emerges “in time, under the form of time” (Sheerin, 2009: 90), where the form of time must itself be conceived of in terms of events and the ways subjects emerge in them. The subject is an expression of the affective and relational form of time by which it emerges, takes shape, and changes. The becoming of subjectivity is enacted in what Deleuze (1994) calls the three “syntheses of time”. We should stress that these three syntheses are intercalated and expressive rather than linear, such that each synthesis is in effect a dimension of the other two, and vice versa (see Boundas, 1994; Widder, 2102). In the service of analytic clarity, we will address each synthesis in turn, although the reader should bear this point in mind, and treat each synthesis as emergent rather than sequential.

The first synthesis establishes the “empirical foundation of time” by ordering the “successive, independent instants” that characterise bare experience into a coherent record of awareness (Widder, 2012: 46). This integration transpires in the mind, in imagination and contemplation, as it becomes aware of its own distinctive position in time. This positioning casts the emergent subject in relation to ‘its’ past, and ‘its’ anticipated future. A subject emerges in time, in its positioning in time, as a partial effect of this first synthesis, as the aleatory passage of time is synthesised in subjective time, what Deleuze (1994: 71) calls the “living present”. In time, the passage of successive ‘instants’ must be converted into a record of ‘lived time’ such that each instant may be reliably connected in contemplation in the mind’s experience of time’s passage. In this way, each passing instant is synthesised into a subjective perspective that connects the subject’s recollections of past time with its “expectations” of future time, as the past and the future are ordered according to the specific character of each passing instant (Widder, 2012: 44). This first passive synthesis locates the subject in time by connecting the present both to a “reflexive past of representation”, and to a “reflexive future of prediction” (Deleuze, 1994: 71).

However this first synthesis is not capable of actually structuring the present given that it is primarily concerned to link present instants to past recollections and future expectations. For this reason, Deleuze (1994) identifies a second synthesis by which the present passes into the past as it is contracted in the body in the form of habits and memories. This contraction structures the present by converting it into lived time; into a particular time of and for the subject. Habit and memory are, in these ways, utterly central to Deleuze’s theory of subjectivation. The second synthesis of time structures the present by converting it from the passive time of imagination into the particular time of subjective memory. This synthesis is not “carried out by the mind, but occurs in the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and all reflection” (Deleuze, 1994: 71). As the mind contemplates the present, and the activities or changes
immanent to it, a form of lived time emerges as the mind acquires a perspective and, henceforth, a degree of material and temporal continuity. It follows that the second synthesis “constitutes time as a living present, and the past and the future as dimensions of this present” insofar as the subject is moved by the activity of the present to recollect the past, and then to connect these recollections in memory (Deleuze, 1994: 76). Recollections give form to memory, as expectations give form to habit. In memory, the past is transformed from the “immediate past of retention”, into the “reflexive past of representation, of reflected and reproduced particularity” (Deleuze, 1994: 71). In and through this transformation, memory moves from simply retaining the past to reflexively representing it to and for a subject. Memory, in this way, grounds the subject’s reflexivity, and the forms of representation and recollection by which the ‘illusion’ of a relatively stable and temporally coherent subject/self is maintained in the mind. The second synthesis gives rise to the “I” who remembers, and who attributes a self-identical subjectivity to this “I”. Hence, it is me, the same me who remembers as the subject of this memory.

Habit is the contraction of memory insofar as memory grounds the subject’s expectations about the future, giving habit its constancy. Memory is the subjective foundation of habit insofar as habits are the subject’s “natural” response to its needs (Deleuze, 1994: 79-80). As the mind contemplates the present, it is led to link the present instant, in imagination and recollection, with other past instants. This process underpins the development of “instinct and learning, memory and intelligence”, as the subject confronts the “urgency of life” as life unfolds in a succession of “active problematic fields” (Deleuze, 1994: 78). Life unfolds in the present as a series of problems (or needs) to be solved. The familiar need for sustenance, succor, solace, company, isolation, sleep, repose, recreation, respite and support are each defined by their repetitions, by their (temporary) abatement and resurfacing in the present. And so, the need for sustenance triggers the reflex to eat, just as fatigue triggers the reflex to rest. These reflexes establish the temporal ground of the body’s contraction of the present in the habits and practices by which its needs may be reliably satisfied, and its corporeality (re)formed. ‘I’ always have a cup of tea at 11am; ‘I’ am normally asleep by 10:30pm; ‘I’ go to the gym three times a week. In each example, habits emerge as the temporal and embodied contraction of a need’s fulfillment. Yet it is critical to note that the repetitions of habit are never identical; after all it is never the same cup of tea that ‘I’ always have at 11, nor the same ‘I’. While habit is the embodied contraction of the subject’s needs, as these needs emerge in time, the temporal specificity of these needs ensures that they are always satisfied differently.

While the reflex for tea may emerge, with some regularity, as a problem to be solved, or a need to be fulfilled, the actual fulfillment of this need, the execution of habit in time and in practice, is always marked by the difference of its repetitions. Habit, in this respect, is the repetition of difference, not of identity (Deleuze, 1994: 73). Habit is never
simply the return of the same, even if the recollections and reminiscences of memory create the illusion of continuity, as if it is always the same ‘I’ that experiences the need that habit ostensibly satisfies. It is for this reason that Deleuze (1994: 86-87) refers to the subject as the “fractured I”, as a way of emphasising the difference that habit makes in the living present. Habit introduces difference to the lived time of the subject as needs are satisfied differently (see also Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015). Even as it implies the continuity of the subject, its temporal and spatial identity, habit cracks the illusion of the unitary subject by introducing difference to it, the difference of time and its variable syntheses, at the very moment of its apparent continuity (Dilkes-Frayne and Duff, 2017). It is only the “habit of saying I” (Deleuze, 1991: x) that conceals these fractures, as memory maintains the illusion of identity. Time, in these respects, cracks the subject between the first and second syntheses.

The third synthesis is far more mysterious, as the cracks that fracture the subject proliferate, leading to a multiplicity, the ‘I’ that is already many, caught between habits and difference, reminiscences and memory, the child becoming adult, the adult becoming older, the many selves of urgent life “each living a different time series” (Widder, 2012: 48). These ‘many selves’ – the fragments of subjectivity that express the differing viewpoints of the fractured ‘I’ – are each recorded in memory, first as they are retained in mental processes, and then as they are reproduced in subjective representations (Deleuze, 1994: 80). The latter form the ‘I’ of memory, as in the ‘I’ who remembers my 30th birthday, even though the varied representations that fracture the self are all retained too in a “disjointed series” that fragments and distributes subjectivity in and across time (Widder, 2012: 48). In this way, memory and reminiscence are crowded with variable “larval subjects” as each is expressed in conscious memory, alongside their unconscious echoes and resonances (Deleuze, 1994: 78). Self and subjectivity refer, for these reasons, to a “multiplicity of subjects living different temporalities within the same, not so unified being, resonating and repeating one another across an untimely and enigmatic conduit” (Widder, 2012: 49).

Deleuze turns to Nietzsche’s account of the eternal return to illustrate how the third synthesis of time works to draw these fragments of subjectivity together. The third synthesis brings movement to time by breaking the linearity of lived time; the idea that the present gives way to the past as it prepares for the future, which will soon be a present becoming past, that will itself feed into the future in an endless ongoing. Developing Nietzsche’s account of the eternal return, Deleuze (1994: 92-3) argues that the many selves that co-exist within the fractured ‘I’ forever return in habit, practice, chance and impulsion, bringing with them the ‘untimely’, the time out of joint of their own temporal series, breaking the neat linear time of common experience. The ‘I’ who celebrated my 30th birthday still subsists within my not-so-unified being, as does the ‘I’ who celebrated my 12th birthday, and yet each returns on its own series, leading along differing lines of becoming that sometimes cohere in subjective time, though mainly
dive as they continue along their own lines. At any moment, each line may be actualised in the present anew, bringing a fragment of subjectivity to the surface, expressing it in lived time and so diverting the present along a new line of becoming. This is the movement by which Deleuze (1994: 92) describes the third synthesis of time, as time is disrupted by the return of (subjective) difference.

The subject may be characterised, on the basis of these three syntheses, according to the differential forms of time that run through it. These temporalities effect the illusion of unified being even as they fracture the self and crack subjectivity into a “thousand intertwinnings, the presents and fatigues, of which we are composed” (Deleuze, 1994: 77). Deleuze interrogates these intertwinnings in terms of the events that actualise the subject, calling up recollections and reminiscences, activating partial selves, assembling fragments of subjectivity, and anticipating a future to come. The three syntheses of time, of contemplation, habit, memory and belief, must therefore be regarded as the means, or form, by which subjectivity coheres in an immanent field of affects, relations, signs, forces and bodies (Boundas, 1994; Duff, 2014). Events draw these elements together, bringing (larval) subjects into encounters with the constituents of this immanent field, the affects and relations that subsist in the habits and memories by which a particular subject is actualised in the living present (Deleuze, 1994: 90). To the extent that subjectivity should be regarded as a situated and partial coherence of preindividual singularities, the three syntheses of time ought to be understood as the principal form by which this coherence obtains. The first synthesis orients the succession of present instants into a lived time whereby the subject comes to contemplate the passage of time as it passes into a recollected past and flows into an anticipated future. The second synthesis structures the present by contracting the contents of present experience (the immanent field of the event) into the habits and memories that characterise the embodied subject. The third synthesis retains these habits, memories, recollections and expectations – and the fragments of subjectivity they inaugurate – into the fractured ‘I’ of the eternal return. The disjointed series of this third synthesis crowds the self in a throng of partially actualised larval subjects. Subjectivity emerges in events, in the three syntheses of time that forever fracture the self, retaining the subjects of events as they pass into recollection, awaiting their recall in events to come. The subject is not before time, or even contemporaneous with it, rather the subject is in and of time; a form of unfolding time and its divergent syntheses.

Practical psychology for a “people to come”

The subject is a materialisation of time in affective and corporeal form. Subjectivity, in these twinned valences, coheres in the contemplations of empirical time, and in the material contractions of habit, memory and expectation. We noted above how
Deleuze’s idiosyncratic account of the subject and subjectivity offered the promise of a conceptual lens sensitive to the social, political and discursive constituents of subjectivity, as well as its biological, affective and material aspects. The three syntheses of time fold these elements into the body, in the becoming awareness by which the present is linked to the past in memory and expectation, and in the material folding of habits and practices in a body of movement and change (see also Massumi, 2002; Grosz, 2017). Sampson (2017) notes how something like a Deleuzian account of time and habit may be observed in recent discussions of brain plasticity and the ways habits, practices, diet, activity and environmental responses structure and restructure the brain’s neural pathways. Such structuring and restructuring may be regarded as a material contraction of time. Similar patterns have been observed in the ways habits and practices structure the body’s morphology, generating distinctive racial, class and gendered differences in and across bodies (see Fox, 2012). The body in its morphology bears the structure of both deep time and lived time in its physiology and its psychology. Just as the human eye might be regarded as an effect of the relationship between light and matter across evolutionary time (Deleuze, 1994: 96), lived time shapes the subjective contexts of memory, recall and expectations, framing and situating the ‘I’ of subjective experience in the living present (Deleuze, 1994: 70-74). Time is in the flesh as it is in the nervous system, shaping the very materiality of subjectivity.

This temporalisation of subjectivity offers a potent conceptual and empirical resource for critical psychologists interested in the processual aspects of subjectivation. It does this by departing from the more commonplace focus on texts, discourses, practices and discipline to afford unique insights into the subject’s ontogenesis, its ‘coming-into-being’. This is an emergent subject, an effect of the spatial, affective and temporal folding of preindividual forces in an immanent field (see also Grosz, 2017: 166-170). As we have noted, critical psychologists have yet to fully develop these Deleuzian insights, even though they have been widely discussed in cognate fields (see Duff, 2014: 27-35 for a review). Perhaps the principal advantage that any turn to Deleuze’s work offers critical psychologists is a renewed focus on the living, breathing body, in contrast to longstanding interest in how bodies are interpellated in power and discourse. It is not that the latter, more Foucauldian, account should no longer be regarded as useful or stimulating, only that it tends to reduce the body to a medium that power applies itself to, drawing forces out of the body and converting them into capacities or functions (see Hook, 2007). Deleuze’s work returns our focus to the immanent forces of (a) life, to the actual (and virtual) affects, signs, events and relations by which the subject emerges in a discrete field. Power relations are surely immanent to this field (Deleuze, 1988: 100-103), however so too are myriad other forces, mingling and interfering with one another, giving form to an emergent subject.

Crucially, we would argue that this formulation offers a way for critical psychologists to engage in new ways with the research agendas emerging in the diverse branches of
We worry that the focus on discourse and power, redolent of much contemporary critical psychology, leaves only limited ground for dialogue and exchange between these branches. With much of the discipline now focused on aligning psychology with the brain sciences, evident most immediately in the ongoing rise of cognitive neuroscience, critical psychologists will need to find novel ways of interrogating the knowledge claims emerging in these sciences, and new ways of contributing to debates regarding the neurological ‘realities’ of brains and the subjects they ostensibly express. Cognitive neuroscience offers the recrudescence of psychological tropes valorising the objectivity of the body and the psyche, and the direct correlation between form and function, even as it allows for greater plasticity in neuronal structure, connection and activity. This trend is most apparent in the tendency for the neurosciences to ‘locate’ the site of human capacities like emotion, speech, memory and cognition in specific regions of the brain, as if speech, for example, emerges first in the brain and then enters into a social context (Sampson, 2017; Shaviro, 2016). The notion that memory or emotion may be conflated with the activity of particular neural pathways should not go unchallenged, given all the work that has transpired across the social sciences and the humanities to ‘denaturalise’ these mental processes and return them to the complex social, affective and material ecologies in which they arguably belong (see Nichterlein & Morss, 2017: 38-41). Deleuze’s oeuvre provides abundant resources to support these endeavours, furnishing an account of subjectivation alert to the myriad elements that comprise it.

We should like to close by briefly reflecting on how the Deleuzian account of subjectivation we have presented in this short review may be put to work in critical psychology. We are particularly interested in the extent to which this account may furnish a more ‘practical psychology’ applicable to both the clinic and the academy. We will ground this discussion in our shared interest in complex health and social problems like mental illness and substance use (see Duff, 2014; Price-Robertson, Manderson & Duff, 2017; Dilkes-Frayne and Duff, 2017). Our principal contentions are twofold. First, we would argue that Deleuze’s account of a temporally and materially emergent subject offers a means of incorporating the social and the biological elements and antecedents of mental illness and substance use, whereas these factors and elements are ordinarily kept distinct in discussions of each condition (Duff, 2014: 110-118). Second, Deleuze’s work holds out the prospect of reinvigorating both empirical and clinical studies of mental illness and substance use by offering new ways of conceiving of the aetiology of each condition, and the means, contexts or processes whereby individuals come to recover from mental illness and/or drug problems (Price-Robertson et al., 2017). With respect to each of these contentions, it may be observed that across the health and social sciences, and within the psychological sciences themselves, science and practice are dominated by rival social or biological accounts of the nature, causes and consequences of mental illness and substance use. While countless heuristic models
have been proposed in an effort to synthesise these rival accounts (see Kolind, Thom & Hunt, 2017; and/or Pilgrim, Pescosolido, & Rogers, 2011), it is far more common for scientists and clinicians alike to cleave to one or another of these accounts, emphasising either the biological, genetic or neurological grounds of mental illness and substance use, or their social and political determinants, without necessarily renouncing the impact of the other. And so, within psychology, critical, social and community psychologists mainly emphasise the social and political contexts of mental illness and substance use, without of course denying the importance of biological and genetic aspects, while cognitive neuroscientists and clinical psychologists emphasise the biological and genetic aspects of each disorder, without denying some role for socio-political factors (see Brown and Stenner, 2009).

Hence, psychologists of all stripes commonly endorse the view that mental illness and substance use have both biological and social aspects and antecedents. However, in practice, this holism is far better understood as an ontological and epistemological hierarchy in which certain factors are accorded primary importance while others are relegated to the role of secondary explanations. This hierarchy may be observed, for example, in the ways neuroscientists treat addiction as a ‘brain disease’, even as they acknowledge that this disease emerges in, and responds to, specific social contexts (see Vrecro, 2010). Similarly, social and community psychologists, along with critical psychologists, are more likely to emphasise the role of power and social disadvantage in the epidemiology of substance use and misuse, even though they never entirely ignore the neurological aspects of addiction (Kolind et al., 2017). Our point here is that not all factors are treated equally in discussions of the causes and consequences of mental illness and substance use, even in those explanatory models that aspire to aetiological and nosological holism. Almost always one may discern a distinctive inclination in favour either of social or biological factors and explanations, even though the empirical evidence in support of each orientation has become overwhelming. Clearly mental illness and substance use happen in the brains of individuated bodies, just as they unfold in a population of human and nonhuman forces to the extent that each takes on a distinctly social ontology. And yet, ontology is precisely the problem here insofar as biological and social factors are typically regarded as indicative of irreducibly different ontological orders. In short, the ‘stuff’ of biological accounts of mental illness and substance use is not the same ontological ‘stuff’ of social and political accounts of these conditions. The former cleaves to the ontological ground of bodies, brains and neural activity, while the latter privileges the ontological ground of power and the social disadvantages it evinces.

Yet what if the gap between these ontological positions could be closed in the provision of an immanent synthesis capable of explaining the social and the biological in the same ontological valence? This is not to suggest, we must hasten to add, a new holism, a unified theory of the subject, but it does offer novel analytical resources for
interrogating the temporal and material aspects of subjectivity (see Duff, 2014: 49-53). As we have noted, this account is grounded in an immanent ontology in which all aspects of what Deleuze (1994: 96) calls “biopsychical life” – ideas, habits, memories, practices, cellular structures, bodies and their morphologies – are accounted for in the same temporal and material terms. Each such aspect may be regarded as an emergent effect of the contemplations and contractions of the three syntheses of time in which matter, territories and affects are folded into particular, individuated forms (Grosz, 2017: 180-190). This means that ideas, technical objects, biological individuals, material entities and inorganic forms all emerge according to the same principles of individuation (Deleuze, 1994: 73-78). This further suggests that we should draw no necessary ontological distinction between bodies, brains or individuals on the one hand, and social entities, norms or practices on the other. All are individuated according to the same temporal and material processes. This is precisely where and how we think critical psychology ought to proceed in its efforts to avail a more practical foundation for responses to complex health and social problems like mental illness and substance use. Partially this effort ought to involve greater engagement between rival social and biological accounts of these conditions, such that we might give each aspect its due. Deleuze’s ontological refiguring of the subject provides grounds for thinking through the ways these diverse forces are folded into the subject, offering the prospect of novel ways of investigating how habit, memory, practice, genetic expression, context and desire are enfolded in each individuated expression of mental illness or substance use. We have begun to explore these pathways elsewhere (Duff, 2014; Price-Robertson, Manderson & Duff, 2017; Dilkes-Frayne & Duff, 2017), although for now we would point to the importance of synthesising social and biological accounts of the causes and consequences of mental illness and substance use in the search for more effective, humane and progressive responses to these conditions. This is what we mean finally by the effort to derive a more practical psychology for a people to come.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) treat the ‘people to come’ as the principal addressees of their speculative and experimental philosophy. This is a people of becoming, a people open to the notion of their becoming-other, free of an essential identity, and expressive of the particular syntheses of time in which individuated forms emerge on a plane of immanence. While some measure of Deleuzian jargon is unavoidable in describing this people to come, we would suggest that these people are natural allies of a novel, Deleuzian, critical psychology. The ‘people to come’ are an expressive function of the three syntheses of time by which subjects are individuated. Among this people, one might say that both illness and health, harm and benefit are all expressions of a particular combination and contraction of human and nonhuman forces – of particular syntheses of habit, memory, genetic expression, practice, desire and expectations – as these forces affect the brain, body, capacities and relations of individuated subjects. All such forces mingle in the expression of what have come to be seen as psychological
conditions. Consistent with this analysis, a more practical psychology might devise new diagnostic, clinical, ethical, therapeutic and aesthetic responses to the emergence and expression of mental illness and substance use that respond not to a sick body or disordered subject, but rather to the particular syntheses of human and nonhuman flows, forces and becomings in which these experiences are expressed. The diagnostic task is to identify the particular events, habits and forces that lead to a break or blockage in the body’s becomings, that inhibit the subject’s creativity and close off particular affective capacities. This is to note, controversially perhaps, that mental illness and substance use should only be regarded as problems to the extent that each condition inhibits the affective and material expression of capacities, forces and becomings by which the individuated subject inhabits a distinctive assemblage of health within a specific social field. If health, taken from this Deleuzian vantage, may be regarded as any particular assemblage of forces by which a body becomes “strong, reasonable and free” (Duff, 2014: 175-181), then illness may be regarded as an effect of the particular syntheses of time and matter by which these becomings are blocked. It follows that any effective therapeutic response to illness may be found in the aesthetic and practical work that is undertaken to remove these blockages in the resumption of a line of becoming strong, reasonable and free. This suggests the importance of conceiving of novel ways of intervening in the specific temporal and material syntheses by which healthy and unhealthy modes of subjectivation emerge so that the grounds of an assemblage of health might be ascertained, along with the means of its promotion. This is one particularly fruitful line of creative and practical inquiry that Deleuze’s distinctive ontological refiguring of subjectivity opens up for critical psychologists. Many more lines await the people to come that any such psychology may inspire.

References


1. In any attempt to open a new practice following Deleuze and Guattari, for any discipline, there will always be the need to consider the problem of method. Their philosophy is doubly counter-institutional: it is critical of institutions and of their propensity to reduce differences to grids, categories and appropriate plans of action; it is a philosophy of the ‘minor’, in the sense of resistance to majority power in any collective endeavour. Since method has served institutions and philosophy as support for the reduction of multiple differences to more manageable categories and routes to action, and since method is one of the most important ways of constructing a ‘major’ philosophy, method is always a prompt for suspicion. However, the problem of method after Deleuze and Guattari is made more complicated by a mistaken assumption. It’s an easy mistake to make. We could think that there cannot be method after Deleuze and Guattari. The attractiveness of this error stems from many of the critical positions adopted by their philosophies. I’ll single out three: the critique of transcendence; the refusal of generality; and the critique of normativity. If method is a transcendent plan to be applied to different situations in the same way, then there is no place for it in Deleuze and Guattari. If method is a way of applying general concepts to particular cases, then method cannot be an outcome of their thought. If method involves a series of norms, in terms of how it works and in terms of what it demands, then method should not be associated with Deleuze and Guattari’s work.

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See Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose (eds), Deleuze and Research Methodologies, Edinburgh University Press, 2013. The editors’ introduction is very effective at setting out the new challenges to method presented by Deleuze and Guattari, pp 1-22.
2. The mistake in denying any method to Deleuze and Guattari is not strictly about the transcendence, generality and normativity of methods. It is instead about their status and persistence. If method is taken as preeminent and eternal, then its transcendence is made absolute.\textsuperscript{24} Preeminent method implies untouchable general concepts and inviolable norms. Outside some famous modern examples in Descartes and Hegel (and, even then, in highly restricted and tendentious interpretations) there are in fact very few methods given this status. Instead, method has a pragmatic character and a form of impermanence. We adopt methods pragmatically, in the sense of seeing whether they help us achieve goals that are themselves negotiable and changeable. We allow methods to vary over time and discard them once they no longer fulfil the functions we demand of them. This pragmatic impermanence and experimentation with method is much closer to what Deleuze and Guattari seek positively as the future of pragmatics.

3. So why does the idea of the sanctity of given methods still hold sway? Partly, it is because in institutional contexts methods are a vehicle for order, reliability and power such that they appear to be all-important and unquestionable. Deleuze and Guattari’s longstanding critique of order words is important in this context; a method is often communicated as an order (‘proceed thus’) and this order rests on a system of power with a specific genealogy and structure.\textsuperscript{25} Methods also hold sway because, in an economic context, methods become a way of guaranteeing quality and identity over time and across distant spaces. For firms, disciplines and organisations in late-capitalism methods are an essential tool of management and production. They can therefore seem

\textsuperscript{24} Christian Kerslake gives a helpful discussion of method in Deleuze by returning to Deleuze’s 1956 lecture series ‘What is Grounding?’ in order explain ‘the enigma of Deleuze’s rejection of “method”’ (Christian Kerslake, \textit{Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy}, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p 8; Gilles Deleuze, \textit{What is Grounding?} trans. A. Kleinherenbrink, Tripleampersand, 2015). Kerslake demonstrates how Deleuze draws a strong opposition between method and system, rejecting the former but not the latter. Quoting Deleuze, Kerslake explains how the act of grounding in philosophy oscillates between knowledge and expression of things, where method ‘treats the object as already there’ and where ‘its principles concern the best way to acquire knowledge from that pre-existing object.’ (18) This is an important remark that stands for any approach to method after Deleuze and Guattari. If method is constructed on the assumption that the object or topic pre-exists inquiry as unchanging and independent and hence merely requires knowledge, this will lead to a failure of method as sensibility to the changing circumstances of thought, system and practice around given problems. A final point about Kerslake’s reflections on Deleuze and method is that he takes Deleuze’s debt to Hegel seriously, thereby dismantling the superficial account of a simple opposition between the two philosophers, especially around questions of method and system.

\textsuperscript{25} The relation between power and method is demonstrated through the study of language by Deleuze and Guattari. Instead of commanding belief and assent, they insist that language and, by extension, method are used to gain obedience. This is another important lesson for the appeal to method in disciplines. There is no method that isn’t in some way a form of compulsion. The question is then how to minimise this claim to obedience sewn into method and language: ‘Rather than common sense, a faculty for the centralization of information, we must define an abominable faculty consisting in emitting, receiving, and transmitting order-words. Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience.’ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, trans. B. Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p 76.
inviolable. Again, Deleuze and Guattari are highly critical of this ordering and repetitious aspect of capitalism, seeing it as a necessary and yet decadent aspect of the capitalist system when compared to its disruptive and inventive sides.\textsuperscript{26} Firms and institutions turn to method, as a quasi-religious means to competitive advantage, when margins are already diminishing among competitors with equivalent products.

4. A change of perspective shows just how much this inviolability is illusory. When viewed over time, we see that methods change rapidly not only within a given practice or organisation, but also between completely different methods. There aren’t fixed methods of management, treatment, production, sales or service in capitalist firms or in social organisations. Instead, profit and performance drive changes in methods. The pragmatic outcome matters much more than how the outcome is achieved. One way of interpreting Deleuze and Guattari’s work is as a series of concepts allowing us to explain and create with the real genealogical multiplicity of methods and practices.

5. The contrast between the imposition of method as a tool for control and power, and the dispensability of any given method when it fails to serve performance and profit, is at the heart of the problem of method for Deleuze and Guattari. Their critical arguments are aimed at the role of method in control, power, capital, performance, organisation and the imposition of norms. The source of this critique comes from observation of many historical organisations and practices, but the most influential field is linguistics, where Deleuze and Guattari develop their idea of pragmatics, against ideas of transcendent or deep structure in language.\textsuperscript{27} We shall see later that we can call these

\textsuperscript{26} Deleuze and Guattari define the method of capitalism as an axiomatics where new axioms can always be added to, in order to explain how capitalism can go beyond seemingly insuperable contradictions. Nonetheless, this method is still restrictive and doomed because of the nature of axiomatics itself and its need to exploit and control creativity and novelty. This necessity explains the return of States and their modes of control alongside global capitalism: ‘Thus the States, in capitalism, are not cancelled out but change form and take on a new meaning: models of realization for a worldwide axiomatic that exceeds them.’ A Thousand Plateaus, p 454 This is an important context for thinking about method after Deleuze and Guattari, in any field, since in our epochs of the various realisations of capitalist axiomatics, any practice will have to interact with those axioms and with their States, both as external factors and as internal requirements for the practice itself. Method will always take place in league with a capitalist axiomatics and its attendant States. For a full and illuminating discussion of Capital in A Thousand Plateaus, see Eugene W. Holland Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader’s Guide, London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

\textsuperscript{27} Any method is prone to give rise to order words – answer this, do this – through its linguistic practices, but equally every practice can look to the transformations and openings made possible within language as free indirect discourse among changing assemblages: ‘The language-function is the transmission of order-words, and order-words relate to assemblages, just as assemblages relate to the incorporeal transformations constituting the variables of the function. Linguistics is nothing without a pragmatics (semiotic or political) to define the effectuation of the condition of possibility of language and the usage of linguistic elements.’ A Thousand Plateaus, 85 Practice should resist the calcification of its language into
The deep question is not therefore how to avoid method and what to replace it with. It is how to deploy methods such that they do not become instruments of control and repression.  

6. The critique of method is therefore only half the story. The mistake is to think that because method has negative aspects it should be avoided in every way. That’s not at all the point. There is rather a shift in focus. For Deleuze and Guattari, method doesn’t serve measurable and pre-set aims and outcomes. Instead, it can contribute to and hold back creative experimentation. This tries out new ways of living with physical, mental, social and political problems. Method therefore becomes a pragmatic structure that is necessary for thought and action, and yet dangerous for them, where they seek to avoid repressive forms. Method serves affirmation, in the sense of giving structure to creation, but it also carries negation into creativity, through its tendencies to serve power and institutionalise it. Thus the conceptual distinction between smooth and striated spaces can be counted as one of the most important innovations brought by Deleuze and Guattari to the problem of method for practices. Any practice will have a tendency to order words by analysing and opening up its assemblages to new variables and new transformations. The question of method should not be ‘How do we repeat this well?’ but rather ‘Where might this lead differently, against its tendency to repeat badly?’

28 The critique of opinion, common sense and good sense has been a constant in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, taking its most pure form in the concern to separate ideas from common sense as operating through representation and recognition, in Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: ‘Clarity and distinctness form the logic of recognition, just as innateness is the theology of common sense: both have already pushed the Idea over into representation.’ Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p 146. Method, for any practice, is always going to be a risk taken with common sense as representation (the representation of types, for instance). It is always going to be a chance taken with the risk of recognition (the ways to recognise cases, for example). Deleuze is not opposed to representation or recognition in every way. He is aware that they are necessary moments in any thought. The danger comes from the institution of a common sense, underpinning temporary and fleeting, necessarily practical and empirical representations and recognitions into what he calls a doxa, where truth becomes a matter of the probable, rather than the object of an encounter. There is no doubt that Deleuze is demanding a lot of us here, in shifting from a model of representation, recognition and probability (Which of the known categories is this likely to belong to?) to a model of event (Through whom, where, how and whence can this take us anew?) It is important to insist on two points here. First, Deleuze is aware of how demanding this philosophy can be and is in no way enjoining us to abandon recognition and representation, but rather stretch them beyond their limits. Second, from a disciplinary and professional point of view, the critique of common sense is a challenge to how disciplines and professions police themselves according to judgements about ‘rogue’ departures from an agreed doxa.

29 One of the most convincing and extensive discussions of the importance of models for Deleuze, in the context of mathematics, is set out by Simon B. Duffy in his Deleuze and the History of Mathematics: in Defense of the “New”, London: Bloomsbury, 2013. The crucial insight by Duffy is that the adoption of mathematical models by Deleuze is always within the ambit of a problematics: ‘The redeployment of mathematical problematics as models for philosophical problematics is one of the strategies that Deleuze employs in his engagement with and reconfiguration of the history of philosophy.’ p 2.
strike its field, to approach it through an epistemological grid, allowing for knowledge, understanding and structured action. Yet, in its experience of the field, the practice will encounter smooth gradients and complex interconnections, such that any striation needs to be treated as, at best, an approximation to this multiplicity of variations and, at worst, as the error of reduction of the field according to a falsifying image. This means that the problem of method will always also be a problem of sensibility, of openness to the differences our practices are bound to miss, hide, eradicate and, indeed, create. For an example of this kind of striation through linguistic definitions and of the significance of Deleuze and Guattari’s pragmatic critique, we could turn to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition and, for instance, the definition of gender dysphoria. The detailed diagnostic criteria striate – in the sense of organising, dividing and judging – bodies, languages, desires, brains, minds, acts and creations according to a detailed grid in order to arrive at a diagnosis through a set of check-like tests. At a simple level, Deleuze and Guattari are reminding us of the complex continuum underlying this imposed grid. They are calling us to question the methodological grid even as we refer to it. They want us to respond to it creatively as something that must constantly be open to change in response to a differentiated field that always eludes it, perhaps most of all when we operate with the dominant idea of disorder rather than the more fluid and positive idea of problem.31

7. There are two features of method in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought that are therefore non-standard and problematic for practice and for pragmatism about method. First, there has to be a creative destruction of method built into method itself. This destruction is radical, in the sense that it is a full break with the control of method, rather than a partial amendment to how it functions, or a built-in steady improvement. For instance, a feedback and amend mechanism, such as a series of upper-level rules for a system to monitor its own success and respond to failures, would itself be part of the control and organisational aspects of method, to be subjected to destructive practice. This can be particularly difficult since such mechanisms are usually applied by a governing body that is viewed and views itself as superior and as the guardian of standards, whether this is at a human level or in terms of automatic and organic systems. Second, method cannot be goal-oriented, if we understand goals to be measurable outcomes or fixed values agreed in advance. The turn to feedback and to meta-level control mechanisms can seem like a liberating and improving development in

30 ‘And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space.’ A Thousand Plateaus, p 474. For an excellent collection on Deleuze, Guattari and Space, see Deleuze and Space, Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (eds), Edinburgh University Press, 2005.
31 DSM 5, 302.6 (F64.2), https://dsm.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596.dsm14
contemporary method. Deleuze and Guattari teach us that feedback is itself method-driven in ways that can be even more repressive than single level methodological structures, because the meta-level method can combine a stronger claim to be sensitive to differences, while introducing even stronger structural mechanisms and a potentially devastating miscalculation about control over the future.

8. The degree of difficulty involved in the creative destruction of method can be grasped through two paradoxes. First, what is the method of the creative destruction of method? If a philosophy requires method for structure, then it should also require some kind of method for the structure of creative destruction, but this implies a higher level method. This would lead to an infinite regress of methods and destruction. Second, what could it mean to think and act creatively but free of determined goals, even if these goals were settled after the fact? As a minimum, an action should be open to review as to what it has achieved. If we can agree upon this, then we can assess different actions and decide what goals are appropriate for future action. If we cannot recognise or judge the outcome of a creative act in this way, we cannot even judge it to have been an action at all, in the sense of a passage between two states, between prior conditions and later outcomes. A clue to the solution to these paradoxes can be found in Deleuze and Guattari’s embracing of concepts such as cut, dice-throw, imperceptibility and lines of escape. Against one of the deepest presuppositions of method, in particular when it maintains an image of its own truth and rectitude, they celebrate the pursuit of ways out of method and towards the new that cannot be recognised as valid from within the method itself. For instance, and practically, these lines of escape can take the form of associations between groups of individuals not recognised or repressed by a given method. Whether they be outcasts, or judged to be deviant, or simply not taken to exist their resistance must be positive, in the sense of creating the movement, and only in a secondary sense negative by drawing away from and eventually overcoming the repressive method.

9. Despite these paradoxes, the depth of the problem of method for Deleuze and Guattari should not be over-estimated. The problem is at its strongest where method has to be deployed against its own negative tendencies. However, a constant aspect of their thought does not suffer directly from the same hindrance. This is the descriptive and diagnostic side of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophies. The description of

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32 A reading of Maria Nichterlein and John Morss’s Deleuze and Psychology: Philosophical Provocations to Psychological Practices is the background to this discussion of method. In particular, I am interested in how we should think about method in a ‘critical psychology that is constantly diversifying’. Deleuze and Psychology: Philosophical Provocations to Psychological Practices, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017, p 123.

33 For a perceptive discussion of Deleuze and Guattari’s work on diagnosis see Aidan Tynan Deleuze’s Literary Clinic: Criticism and the Politics of Symptoms, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
symptoms and mapping of machines and functions are among the greatest strengths of the Deleuzo-Guattarian approaches. Though they depend on an accompanying affirmation, the descriptions themselves can be viewed as separate methods. The two sides, descriptive and creative, or diagnosis and escape, are never fully independent. Furthermore, when used in this philosophical sense, diagnosis should be seen as an all-encompassing experimental practice — a manner of transforming a problem that includes thinkers and worlds, rather than a form of cross-referencing from a case to known general states. Nonetheless, where method is concerned, it is viable to deploy an accurate and far-reaching toolbox of concepts and structures in description while keeping their creative destruction in reserve.

10. Descriptive and diagnostic tools such as tracing molar and molecular processes in a system, or picking out the tree-like structures and underlying rhizomes of a society, or distinguishing the machine of state and war machines at work in a conflict, or working with the flows and cuts of a machine-like process, show Deleuze and Guattari's methodological inventiveness and acuteness at their best. A molar process draws different movements and components into a well-defined identity with specific boundaries and oppositions to other identities; for example, at an organisational level the constitution of a party or a discipline around a particular definition and order is molar. A molecular process is a passing gathering of individuals into a flow; for example, a crowd heading to the exits of a concert or droplets coalescing into a stream. Any identity ascribed to the molecular process is only adequate if it is based on the passing flow rather than on the determination of a joint and more permanent identity. A tree-like structure is the division of processes into component parts according to a hierarchy based on importance and functions (root, trunk, branches); for instance, the division of a company into manufacturing, sales, management, board, CEO and share-holders. A rhizome is a distributed network with no central organisation or hierarchy. It is differentiated according to movements and shades and can reconstitute from any of its parts. A lawn is a rhizome. An anarchist group should be a rhizome, if it is to be able to survive the capture of some of its members. A machine of state has a central function of organising, managing and drawing benefit from all other processes in a society. It tends to a thorough mapping of society according to parts, roles, identities and values. A war-machine is a limited function and limited life machine aimed around a particular movement and enabled by a limited set of processes. The EU is a machine of state; smuggling operations are war machines, so long as they do not become part of state-like mafia. There is a methodological skill in deploying these concepts and structures. It

draws on their conceptual creativity to make maps of many interlinked and dominant modes of control and damage in contemporary and historical societies. We can use these tools and concepts together or in complex arrangements and assemblies. Irrespective of what we then do with the analysis, they help us to grasp complex and evolving systems. The legacy of helpful questions and models bequeathed to us by Deleuze and Guattari – with characteristic abandon and generosity – explains the extraordinary reach and promise of their thought. What is the molar here? Where are the molecular flows? How is the tree structure organised and ruled? Where are the rhizomes beneath it? Is this a machine of state or a war machine? What new flows are there here? How are these new flows beginning to be cut into redirected and interrupted? By who, where, and for what? These are all questions of method and towards methods.

11. The balance between the need to overcome methods and their importance for structure in diagnosis explains the controversial nature of claims to Deleuzian or Deleuzo-Guattarian method. For the former, there is the idea of Deleuze’s method as an experimental dialectics based around relations of different kinds of differentiation in the emergence of individuations (differentiation and differenciation – where the first term indicates a difference of degree across an ongoing transformation and the second an actual difference based on the determination of identities at a given time). The primary aim of the method is therefore to unpick which processes are constitutive of identities and which ones lead to their transformation. For the latter, there is the growing dominance of the idea of schizo-analysis – understood loosely as the diagnosis of molar and molecular processes, of major and minor forms (for instance, in literature) as well as disjunctions and lines of flight – based around Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus. Again, the method is one of mapping different processes, with an emphasis on giving priority to the molecular, the minor and to lines of escape. However, when either of these methods is given a final formal status, in the sense of final values ascribed to each process, inner and outer tensions emerge. Internally, the dialectical method has deep contradictions around the nature of the new in relation to the logical structure of the method. Is the new subjected to the structure, or is it something that goes beyond any

35 For introductions to this important distinction in Deleuze’s philosophy, see my own Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: a Critical Introduction and Guide, Second Edition, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, or Henry Somers Hall, Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: an Edinburgh Philosophical Guide, Edinburgh University Press, 2013. In discussing Deleuze’s methodology as a way of reinterpreting figures from the history of philosophy, Daniel W. Smith makes a telling remark about the role of a ‘zone of indiscernability’ between the historical text and Deleuze’s original ideas. This is a good suggestion for understanding method after Deleuze more broadly, in relation to differentiation, since it implies that method should go beyond fixed distinctions between different elements and actors of the method. In order to introduce shared zones of becoming, there has to be uncertainty with respect to boundaries for the method. Daniel S. Smith, Essays on Deleuze, Edinburgh University Press: 2012, pp 63-6.
possible structure? Similarly, schizo-analysis has internal tensions around the positivity and negativity of disjunctions or ‘schizes’. 36 Why are some cuts positive in relation to new lines of escape, whereas others prove to be negative? Is the assessment of those values inherent to schizo-analysis, such that we could assign probabilities to positive and negative outcomes in advance? Externally, the difficulties are even stronger, since Deleuze goes well beyond his statements about dialectics in all his books other than Difference and Repetition. It doesn’t make sense to call his method dialectics for The Logic of Sense or Cinema 1 and Cinema 2, let alone The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque. The same applies to Guattari’s works with Deleuze, since each collective book can be seen as going beyond, and in some ways renouncing the methods of others, while staying true to some more vague idea of conceptual resemblances and political values across the philosophy. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that Guattari’s work on language, political activity, clinical practice and ecology is more extensive and deeper in terms of method and collective action than Deleuze’s. At least where method is concerned, the tendency to overemphasise Deleuze in the collective work must be resisted. 37

12. If Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy depends on two approaches to method that complement and oppose one another, and with no recourse to a third term that could resolve their differences, my contention is that their approach to method is necessarily pragmatic. However, as we have seen, this pragmatism is itself special, insofar as it has neither identified goals, nor a method of its own. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari experiment with method and its destruction in individual circumstances and in relation to individual perspectives on complex problems. In trying to define their pragmatism as sharing a common kernel with classical and contemporary pragmatism, I have described philosophical pragmatisms as different interpretations of this primary principle: ‘Everything evolves amidst a shared problem’. 38 Deleuze and Guattari depart from other versions of pragmatism in taking radical positions on the concepts of evolution, environment, sharing and problems. Evolution is multiple and open-ended, rather than subject to natural law. Environment is both actual and virtual, including ideal and

36 In his discussion of micropolitics, Nathan Widder draws attention to practices that ‘work to disaggregate to stratifications that schematise us’ (143), but he is careful as well to draw attention to the dangers in these practices that can ‘lead to an empty “black hole”’ (145). Widder adds to the discussion of method given here by showing how any form of self-creation and joint creation is political in the strong sense of a matter of ‘contest and engagement with difference’. Nathan Widder, Political Theory after Deleuze, London: Continuum, 2012, p 146.


38 For a wide range of essays on Deleuze and pragmatism, see Deleuze and Pragmatism, Sean Bowden, Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (eds), New York: Routledge, 2015. The essays by Simone Bignall and by John J. Stuhr are particularly good at drawing connections between Deleuze and Guattari’s methods and those developed by Dewey.
abstract factors. Pragmatism isn’t shared for humans in democracies, but rather shared across all life forms and their interconnected environments. Problems aren’t common sense practical difficulties, but rather genetic and complex conditions for any evolution. Deleuze and Guattari’s adoption of linguistic pragmatics is itself multiple and changeable, caught in its processes of self-destruction. It will therefore always be wrong to seek their general method for a subject or practice. There cannot be one.

13. Given the negative effect of imposing general concepts over individuals, we should abandon the idea of general methods. Instead, we should experiment with which concepts we can adapt from Deleuze and Guattari and which clues to methodological construction and destruction we can glean from a specific pragmatic study of a given problem for an individual event. In what follows, I will therefore track the problem of method as it is worked with in the conclusion to What is Philosophy?, ‘From chaos to the brain’, where they write about the relation of thought to brain in the context of art, science and philosophy.

14. The first sentence of ‘From chaos to brain’ shows that the problem of method is central to the question of thought and brain: ‘We only ask for a little order to protect us from chaos.’ Deleuze and Guattari’s first pragmatic methodological principle is for a minimum of order, just enough structure to avoid a collapse into chaos. It is important to contrast this principle with one that might appear similar but is in fact the opposite. They could have said ‘We require order’, but this would have left open questions of how much order and of the intrinsic value of order. Maybe we need a lot of order and maybe

39 In the conclusion to her Deleuze et l’art, Anne Sauvagnargues gives the most insightful analysis of Deleuze’s work as pragmatic method. Sauvagnargues’s aim is two-fold. She gives an account of method after Deleuze and she outlines her own method for approaching Deleuze’s work in a manner consistent with it. She draws out the main aspects of this pragmatism as response to ‘problematic knots’ that are prospective and retrospective at the same time, where the pragmatics must ‘accentuate ruptures or continuities, dependent on the chosen axis.’ According to Sauvagnargues, method is relative to a chosen perspective and must remain mobile. She insists on Deleuze’s methodological empiricism and its requirement for heterogeneity as it unfolds. Method should be a perspectival cartography of concepts in a process of becoming: a perspective is adopted in order to allow an experimental mapping of a problem and of its concepts as emergent. We can take this as a model for other methods, after Deleuze, where pragmatic method observes cuts and continuities in its relation to a chosen sphere by experimenting on new directions and transformations. I cannot do full justice to Sauvagnargues’s acute study in these limited notes, but perhaps the most important practical guidance to retain is her debt to detailed processes of ‘constitutive thresholds’, ‘internal ramifications’, ‘external rhizomatic developments’, connective ‘assemblages’ and a variable body of references. Anne Sauvagnargues, Deleuze et l’art, Paris: PUF, 2005, pp 255-9. See also, Sauvagnargues practical study of Deleuze’s method in his reading of Proust in her Deleuze: l’empirisme transcendental, Paris: PUF, 2009, pp 61-7.

40 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, What is Philosophy?, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p 202 [I have modified translations of this text, since the current translation is, in my view, somewhat inaccurate in some of its phrasing].
order is a good thing in its own right. Neither of these options is the case. For Deleuze and Guattari, order is a necessity but in a negative sense: it keeps from us from chaos but at a cost to be minimised. Here, then, is a first principle for method after Deleuze and Guattari: we require method, but it should be minimised.41

15. Deleuze and Guattari then go on to explain why we need a minimum of order. The reason is practical, about the life of thought, rather than theoretical and about order itself. Without order, thought falls away and this fall is painful. Chaos draws thought into suffering and threatens its existence: ‘anguishing’, ‘gnawed at’, ‘thrown about’. We’ll see later how chaos should not be seen as simply negative, but life depends on a minimum of order, because it always risks losing its consistency in an agonizing collapse. This point is very important for understanding Deleuze and Guattari’s pragmatism for two reasons. First, there is negativity to disorder. Second, this negativity is about the threat of a painful breakdown of necessary consistency. We can therefore add a further principle for method. Method protects life in its individual reliance on consistency.

16. If we need method to protect us from chaos, why would we not want as much protection as we can get? Why wouldn’t we want to maximise order? If there’s a wolf pack out there, why wouldn’t we build the highest walls we can? The answer is at first hard to make out, but it follows from the nature of ideas. The appearance and disappearance of ideas ‘coincide’. By this Deleuze and Guattari mean ideas come out of and fall into chaos. The new in thought is a potential within chaos, determined as infinite variability against a background of complete lack of determination. There’s no question that this is a difficult idea, so I will translate it into more simple terms, with all the risks of imprecision this entails. Deleuze and Guattari suggest new changes in thought appear as a change in the intensity of ideas, itself dependent on an infinite reserve of changing

41 In the conclusion to his interpretation of What is Philosophy?, Jeffrey A. Bell gives a reading of the ‘From chaos to brain’ chapter that stresses a search for the good life, rather than the question of method covered here. While our two interpretations are close in agreeing that Deleuze and Guattari situate action between two extremes, I depart a little from Bell’s focus on the idea of ‘moderation’. Moderation would indicate a middle way, a life of compromises. Methodologically, this would encourage an idea of balance, continuity and mediation. In my view that’s not quite what they are indicating, because this would depart much too far from the need to forge new experimental methods and prepare for their destruction and replacement. It’s not necessarily a life of moderation that Deleuze and Guattari prepare us for, but a life of oscillation and constant renewal; not a life well lived, but a life lived as badly as we can bear when we are responding to the problems shaping us, a life of its survived extremes and not a life avoiding extremes as defined by others—the judgement of well and badly will always be a majority judgement and whereas balanced extremes are always individual tests. See Jeffrey A. Bell Deleuze and Guattari’s What is Philosophy?: a Critical Introduction and Guide, Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp 238-46.

42 What is Philosophy?, p 201. My reservations about the translation show through here insofar as the English loses the French use of anguish. This is an important omission because Deleuze and Guattari are alluding to the anguish (angoisse) brought about by the threat of chaos. There is a Sartrean and existentialist aspect to this that the translation misses.
intensities free of any actual limits or bearers. This infinite reserve is the positive side of chaos. It feeds into actual thought to bring the new. Yet, because it does so through intensities ‘without nature or thought’, it is also a condition for collapse. Order and method are therefore pragmatic strategies designed to maximise new intensities while minimising their inevitable collapses. This explains why order must itself be minimised, since the further we protect ourselves from the painful fall into chaos, the further we remove ourselves from the life-giving intensity and renewal afforded by new ideas.

17. The opening lines of ‘From chaos to the brain’ have hidden references to earlier work by Deleuze and Guattari. First, there are concepts taken from Spinoza. The life of thought as fear of and resistance to collapse can be traced back to his conatus: it is the essence of every living thing to struggle to increase its power, where power is defined as a capacity to affect and be affected. Opinion is the lowest form of thought, taking it furthest from its conatus, because opinionated thought turns away from understanding and from new ideas. Men of opinion are decadent fools for Spinoza because they settle for an illusion, the form of knowledge furthest from true understanding. Second, Deleuze and Guattari are referring to processes of order taken from Hume. Ideas acquire order through their association according to resemblance, contiguity and causality. This allows them to attain the minimum of consistency to keep them open to the new yet away from chaos. Third, from Kant, but also from Guattari’s political studies, objects and sensations are the condition for the emergence of opinion, since objective consistency and its reproduction in the senses secure and bolster opinion as common sense and common order. We can suggest another principle at this point. Opinion and common sense draw method away from its minimal function and away from the intensity of life.

18. Throughout What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari have been defining and studying art, science and philosophy as practices opposed to common sense and opinion. They are the thought of the new and of new intensity, but they must also therefore be creativity at its most dangerous, in coming as close as they can to chaos and to the collapse of thought. Against the overprotection of religious dogma, into which all methods can fall, creative art, science and philosophy take risks: ‘The philosopher, the scientist, the artist seem to have returned from the land of the dead.’

19. The nature of the risk is the fall into chaos and disorder, which must themselves be understood as types of death, though not necessarily of a whole organism or system, but of (at least) a line of thought or a potential. This provides us with another qualification around methods. It can seem extreme, but it is important in view of the role of methods in diagnosis and action. *The limit where methods are brought in and operate minimally is death.* This is a deep insight by Deleuze and Guattari, since it explains the importance of method and the temptation to maximise it, in the sense of seeking as much protection from death as possible.

20. Having positioned method and order in relation to death, Deleuze and Guattari once again address the question of a possible maximisation of order. They do this through very quick but important characterisations of the methods of art, science and philosophy in relation to chaos. I will return to this in the next paragraph, but it is helpful to work backwards from an important explanatory statement: ‘One could say that the struggle against chaos is not without affinity with the enemy, because another struggle develops and takes on greater importance, against opinion, that itself nonetheless claims to protect us from chaos itself.’ The problem of method takes place between two opponents – chaos and opinion. Both of these involve the death of living intensity; to fall into chaos, or to be entombed in dogmatic opinion. Deleuze and Guattari take sides in these conflicts, but only as a matter of degree (‘takes on greater importance’). We should always try to go as close as we can to chaos and as far away as we can from opinion. Or, stated as a principle of method: *method should be minimised in relation to its attraction to opinion and the loss of intensity.*

21. We can learn about the practice of method from the way art, science and philosophy draw new thought from chaos. Philosophy draws conceptual ‘variations’ from chaos. This means that, in creating a concept, the philosopher sets off chains of changes in intensity through everything. The variation is a re-evaluation of all values; for example, in the way the creation of the concept of modern subject changes the world, after Descartes’s *cogito*. There are two concurrent processes at work in this creation. On the one hand, it brings in new intensities and transforms a world by setting it in motion again: a reinvigoration of life. On the other hand, the new concept and new world has a tendency to slow down and fall into opinion: no longer the appearance of new ways of living, but the deification of one way of living for all times. The former is a life force; the latter represses it. The same is true for science which draws variables from chaos by abstracting them from others and setting them into specific functions, with a tendency to create a limited world based on that function, then falsely extended to all worlds. Art

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46 Ibid, p. 203.
draws varieties from chaos; that is, new sensibilities or new ways of feeling. Referring back to their earlier work on Turner, Deleuze and Guattari explain how art is always on the edge of catastrophe, on the edge of disintegrating into an indistinct background or chaos. The opposing danger for art lies in the institution of a sensibility against all others, such that art fails to change and move us, becoming instead an instrument of control through aesthetic opinion.

22. We shouldn’t take specific methods from these brief remarks on art, science and philosophy, because they are about the particular challenge of how to model these modes of thought as different from one another in relation to chaos. We can, however, learn further principles for any method in relation to the threat of chaos: methods should be designed to show both the emergence of intensity from chaos and its fall into opinion for any given problem. It is worth commenting on how this principle is rarely touched on outside Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. They are introducing an important novel approach to method here. Usually, a method presents an order and a manner, like a repeatable instruction where both chaos and rigidity are hidden as problems of method; they are kept outside as unspoken threats. Against the idea of method as a clear and bare plan, Deleuze and Guattari teach that we should also understand method as having to reveal its own risks. We should construct methods such that the twin threats of opinion and chaos are expressed within methods in terms of structure and vocabulary. This means being explicit about what a method is guarding against, not as only as a mere threat but also as a resource. We should also be explicit about how the very act of guarding can cause even greater damage. Every method must show the twin risks of chaotic collapse and opinionated dogmatism at every stage of its expression and construction. In our modern litigious societies, we already follow this principle in small ways when our methods explicitly cover themselves against failure; for instance, when we have backup plans or when we incorporate awareness of possible injuries in the method itself (in patient waver forms, in medical practice, or the small print of legal contracts). However, it is very rare for a method to incorporate awareness of its own tendency to dangerous dogmatism.

23. Why should we view opinion and common sense as death? Even if we accept the idea that methods can lead to a low intensity and boring life, one with few differences and little novelty, isn’t that one of the things we seek from methods, a little protection?

from suffering and pain? A large proportion of ‘From chaos to the brain’ is dedicated to responding to this objection in the context of art, science and philosophy. For art, opinion and convention are the death of art, because art is always about the creation of new sensibility in relation to matter. Once blocks of feelings and matter become mere clichés, there is no art, only standard communication. To escape from this chocolate box effect, the artist must create a new sensation, something that hasn’t been felt this way before with this material event. Art starts with cliché, in the sense that any working medium and any environment is full of clichés. A cliché is an association of ageing ideas, de-intensified feelings and objectified materials. Art must then fight against them by bringing in as much destruction as it can into creative practice. We could interpret this as a model for method in an art school: destroy as many conventions and clichés as you can through new creations, always taking the school to the very edge of survival.

24. If we can see the death in art when it is taken over by common sense, cliché and convention, it is much harder to do so for science. Deleuze and Guattari are well-aware of this and seek to explain the destructive inner tendencies of science through the way it operates against chaos by deploying abstractions, functions and statistics to achieve an agreed scientific opinion. All the better for that agreement we might say, given the increased knowledge of our bodies, minds, of nature and the world that scientific opinion has given us, against the chaos of disease, disaster and tragedy. This would be to miss two ways in which science remains close to chaos. First, in terms of its own functions and variables, science tries to get as close to chaos as it can, seeking greater precision at the cost of greater indeterminacy, finding divergences and differences beneath the more brute accounts given by broad opinion. It is true that science moves towards equilibria, but also moves away from them in order to understand why they are insufficient or inaccurate. Settled scientific opinion is a kind of death of science, as the search for ever better understanding. Scientific advancement is then also a struggle against its fall into dogmatic resistance to new discoveries. Second, in terms of a wider connection between scientific opinion and general opinion, science fights against itself and for chaos because ‘man’s misfortune comes from opinion’. This misfortune takes a specific form in relation to science: determinist predictions and probabilistic evaluation. By this, Deleuze and Guattari are referring to those moments where science moves away from its uncertain and undetermined origins, requiring abstraction and

48 This reaction to the cliché in art can be traced back to Deleuze’s work on Francis Bacon: ‘The entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés, which the painter will have to break with.’ Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sensation, trans. D. W. Smith, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p 31. There is a broader lesson here for all disciplinary methods, since they too are at risk from the cliché which will take on forms specific to each discipline.

functions. When this happens, through an alliance with other forms of opinion, the world is approached as if it could not be other than as shown according to limited variables and set functions. This leads to the dogmatic ideas of certainty in predictions and accuracy in probabilities, both of which become sources of misfortune when the predictions and probabilities prove to be wrong. Those shameful moments where science has been co-opted by dominant political opinion around race and sexuality are examples of this misfortune.

25. Deleuze and Guattari’s analyses of science in its relation to chaos and opinion form the basis for understanding method and order as specifically scientific. This is important for reflection on contemporary methods, given the dominance of scientific methods and scientific knowledge in the construction of methods for other areas and problems. Deleuze and Guattari teach us that we should have a principle for the adoption of scientific practices and understanding within method to guard against its own negative tendencies. The principle I would suggest is this: when borrowing methods and knowledge from science, every construction of a method should build in ways of overcoming the limits imposed by scientific abstraction and ways of questioning and working against the elevation of scientific knowledge into dogma.

26. There are two sources readily available for this questioning of science. They explain why Deleuze and Guattari speak of three difference types of thought: art, science and philosophy. The fall into restriction and dogma of science can be countered by methods incorporating artistic and philosophical creativity. Any method, but above all those dominated by science, should include the creation of artistic sensations and philosophical concepts alongside and counter to its scientific aspects. We only play lip service to this principle in contemporary practices, such that art becomes an illustration for science and philosophy a kind of conceptual hygiene for scientific concepts. If we take Deleuze and Guattari seriously, these subservient roles must be changed. Instead, art and philosophy must challenge science within any given method. The former can point to sensations and modes of life that have been overlooked or crushed. The latter provides critical and alternative concepts. The position of science within method should always be made uncomfortable. In the same way that science can destabilise and inspire art and philosophy.

50 This connection between major and minor science, and royal science can be traced back to A Thousand Plateaus: ‘Major science has a perpetual need for the inspiration of the minor, but the minor would be nothing if it did not confront and conform to the highest scientific requirements.’ p 486.
DELEUZE, SIMONDON AND THE ‘PROBLEM’ OF PSYCHOLOGICAL LIFE

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Abstract

This paper draws on the concept of affect in the writings of Deleuze (via Spinoza), and Simondon, to develop an ontogenetic version of psychology. The value of this approach is its focus on becoming rather than form, which makes it well placed to navigate the specific conditions of the genesis of human activity in contemporary socio-technical worlds. Psychology can then be thought of as emerging through processes of movement and transformation that simultaneously grow “from the inside and the outside” (Deleuze, 2001: 45). A psychology of this kind can potentially open up to the ideas of distributed agency that have emerged from critical theory in recent years (e.g. Galloway & Thacker, 2007). For example, the view that human capacities (e.g. cognition) are increasingly operating as much through technology as human brains, presenting new ontological questions (Hayles, 2012). Often, the focus has been on cognition and digital media, although that is changing now towards greater critical theory regarding digital media and emotion (Sampson, 2017). In this paper I seek to address these questions through the work of Gilbert Simondon, who offers a concept of affectivity that helps to theoretically isolate the genesis of individual activity without becoming trapped by the idea of a finished product. This speaks to the role of emotion and affect in contemporary socio-technical worlds, as core processes through which psychological experience manifests.

Keywords: Simondon, Deleuze, emotion, digital, affective milieu, individuation

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Introduction

There have been multiple attempts to define a ‘relational’ approach to psychology since the emergence of critical psychology. While diverse in approach, there has been a shared concern to avoid reductionism and essentialism, and to emphasise the ‘social’ shaping of psychological experience (see Teo, 2014 for a comprehensive overview). Approaches have often coalesced around certain concepts, such as discourse, embodiment and more recently, affect; as well as specific theorists (e.g. Foucault). The challenge has always been to present a coherent relational approach that challenges the thinking of much mainstream cognitive theory, while avoiding essentialism or reductionism (e.g. through an over reliance on discourse). Indeed, we have often been compelled to start ‘in the middle’ (Brown and Stenner, 2009), wherever the middle may be. This emergence in critical psychology is both a contribution to, and reflection of, a wider move of non-essentialist thinking across the social sciences (and beyond). Although diverse in approach, a shared concern has featured to view the world as constantly ‘in-making’ in and through multiple relations and connections. This has led to the current popularity of concepts such as assemblage (e.g. Sampson, 2017) and meshwork (Ingold, 2015). Viewing any one element as dominant or primary has been viewed as a mistake of a lot of mainstream positivist theory, although examples of less reductionist theory in so-called mainstream thinking have existed for some time. For instance, Ulrich Neisser’s early cognitive psychology, in which he states “[M]any cognitive phenomena are incomprehensible unless one takes some account of what the subject is trying to do” (1967: 5); an early steer towards a ‘situated cognition’. There is also Andy Clark’s and David Chalmers’ (1998) ‘extended mind’ thesis in philosophy, as well as the rise of epigenetics (Blackman, 2016). Nonetheless, a movement towards relationality has emerged, premised on the idea that psychological categories (e.g. emotion, memory) do not pertain to individual entities but rather that such experiences only exist within relations to others (humans and non-humans) (Despret, 2004).

Relational approaches therefore require a shift in the psychological unit of analysis, through expanding beyond the traditional ‘internal’ locations of mind and brain to wider ecological contexts in which individual and social life emerge and unfold. A distinction between essentialism and constructionism has often featured as a jumping off point for critical psychological approaches, with the latter primarily focusing on the role of discourse as constituting the social (Blackman, 2008). Relationality has been seen as a way to move beyond essentialist theories of the psychological, with new theories of embodiment, sensation, memory, space and affect emerging (Teo, 2014). Hence,
multiple theories of relationality have come to populate critical psychology (Tucker, 2006).

In this article, I develop a theory of the psychological subject informed by a particular conceptualisation of affect, drawing upon Spinoza, Deleuze and Simondon. Deleuze has featured extensively in social and cultural theory in the previous 20 years, although not so much in psychology (Nichterlein & Morss, 2017 being a valuable corrective). Gilbert Simondon has been far less used, although that is starting to change (Tucker, 2013; Tucker & Goodings, 2014). I will argue that potentially valuable lessons can be learnt through a Spinoza-Deleuze-Simondon journey, in relation to psychology, with specific reference to the socio-technical challenges of contemporary life. Studies of affect are not a new area, with a plethora of new theoretical offerings emerging in recent times. Indeed, Seigworth & Gregg name a “by no means fully comprehensive” (2010: 8) eight distinct strands of affect theory in the social sciences and cultural studies. I will focus on the area of digitality and emotion because of the increasing number of voices in academia, industry and beyond that claim that emotions and affect are becoming more accessible to (and potentially manipulated by) digital technologies, and as such, are deemed to be an example of the ways that human life is under threat from machines (McStay, 2016). I will not claim a new singular identity for affect; a new improved version. My aim is, following Deleuze, to use the concept to start a journey, focused on its becoming than being. Despite uses of affect being diffuse and diverse (Blackman, 2012; Hemmings, 2005), I argue it does provide a direction to theoretical attempts to render psychological life in contemporary socio-technical worlds sensible.

Thinking affect with Deleuze and Spinoza

Deleuze’s approach to affect is heavily indebted to Spinoza. Indeed, such was Spinoza’s influence on Deleuze that the latter wrote two books on Spinoza’s philosophy (which broke his habit of single monographs on key influences, e.g. Bergson, Hume). It was Spinoza’s monism that was the initial draw, a non-hylomorphic approach of all life existing as a single substance, from which an infinite number of attributes could emerge. This means that no two ‘things’ can be ontologically distinguished according to species or form. The all-encompassing substance Spinoza thought of as God or Nature. With his monist philosophy human beings are actualised attributes from infinite possible attributes. Spinoza’s affect is immediately relational, as it renders a body incomprehensible without reference to another body. What a body does is implicitly related to the connection(s) it has with other bodies. Spinoza envisaged a parallelism between bodies and ideas. This was part of his rebuttal of the privilege Cartesianism gives to the ‘rational’ cogito. For Spinoza, ideas are not cognitive representations of body states, making cognition somehow superior due to it being the realm of knowledge
about the body. Instead, neither bodies nor ideas are considered as reducible to each other. They operate as parallel processes in which ideas emerge as part of a wider set of ordering relations (Brown and Stenner, 2009), with affect registering ideas as patterns of embodied movement and rest (Smith and Tucker, 2015).

Deleuze’s definition of bodies according to degrees of longitude and latitude comes from Spinoza’s invitation to consider bodies (and ideas) in divergent horizontal and vertical directions. The former conveys the relation of bodies and ideas which unite through commonality across the two attributes, and the latter as expressions of the totality of God/Nature as unifying substance (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999). There are two vectors through which the body-idea parallelism operates, one in relation to the wider system of substance, and an ‘internal’ one between body and idea as attributes. The dual vector model operates through relations that are ‘alive’, in terms of existing only as movements that result in modifications of bodies and ideas. It is affect that registers modifications, and can then in turn speak to the formation of individual emotional experience. Affects are broadly characterised according to a continuum between relational modifications that emerge as joyful, and those that produce sadness (Deleuze, 1992). This is where the common take on Spinoza’s affect as indicating either an increase or decrease in a body’s capacity to act (with the former as joyful, and the latter as sad). This is quite a crude characterisation, but can be made more sophisticated through focus on commonly experienced emotions, which Brown and Stenner (2009) demonstrate very well. An example would be the expression of anxiety in relation to an upcoming hospital appointment in which major surgery as a possible outcome hinges on the results of a series of tests. If the test results are positive, surgery can be avoided, and the body will not suffer a diminution of capacity. If results are negative, surgery and a loss of power will occur. The experience of emotion felt by the patient is relational, it is the consequence of the result of the test. Moreover, it is also temporal. If the next time a test is due it demonstrates that surgery has been successful, the emotional response to the test and the consultation shifts from negative to positive.

Spinoza’s analysis of affect speaks valuably to a relational non-bifurcated approach. This is based on a logic that affect operates through a parallel process of ideas and bodies, as part of a broader network, or assemblage of activity. This encourages an extended view of psychology, which does not limit the location of psychological processes to interiority. Extended versions of psychology have become popular in relation to the increased presence of technology in modern life. For instance, the notion of distributed (or situated) cognition claims an extension of psychological processes beyond the individual (brain) to the technical operation of computers, which are subsequently imbued with agency in relation to psychological elements such as thinking, decision making and memory. Hutchins’ (1995) ‘situated cognition’ is a good example of this, which he uses to develop a computational model of ship navigation, where the ‘thinking’
operates through a system composed of individual navigators and an array of navigational equipment:

If we ascribe to individual minds in isolation the properties of systems that are actually composed of individuals manipulating systems of cultural artefacts, then we have attributed to individual minds a process that they do not necessarily have, and we have failed to ask about the processes they actually must have in order to manipulate the artefacts. This sort of attribution is a serious but frequently committed error. (Hutchins, 1995: 173)

Hutchins’s point is not to claim that all thinking occurs ‘within’ the individual, but rather to understand how thinking (as computation) is distributed across individuals and technologies. Distributed cognition has gained traction because it is encapsulated within the idea that as technologies become more sophisticated, they develop agency in relation to psychological functions and processes. It also helps that it connects with the computational model that has dominated cognitive psychology since the second half of the 20th century.

Deleuze’s concept of affect offers an alternative relational approach as it does not draw on a computational approach to psychology (Brown & Stenner, 2001; Tucker, 2012). Instead, it places psychological experience on a continuum, extending from the brain, to the body, to other bodies (human and non-human). Deleuze’s affect stimulates us to consider any part of this continuum to be potentially affective and therefore register as psychological. Moreover, Deleuze (with Guattari) defines the body as “[N]othing but affects and local movement” (1987: 287). Thinking a body in a given situation requires analysing the “sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree or potential (latitude)” (ibid). Deleuze tends to think in terms of affect, rather than cognition, although an underlying relationality exists with both.

Relations are defined temporally, in terms of movement and rest, and spatially in terms of the capacities of bodies to affect others. There is an obvious value to this relational notion of affect, but it speaks directly to the ways that a body’s actions and experiences depend on the movement of power in the material contexts within which everyday life unfolds. The importance of motion in the concept of affect in Spinoza and Deleuze directs us to consider life as emerging through rhythms and speeds of movement in contemporary socio-technical worlds. As Duclos et al (2017) recently point out, digitally-mediated cultures are subject to new speeds and accelerations. The version of affect developing here is one that is inherently relational and motional. It does not though speak directly to the role of technics in society. The rise of digitality in recent years has directed considerable attention to technologies, and their relationships to humans. This
question leads us directly to the work of Simondon, who was an important influence on Deleuze, and for whom, technics was a central philosophical concern.

Simondon and individuation

Simondon argues that by better understanding our relationship with the technical objects fashioned to regulate our existence in the world, we create for ourselves the possibility of a new idea of what it means to be human, on the basis of a knowledge that correlates technologies with human processes of existence. Human reality lives through technologies. (Scott, 2014: 1)

David Scott captures how prominent a role technologies play in Simondon’s thinking, and indeed Simondon was a key influence on philosophies of technology (e.g. Stiegler). Simondon’s ontogenetic approach to individuation was developed in relation to technological objects and living beings (including a specific focus on psychology). Although writing to a pre-digital world, his philosophy speaks directly to living in digitally mediated environments. If it was a viable claim that humanity ‘lives through technologies’ in pre-digital age, it is an even more prescient comment on the information saturated environments of modern life. Simondon’s focus on technical objects came from a perceived need to emphasise their role in culture, and not just as the primary view of them as passive tools for human use. Technics and culture cannot be separated for Simondon, and as such, we need to find a way to explain their interwoveness. Simondon was writing largely in an analogue age, with his examples often related to engineering (e.g. Guimbal turbine). He was focused on developing an onto-genetic approach to claim that technical objects do not exist as examples of some kind of inherent form, i.e. machines are not, in and of themselves, the originators of their functions. Instead, they emerge as a ‘solution’ to a problem. Moreover, the genesis of a technical object does not involve 'new' elements, but rather a new 'coming together' of existing elements. For instance, a brick emerges from the elements of clay, mould and a kiln. All pre-existed the brick. Moreover, the 'brickness' of the brick does not emanate from the brick itself, in terms of being inherent to that object, but emerges through a process of the coming together of the clay, mould and kiln for a specific function, e.g. construction. The perceived ‘brickness’ is not necessarily permanent as the brick could in the future be broken into small pieces to form rubble.

It was in On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects that Simondon (2017) introduced his ideas regarding individuation. He was though a psychologist by training, and indeed, taught in psychology, not philosophy, as many of his philosophical contemporaries did (e.g. Deleuze). Simondon’s focus on the individuation of technical objects extended to a study of human psychology in his later work, Psychic and Collective Individuation.
same principles apply, namely that psychological life is not determined by a set of inherent properties but emerges in and through individuations that are simultaneously individual and collective. Simondon always starts 'in the middle', arguing that an ontogenetic approach is required based on the principle of individuation, in which the genesis, and ongoing life, of living beings emerges in and through a broader set of relations. Simondon sums this up as the need to place "the individual into the system of reality in which the individuation occurs" (2009: 4). When Simondon talks about the genesis of psychic and collective individuation, he is not distinguishing two forms of individuation, but rather one form that is "psychic and collective, or to put it another way, psychosocial" (Combes, 2013: 31). The emphasis is on the process of individuation, rather than individual and collective as defined entities. As Simondon notes, “[S]trictly speaking, we cannot speak of the individual, but only of individuation; we must get back to the activity, to genesis, rather than trying to grasp the already given being in order to discover the criteria by which we can know whether or not it is an individual. The individual is not a being but an act” (cited in Barthelemy, 2015: 26). Psychic and collective individuation emerges through the "division of being" into phases (Simondon, 2009: 6). A distinction is made between becoming and being, with psychic and collective individuation existing as phases of becoming, and the realm of preindividuation as non-phased being. It is the phasing of life that catalyses processes of individuation (which is what makes Simondon’s a relational and processual philosophy). This process of phasing occurs unequivocally through environment-body relations that Simondon frames as associated milieus.

Individuation and associated milieus

The unit of analysis in Simondon's psycho-social approach becomes the milieu, which names the localised environmental context through which individuation takes place.51 The milieu is not just seen as the wider system of affordance (as per Eleanor Gibson’s (1969) and James Gibson’s (1979) ecological psychology), but rather as a permanent companion to the living being. The milieu is a way to condition a future of possible change and transformation. Similarities exist with Anderson’s (2009) conceptualisation of affective atmospheres as impersonal aspects of collective situations, which also manage to feel intensely personal. The notion of milieu develops this through requiring specific attention to individual-environment relations, and what new milieus (or potential/s for affective experience) are made possible. Milieus direct us towards thinking about experience in the making, as in-formed rather than pre-formed.

51 The concept of milieu can be traced back to Jacob von Uexküll’s (2010) thinking regarding the relation/s between animals and environment – see Brown (this volume) for a discussion of von Uexküll and critical psychology.
Simondon's concept of associated milieu can localise the notion of atmospheres in such a way that directs attention to the specificity of individuation. It also resonates with the concept of assemblage, which has featured heavily in the social sciences and cultural studies (DeLanda, 2006; Sampson, 2017). Although broad in use, assemblage theory has been recruited to analyse the ways that entities operate as a set of elements, whose relations do not operate in terms of an internal logic. The entity as a whole does not retain the identifying structure of its composite elements (DeLanda, 2006). Indeed, assemblages have been framed as the coming together of heterogeneous elements to form entities ranging from biological organisms to socio-political orders (Sampson, 2017). The concept of assemblage has often been associated with Deleuze & Guattari, and while they did discuss a concept of assemblage, its use across the social sciences and cultural theory cannot be reduced entirely to their reading. Indeed, Deleuze & Guattari's mentions of assemblage were quite small in number, even if it is said to relate to other parts of his conceptual work, e.g. content and expression, deterritorialisation (DeLanda, 2006). The focus on heterogeneity in the form of indeterminacy and spatial and temporal contingency links to the principles underpinning the associated milieu, despite assemblage theory being criticised for inadequately conceptualising motion (Ingold, 2015). Simondon’s attention was directed to the context in and through which individuation emerged (whether in relation to technical or psychic objects) and was more localised than many theories of assemblage. Indeed, theories of assemblage do not share the focus on individuation.

Associated milieus are taken as always-already motional, even if the movement relates to an individual’s ongoing interaction with its milieu, meaning that a sense of stability in the expression of individuation is possible (Clough, 2010). For instance, the individuation of a brick through the 'coming together' of unformed clay and a brick mould. For Simondon, milieus should not be thought of according to a subject and object distinction, with material objects seen as inert tools for active subjects. Instead milieus can facilitate a conceptual ground for affect to be framed as the relational force through which individual experience unfolds. Whilst Anderson’s notion of atmosphere is non-individualistic, Simondon’s concept of milieu is associated with a ‘living being’, and is at once singular, technological and geographical. Simondon offers the associated milieu as a conceptualisation of the development of individual psychological beings as both individual and collective, without either being seen as ontologically distinct. The individuation of beings is core to their endurance, which Simondon states “is possible because of the recurrence of causality in the environment which the technical being creates around itself, an environment which it influences and by which it is influenced. This environment, which is at the same time natural and technical, can be called the associated milieu” (Simondon, 2017: 49). The milieu is not an embryonic stage of becoming, which recedes once individuation takes place, but is continually present, moving in and through processes of individuation. The point Simondon is making is that
individuals do not exist outside of the milieu; the "individual never exists alone, it is only ever relative to the milieu associated with its existing" (Scott, 2014: 7).

Individuals gain their internal consistency through the associated milieu, which is what differentiates milieu from atmosphere, as the former is focused on how individual living beings achieve an ‘internal consistency’ (what psychologists usually call an ‘identity’). This does not occur due to a form of internal logic (e.g. specific personality trait), but rather through processes of individuation that constitute the milieu. Simondon captures this when discussing technical objects, although the same principle applies to psychic objects, “[T]he only thing that counts is the exchange of energy and information... between the technical object and its milieu” (2017: 51). Simondon’s non-hylomorphic approach provides the impetus for him to recalibrate the concept of information, away from the classic Shannon and Weaver sign-signal model, towards a more agentic understanding in which “there is no datum or measure of information per se, only processes of information that resolve the disparate into systems of relationality and the individuals they comprise” (Toscano, 2006: 145). Information is not the passing of 'data' between established individuals but names the process of matter taking form in creative processes of movement of organism and milieu. Information is the process of materialisation that manifests as the ongoing interactions between individual and milieu (Clough, 2010).

Information does not pertain to the internal elements of an individuating form, because the form is not self-organising through the informational processes of its constituent parts. Individuation is not autopoietic in this sense. This is because its metastable identity does not emerge through processes that are self-originating. There are similarities between individuation and autopoiesis, but the former is not taken to be an entity whose material existence as a distinct object in space and time emerges through the dynamics of the ‘internal’ elements through which it manifests. Individuation does not refer to a system per se, but rather to an un-bounded manifold of possible interactions. Not all are ‘present’ in the individual-milieu, awaiting form, but are emergent possibilities for future psychic and collective individuation. This is why the question of a stable identity defining an individual is so hard for Simondon to accept. If beings are always partially collective, then it is impossible for the future being of an individual to be reduced to its own being alone. It cannot remain stable in perpetuity, because individuation is always ‘open’ to new phases of becoming, which means individual beings can only be metastable. Moreover, as we will see the concept of affectivity provides a psychological element to the processes of individuation and metastability, which does not commonly feature in other relational concepts such as autopoiesis and assemblage.

Simondon’s focus on phases of being and metastability means psychological subjects are always-already emerging with an associated milieu. Neither are static, but subject to
reconfiguration and recreation. Indeed, this is a necessity for the process philosophical approach Simondon advocates. Psychological analysis then has to always incorporate the milieu, and in doing so, is fundamentally relational. To understand psychological life, one has to analyse the ‘living being in context’. It is the relationship between the living being and associated milieu that is affective, for Simondon. Affectivity names the process of feeling more than one, because an individual’s being cannot be resolved entirely in the realm of interiority. It needs the milieu, and as such, comes to recognise that its perceived psychological independence does not emanate from it being an isolated being, but rather as connected and related to the world outside the borders of the body. As such, “the living being grows from both the inside and the outside, the entire content of its inner space is in ‘topological’ contact with the contents of exterior space” (Deleuze, 2001: 47). The subject-milieu relationship does not rule out influence from broader socio-political forces (e.g. capital, race, gender, sexuality). Indeed, all are possible constituents of present and future ‘subjects’. What the subject-milieu does is to render such forces applicable at the local level where psychological subjects emerge.

Simondon’s theory of individuation links directly to Spinoza and Deleuze’s concepts of affect, in relation to the notion of the individual being an unfinished product of relational processes involving ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ elements. Individuation is always an active process of ‘bringing together’ two (or more) disparate elements. There is only difference for Simondon, no unity of identity. This means that a relation always exists between an individual attribute and the environment. Individuation is the process of continually making life from existing environment-element individuations. All we can do is analyse lines of individuation, aware that our interaction with them (as theorists and/or empiricists) will change them. This was highly influential for Deleuze, particularly his theory of difference in Difference and Repetition. Where Deleuze differs is in his use of difference and repetition to articulate transcendental empiricism (Sauvagnargues, 2012), in which the concept of individuation is (re)framed through the notions of actuality and virtuality. The former being the emerging of an empirical object at a given time and the latter a virtual realm of potentiality. Simondon remains focused on the specificity of psychic and collective individuation, and the role of affectivity and emotivity therein.

**Affectivity and emotion**

The problem presented by Simondon’s philosophy of individuation is that it goes against common sense practice of perceiving oneself a discrete subject. This substantialist position takes an intrasubjective approach to manage psychological concerns, namely looking ‘inside’ for solutions to psychological problems. For Simondon, this is misguided, because it fails to address the psychosocial reality of being. A focus on the individual as
the defined unit of analysis does not recognise the reality that individuals do not exist outside of milieus. As Combes notes, "[A]ffective life thus shows us that we are not only individuals, that our being is not reducible to our individuated being" (2013: 31). Individual beings are ‘open’, in that individuation is always individual-milieu. To focus on the individual is a misplaced locationism, the analytic lens has to be widened to include the individuating ground of the milieu. Elizabeth Wilson’s (2010) analysis of the story of Deep Blue and the Chess Master Garry Kasparov is a useful example here:

The Deep Blue computer gained worldwide notoriety when it defeated Kasparov. The argument made at the time was that Deep Blue developed greater intellectual capacities than Kasparov, namely that it could think better. Wilson’s claim though that the real reason Kasparov lost to Deep Mind was affective, because when he is at his most effective, he recruits his opponents into an affective intensity....The pertinent issue is not the emotion in Kasparov (Is he angry? Is he afraid?), as if he operates as an affective monad (as isolated talent); rather it is the emotional relationality between Kasparov and his opponent that governs (p. 16)

Wilson directs us to consider the role of emotion in the space occupied by Kasparov and Deep Blue. The emotional character of the game is changed when Kasparov is faced with Deep Blue, rather than a human opponent. The “affective intensity” of the human vs human relation is reconfigured in the human vs machine scenario. What Wilson’s analysis does is to shift the analytic starting point from the idea of Kasparov and the machine as individuals to the game emerging from a context of emotional activity, of which Kasparov and Deep Blue are just two elements. It was not just the case that Kasparov was “emotionally underwhelmed” in terms of losing his emotional power when faced with a machine opponent, but that engaging with Deep Blue constituted a new phase of being with a different affective, and therefore, emotional potential. Kasparov is a key part of this but is not the only agent. When facing Deep Blue, the “affective circuitry” is changed. As Wilson notes, the question is not whether machine beating person is a line in the sand of technological advancement. What’s really at work is affective transformation, which changes the subject-milieu relationship. This change will be felt at both levels, it is not just the case the Kasparov is changed (i.e. weakened) by it, but the possibilities for individuation alter as a consequence of entering a new phase of being. Analysing at this level is more informative than viewing the event as a battle between competing individual information processors.

The experience of individuation though is not straightforward, with Simondon framing the human experience of individuation as emerging through affectivity and emotivity. The influence on affectivity comes from Spinoza, in terms of Simondon’s "interest in the details of how specific technical bodies have the power to affect and be affected" (Combes, 2013: 101). Simondon’s affectivity is therefore central to the emergence of
individual psychic life. He states, “affectivity and emotivity, which constitute the resonance of being in relation to itself, and which link the individuated being to the preindividual reality that is linked to it, just like the tropistic or taxonomic unity and perception link it to its environment” (2009: 9). We should not claim psychic attributes as substances though, affect is not to be reified. Indeed, Simondon is keen not to think of a psychic individual as such, but rather psychic problems that drive individuation (which is psychic AND collective). Do not start analysis with the idea of the 'finished' individual being in mind, but rather think only of the conditions of its emergence (genesis) and ongoing metastability. Affectivity and emotivity become the functions of psychological being rather than substances "filling it" (Combes, 2013: 27). Affectivity acts as the "relational layer constituting the center of individuality" (Combes, 2013: 31). It is affectivity that puts “into communication that which is larger and that which is smaller than” us (Simondon, 2009: 9). Simondon considers affectivity as a problem at the centre of the human condition. Affectivity therefore holds an ontogenetic role, as it acts as the actual structuring movement of psychological life. If psychic life unfolds through individuating processes of becoming, it is affectivity that constitutes this becoming.

A distinction between technical and psychic objects emerges through delineating the role of affectivity and emotivity. Simondon uses affectivity to critique the idea of psychic reality always being intra-individual. Instead, we need to be open to the pre-individual reality through which new interactions between individual and collective emerge. This is not easy though and presents a challenge in terms of everyday life. In realising the presence of pre-individual reality, individuals can often try to ‘internally’ solve the tension between recognising oneself as a coherent psychological individual while simultaneously carrying some ‘yet to be actualised’ exterior reality. Simondon names this an emotional process of anxiety (which is active not passive). Affectivity is consequently the fundamental inter-connectedness of individual and pre-individual in the formation of psychic being, and emotivity names the process of feeling this relationship as a tension for which one seeks an ‘internal’ (and therefore inadequate) solution. Affectivity is the structuring movement of life as it conditions becoming and being, and consequently the subject. Muriel Combes captures this nicely when she writes that affectivity “arises in us as a liaison between the relation of the individual to itself and its relation to the world” (p. 31). Emotivity becomes that which "modulates psychic life, while affection is what is modulated" (Scott, 2014, 71). A conceptual multi-layering is at work in understanding psychological being. Emotion provides some sense of continuity to psychic being, albeit in a way that requires being in constant contact with the affective realm of preindividuation.

Thus, affectivity “shows us that we are not only individuals, that our being is not reducible to our individuated being.” (Combes, 2013, p31). It is here that the third part of Simondon’s individuation triptych emerges, namely transindividuation, which
explains the "systematic unity of the interior (psychic) individuation and the exterior (collective) individuation (2009: 8). Transindividuation designates a form of individuated being which is neither a manifestation of intra-individuality nor collective life, but rather part of a wider system of preindividuation, which relates to individuation and which is "capable of constituting a new problematic with its own metastability" (ibid). Transindividuality names the overarching reality of relationality upon which Simondon's philosophy of individuation is based. It defines the complexity of the operation of individuation as psychic and collective, and through emotion and affectivity. Simondon also refers to this as ‘emotive latency’, as emotion is latent until the transindividual relation takes hold through processes that are always-already collective. This means that emotion cannot be entirely reduced to the level of the individual, however personal it may feel, but is always the product of processes that are collective (Ellis & Tucker, 2015).

Affective milieus and psychological subjects

Where then does all this theorising leave us in relation to understanding critical psychological approaches to the psychological subject? I chose to address this in relation to the digital, given the ways data are coming to blur notions of individuality and collectivity, which are core to Simondon’s philosophy. We can acknowledge that digital media are present in many of the environments through which everyday life unfolds, and indeed, would potentially like to play an even larger role (e.g. current push to have digital voice assistants in the home - Amazon’s Echo). Critics suggest this creates a pressure on psychological experience due to it being more difficult to avoid the monitoring, capture and storage of individual activity through digital technologies, e.g. tracking internet searches, capture of social media activity etc. (Harper et al, 2013). Indeed, new form of surveillance of emotion (emotoveillance) has been coined (McStay, 2016). Critiques are largely based on the idea that digital media collect vast amounts of personal information, which provide considerable insight regarding people’s thoughts and feelings. This information generates bulging databases of big technology companies, which can then be used ‘against’ us in terms of tailored advertising, mass surveillance, as well as more localised forms of voyeurism through social media (Ball, 2014). While these critiques clearly speak to elements of life in the digital age, they are premised on a substantialist philosophy that renders pre-formed individuals as the originators of information. Simondon’s philosophy relies on a more powerful idea of information, that frames it as "the condition of actualization” (2017: 155). Information is the agent of individuation through in-forming phases of being into metastable states. In this sense, information is an active element in the process of individuation, rather than a conduit for the transmission of internal thoughts and feelings from a discrete individual to a digital database.
These developments fit into wider claims that the digital is increasingly part of what makes us human (Horst & Miller, 2016). Often this development is seen as a threat, as if digital technologies are capable of eroding human values, of somehow taking control of human capacities, of shaping what we are and what we do (Stiegler, 2016). In a sense though, the underlying theory of psychology as ontogenetic does not change with regard to living in a digital age. We have always been collective, and digitality does not change this. My argument in this paper has been to frame a psychology of affect that is relational, motional and collective, drawn from Simondon, which speaks directly to critical psychological concerns to deliver theories of relationality that offer new understandings for psychology. Simondon’s theory of individuation is valuable because it conceptualises psyche and collective as always-already intertwined, and in doing so, widens the unit of analysis to consider the conditions in and through which individual and collective life unfold. In relation to living in increasingly digital environments, a focus on individuation encourages awareness of how we are shaped by phases of metastable being, and ever subject to individuation by future collectives. Addressing increased digitisation in this way can help to provide a more nuanced understanding of the reality of the multiple relations individuals have with digital technologies. Perhaps by attending closely to these new individuations, we can ensure that concerns about increased digitisation do not become frothy, but rather remain grounded in everyday individuating lives. Indeed, emotion helps here as it becomes a way of thinking the "collective at molecular level" (Combes, 2013: 52).

The idea of the psychological subject as emerging and operating through affective milieus at the threshold of interiority and exteriority encourages us to develop a more expansive approach to the study of the kinds of psychological subject made possible in contemporary digitally mediated worlds. For instance, the increased focus on areas such as affective computer and artificial intelligence rely on individualistic notions of emotion, constituting them as individual states that can be identified and potentially manipulated by machines. So long as they continue to do so, they will fall short in their attempts to capture and predict emotional life. This critique exists in addition to those that claim that as digital technologies cannot feel emotion, it will always remain out of grasp, however encroaching on everyday life digital media become. My argument is that the individualistic approach does not enable an analysis of how we come to feel with technologies. An approach informed by Simondon’s psychology offers a way by which to potentially bridge existing positions, which become somewhat polarized between the individual ecologies of users of digital media, and the collective machines of digitisation, which are said to constitute the digital ‘side’ of contemporary life through data. We are individual beings, but we also carry something of the collective with us.

Digital media are very good at exploiting the dual-aspect (individual AND collective) concept of the subject, e.g. the aggregation of individual data into ‘big data’, which is then used to feedback into individual’s digital activity, such as tailored advertising.
Concerns about increased digitization often rely on notions of bounded ‘data individuals’ whose privacy is under threat when data shared is deemed to remain the property of the individual it originated from. I take from Simondon a notion of the subject as a structuring movement of an ongoing point of liaison between interiority and exteriority. Exteriority and interiority do not relate to pre-existing domains of activity, but are series of intensities and sensations, which are themselves in movement. As such we do not experience objects, but rather movements. As David Scott notes, “our sensible reality is tropistic” (2014: 69). Affectivity defines this process, the connecting with the external world and rendering parts of it emotionally sensible. To return to Wilson’s example of Kasparov and Deep Blue, the problem Kasparov faced was how to process, and work with, the affective implications of playing against a machine opponent, not just to try to think better. The concepts of affectivity, milieu and individuation expand the unit of analysis to include the localised environment, and for this to be seen as affectively charged. This does not mean that affect is discharged in a universal manner. Rather, it is a way of designating the fundamental relationality of psychic and collective individuation. It directs analysis to the ways that subjects relate to, and become aware of, the connections with exteriority through which psychological life unfolds. Tensions that arise require relational solutions, they cannot be solved ‘internally’, as psychological subjects emerge through the structuring movement of psychic and collective individuation. To be simultaneously individual and collective, in an open and indeterminate way, is at the core of psychological life for Simondon. Coming to terms with this tension, and how it can be utilized by digital media, is core to understanding psychological life in a digital age.

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SECTION 3
ARTISTIC PROVOCATIONS
The final differentiation Deleuze makes is between philosophy and art. Art has been central in Deleuze’s solo work as well as in his collaboration with Guattari. Their oft-quoted statement that ‘[n]ot only does art not wait for humans to begin, but we may ask if art ever appears among human beings, except under artificial and belated conditions’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 320) is a strong reminder of the centrality of art not just as a human but, more importantly, a vital activity. Art, for Deleuze and Guattari is intimately connected with the establishment of territories and the consequent ‘reorganization of functions and [...] regrouping of forces’ (ibid). As Holland explains, for Deleuze and Guattari ‘art takes precedence over “instinct” – even in animals. “Can the [becoming-expressive of rhythm and territorial motifs] be called Art?” – Deleuze & Guattari ask? And their answer is yes.’ (Holland, 2013, p. 70)

Yet, the differentiation that Deleuze makes between philosophy and art is puzzling for it seems counterintuitive in relation to his main argument that life is constant change, differentiation and becoming. As Deleuze states early in the chapter dedicated to this activity, “[a]rt preserves, and it is the only thing in life that is preserved’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 163). As Bell explains, the key to understand this claim is to understand that ‘[w]hat is preserved, however, is not a continuously self-identical, unchanging entity’ (2016, p. 216) and ‘should not be confused with the qualities and properties of the objects themselves, nor with the relations these objects have to the subjects and institutions that support artists’ (p. 217). What is preserved is something that ‘became independent of its ‘model’ from the start’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 163). For Deleuze what is preserved is ‘a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects [...] a being of sensation and nothing else: it exist in itself’ (ibid). Take for example the Mona Lisa: if Deleuze was able to use the notion referred to earlier of a ‘bearded’ Mona Lisa as part of the transformative effects of a commentary, this is because our culture holds this image as a recognizable icon.... An icon, as we all know, that is not ‘bearded.’ What is recognized is not a specific person. Deleuze would say that what is recognized is a moment of life, a gust of (renaissance) wind.

In line with his considerations that ‘[s]ubject and object give a poor approximation of thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 85), the permanence that Deleuze sees in a being or bloc of sensation stands independent of the perception of the artist. This independence of the piece of art – its quality as a ‘monument’ (p. 164) – is similar to the autonomy of the philosophical concept and the scientific function. In line with earlier comments on the Deleuzian trinity, this autonomy informs the artist about what remains to be done, about what is to be done. The artist is shaped by the creation in the same way that the work of the philosopher informs the actualization of a certain philosophical persona that brings the concept to life. A similar dynamic occurs in science, where the scientific function is related not to a specific scientist but to a partial observer. The philosopher, the scientist and the artist, all work in extracting something out of their existential domains – their planes of immanence – so as to create something that
acquires a solidity of its own and that, in turn, further shapes such a thinker and their times.

What is unique for art however is that what the artist attempts to create, is ‘a bloc of sensation’ that is able to ‘stand on its own.’ Bell once again explains this point well: ‘[t]he artist’s task is not to represent a model or adequately portray a possible or actually existent life or state of affairs, or even a dramatic transition between states of affairs; to the contrary, the artist’s task, and one that is exceedingly difficult, is to extract A LIFE.’ (2016, p. 219)

The actualization of a piece of art, the extraction of a life out of the predictability of everyday lived experience, follows a very different process to the one that we described for science. Instead of the scientific actualization of an extension, an actualization that results in slowing down and freezing a moment in time, artistic production emerges as a crystallization that results from an intensification of thought. Deleuze uses Virginia Woolf’s entries in her diary to provide some clues: “Saturate every atom,” “eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity,” and everything that adheres to our current and lived perceptions, everything that nourishes the mediocre novelist; and keep only the saturation that gives us the percept. “It must include nonsense, fact, sordidity: but made transparent”; “I want to put practically everything in; yet to saturate.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 172). As Bell explains, “a text is saturated not because it accurately portrays a scene from a life as lived but rather because it saturates such a scene with the instability that comes with the point of saturation, and it is this unstable state at the edge of chaos that allows for the possibility of new affects.’ (2016, p. 220)

Instead of the materiality of everyday life, and perhaps as the most powerful antidote to the banality that surrounds human life these days, the play with materiality that Deleuze sees of value in art is one that includes an active element of fabulation. As Deleuze explains, ‘fabulation has nothing to do with memory, however exaggerated, or with fantasy. In fact, the artist, including the novelist, goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived. The artist is a seer, a becomer’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 171). The percept forces the artist to think beyond his or her own state of affairs, beyond the artist familiar little secrets, triumphs and lies so as to create something that equally escapes him or her, something that is larger and beyond that specific artist. In this sense, Deleuze asserts that “[t]he percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man’ ( p. 169). This landscape before (and after) man is ‘a sacred source’ (ibid), a source larger than the artist. As Bell indicates, this is an exceedingly difficult task for, as Deleuze says “having seen Life in the living or the Living in the lived, the novelist or painter returns breathless and with bloodshot eyes [...] What life they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illness or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source of
breath that supports them through the illness of the lived (what Nietzsche called health)” (p. 172-3). This is a health that is altogether different to the one that is currently offered in the pharmaceutical markets of Capitalism, of the markets that require from us ongoing dissatisfaction and fear vis-à-vis the lives we are living and, at the same time, offer ‘easy’ and readymade solutions; it is a health that is deeply connected to a vitalism beyond the individual yet which connects us intimately with the fluidity and complexity of everyday life and the actualization not of what is familiar but what is missing and is in the process of being born; with the creation of ‘a new earth, a new people’ (p. 101, see also Saldanha and Stark, 2016).

In exploring the implications of these profoundly powerful insights for a psychological discipline, it might be perhaps important to start by noting that psychology had a stronger appreciation of and connection with art and the artistic/aesthetic dimension in its earlier stages. Suffice to think on the importance of the stream of consciousness in William James’ work (Leary, 2018, p. 43) and its significant effect on modernist writers (e.g. Marcel Proust. See Sachs, 2014), as well as of Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (2008) as good examples of this state of affairs. The relevance of art to the discipline seem to have silently moved ‘out of scope’ as the disciplinary emphasis grew towards its ‘scientific standing’. It seems reasonable to state that art has been relegated to a status of ‘mostly irrelevant’ to the discipline, something that is more a ‘personal characteristic’ or ‘personal interest’ to some psychologists rather than something that is core to its disciplinary practice. This should not be surprising since, one could argue, due to strategic reasons psychology as a discipline has purposefully aligned itself with the sciences and distanced itself from its philosophical and humanities genesis.

Perhaps because of this situation, Deleuze’s considerations on the value of art are most intriguingly provoking for the discipline since these shake the discipline into acknowledging its responsibility, not only towards the thoughtful and critical (scientific) consideration of the current state of affairs – the possibilities of life that are present in life as is – but, perhaps more importantly, psychology has also a critical (artistic) responsibility in supporting life in its full spectrum including lives that have been silenced, lives that are missing and lives that are yet to be lived on this earth. In short, psychology has a responsibility towards the forms of life that escapes prevalent common and good sense.

In this sense, and returning to the challenges within the modern condition described in the introduction, this section will be looking at establishing creative connections with aesthetic dimension in psychology

Barbetta’s paper – *Percepts, Affects and Desire* – opens this section introducing and exploring some thoughts concerning stability and transformation in human experience. Making connections with the work of Spinoza on passions and establishing critical connections between Deleuze and James Joyce, Barbetta brings the full force of
literature to bring interesting transformations to the concept of ‘desire.’ Barbetta
interrogates the break that Deleuze and Guattari make ‘with the psychoanalytic vision
of desire as a negative instance (the missing of something, a lack to be endlessly fulfilled)
and foster the positive instance of desire as a production of the unconscious’ (Barbetta,
p. 153).

Stenner’s paper – *The Risky Truth of Fabulation: Deleuze, Bergson and Durkheim on the
Becomings of Religion and Art* – explores further the presence of productive forces at
play in psychological phenomena when he discusses Deleuze’s use of the concept of
fabulation. In line with and furthering Duff and Price-Robertson’s consideration of the
subject and ‘the people to come’, Stenner explores how a Deleuzian treatment of this
concept, expanding on Bergson’s, establishes a critical difference from similar ideas in
Durkheim’s conceptual landscape for the social sciences. This exploration then
articulates a further step in understanding the productive forces of desire and of a future
that is yet to come in the shaping of the human condition.

The last paper in this special issue is Pannell’s *Deleuze’s Critical and Clinical uses of
Literature*. As the title indicates, Pannell’s paper interrogates the long-term interest that
Deleuze had in the connections between the critical and the clinical in the context of his
search for ‘a certain ‘vitality’ that can only be found in ‘a Life’ freed from the constraints
of a static subject’ (Pannell, p. 193). Exploring the articulation of Deleuze’s insights into
clinical practice she further states, ‘Health here is not opposed to illness, but rather,
following Nietzsche is a noble ‘commitment to the practice of living,’ which entails the
search for “vitality” in the patient and the analyst.’ (ibid)

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PERCEPTS, AFFECTS AND DESIRE

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Abstract

In this essay I explore some thoughts concerning stability (percepts and affects) and modification (desire). The two works written by Deleuze and Guattari that I consider in this exploration are What is Philosophy? and the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus. I make reference to Joyce’s literature, despite Joyce being rarely mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari. The reason for using Joyce is that the Irish writer seems to have more than one affinity with the texts produced in the intersecting lives (Dosse, 2011) of the two French writers.

At the same time, Spinoza, among the philosophers who influenced Deleuze, is the benchmark of my essay for understanding the distinction between stability, concerning the work of art, and the work of the unconscious. The distinction between the philosophical mainstream (particularly Aquinas) in regard to “desire” and the importance of body in Spinoza’s philosophy is the path I follow for demonstrating that Schizoanalysis is a breaking point for philosophy, for psychology and for psychoanalysis.

In continuing the line traced out by Spinoza, and followed by Nietzsche and Bergson among others, Deleuze and Guattari break with the psychoanalytical vision of desire as a negative instance (the missing of something, a lack to be endlessly fulfilled) and foster the positive instance of desire as a production of the unconscious. Finally, I note that the distinction between the stability of the work of art and the modification of desire – in connection with the distinction made by Spinoza – permits Deleuze to entirely regain the issue concerning: “what a body can do”.

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An imaginary parallel: Deleuze/Joyce

Deleuze and Guattari differentiate two terms in *What is Philosophy?* (1996) “percepts” and “affects.” In explaining these concepts, they state that “[p]ercepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them” (p. 164) and: “[a]ffects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them” (ibid). Percepts and affects are independent of the person who created the work of art and independent of its observer (or admirer). Percepts and affects must have a strength that preserves the work of art in itself, as a harmony that goes beyond humanity. The compound of percept and affect is a “bloc of sensations”.

Harmonies are affects. Consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color, are affects of music or painting. Rameau emphasized the identity of harmony and affect. The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist’s greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*. Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality (ibid).

What Deleuze and Guattari mean here is that, for any work of art to be such, it must have *stability* and *harmony* (Deleuze, 1992a). Note that this claim by them does not require perfection and normality. Having *stability* means that the work of art is resistant to the gaze of the observer, and even resistant to the career of its creator. Having harmony means that an accord is established between consonances and dissonances (Deleuze, 1992b), as in the Baroque. The created is a “being whose validity lies” far beyond “any lived” and is preserved in itself.

Standing up alone does not mean having a top and a bottom or being upright (for even houses are drunk and askew); it is only the act by which the compound of created sensations is preserved in itself - a monument, but one that maybe contained in a few marks or a few lines, like a poem by Emily Dickinson. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 164-165)

Understanding this stability that ‘stands on its own’ brings us close to the connection between Deleuze, Guattari and Joyce. Although references to James Joyce rarely appear on Deleuze’s pages (Deleuze, 1972, 1977, Restuccia, 1984, Murphy, 1999, Davies, 2005, Beaulieu, 2016), the French philosopher and Guattari used the word “chaosmos” (a neologism invented by Joyce) several times in many of their essays. As Beaulieu states,

The notion of chaosmos, borrowed from James Joyce, points to another aspect of Deleuze’s cosmological sensitivity. Joyce’s neologism “chaosmos” expresses the fact that chaos and cosmos
For Joyce and Deleuze, chaosmos is the disjunctive synthesis between chaos and cosmos, and cosmos, from the Greek tradition, means, first of all, “the order of the universe”.

“Chaosmos” is in Deleuze’s project since its very beginning, and it is particularly important in regard to psychology. On the essay concerning Hume, written in 1953 (now in Deleuze, 1991), Deleuze considers the 18th Century Scottish philosopher as the founder of a new type of psychology. Instead of a “psychology of mind”, Hume proposes a “psychology of mind affections. “The two ways for the mind to be affected are passions and the social”. How minds connect passions to the social world? In a way that Guattari calls Chaosmosic (Guattari, 1995), which is “an ethico-aesthetic paradigm”, something dealing with the immanent singularity of the event (chaos) that takes stability in life (cosmos). Even though chaos and cosmos are not two different instances that join, they are a single instance, as in the portmanteau words.

Through the 20th Century however, the clinical stories became more and more constrained and, in turn, concepts became academic power/knowledge tools in the hands of the “expert psychologist”, constituting an authoritarian attitude that increasingly framed reality within the boundaries of ‘right-thinking’ individuals and families. In this sense, the example of the Oedipus, made by Deleuze and Guattari, is the most paradigmatic one. The complex and nuanced tragedy, by Sophocles, was transformed, by psychoanalysis, in the triangle “mom-dad-son” and, through this transformation, the role of “Destiny” was completely neglected. The unconscious, instead of being immanent to life (the Greek Moirae) as in the way Sophocles shapes the tragedy of Oedipus, became the desire of the missing mother due to the interdiction of the father. Such a transformation has lead psychology to the wrong idea of considering passions as private issues that are to be put under the control of the “Self”. Within such a frame, therapy in all its guises – including counselling and psychological “rehabilitation” – has the task to make people aware, thus moving the focus to the dominion of “conscious purpose” and cutting the social and historical issues, as if, to give just one example, the alcoholic is a person who is not aware of the limits of drinking instead of the obscene parody of the “Self”-made man (Bateson, 1971, Deleuze, & Parnet, 2011). This all is going to be removed by the contemporary “official” psychology, hegemonized by the “philosophy of mind”, with the program of transforming people as “trivial machines” (Foerster, 1984), machines completely “aware” of everything.

Critical psychology, in re-evaluating Deleuze and other thinkers (e.g. Spinoza whom I am speaking further later, Whitehead, Simondon and Artaud), invests efforts to come back to affects, as an alternative to the theory of mind and the concept of “emotion” (Brown, & Stenner, 2001) as a neuro-physiological issue – central to present dominant Cartesian
psychology. The alternative is a reorientation into the dynamic of affects-affections, the “corporeal turn” and the encounter between bodies. From the critical point of view, arts – more than medicine – are the main point of inspiration. Instead of “the medical body”, psychology deals with music, theatre and poetry on the one hand and, on the other, aging, political asylum, schizophrenia, torture and war as social issues.

Definition of art

The definition of art, given by Deleuze and Guattari, appears to be similar to the one given by Joyce in the novel Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man. Joyce writes with his Hero’s (Stephen) “voice”:

You see I use the word arrest. I mean that the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts, which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I used the general term) is therefore static (2016, p. 254).

There is something, in art, that is static, that has stability – as far as the meanings of “static” (Joyce) and “having stability” (Deleuze and Guattari) are similar. This is what characterizes the aesthetic gaze as a stare, rather than as a glance. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between Joyce and the two authors of What is Philosophy? Such a difference seems to concern the use of the term “desire”. In Joyce’s aesthetic theory, “desire” is excited by improper art, as for the example of pornography. Proper art affects are static; in Joyce’s view they are pity and terror. Instead desire is a “kinetic” feeling. Having been satisfied, desire temporarily disappears. Desire goes back and forth, has a connection with lust, or concupiscence. For Deleuze and Guattari in contrast, desire is a positive reality that belongs to life it is a plateau of immanence. As we’ll see in the next paragraph, desire is not something, which has to do with a lapse.

What is Philosophy? and Capitalism and Schizophrenia: a contradiction?

Coming back to Deleuze and Guattari’s “block of sensations”, I will confront What is Philosophy? to the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1983, 1987). What do the two authors have in mind when they are in the process of writing Anti-Oedipus and,
later on, *A Thousand Plateaus*? And what is the difference, if any, with *What is Philosophy*?

*Prima facie* we are dealing with two contradictory arguments. Is the world something that has a continuous movement—like a “desiring machine”—or does the world have stability, in terms of “percepts”, and “affects”? We have to decide whether such a question concerns a contradiction in the two philosophers or a distinction within the complexity of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy.

At a first glance, one can observe that stability (of the work of art) and continuous movement (of the unconscious at work) are exactly the opposite. In such a case, the contradiction to be resolved, or demonstrated, is the one between the idea of “Work of Art” in *What is Philosophy*? – in a way similar to that expressed by Joyce, concerning “stability” in *Portrait* – and the notion of “desiring machines” as expressed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. This approach could easily lead to declaring *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to be a mistake within the works of Deleuze and Guattari.

This apparent contradiction has to deal with the complex interweaving between affects and affections, as well as the interweaving between percepts and perceptions. Affections and perceptions depend on the “state of those who experience them” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 164). Perceptions and affections have a psychological side, they transform the subject; they touch “It” (Groddeck, 1961), producing the overlapping mind/body confusion addressed by Spinoza as I will discuss next. On the other hand, affects and percepts belong to the ontological side of our living experience. They are events, independent from us, belonging to life. Art is the way affects and percepts touch the subject with stability. Spinoza’s distinction, between substance and affections, seems to clarify the apparent contradiction in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s thought.

**Affects are no longer feelings or affections, a confrontation with Spinoza’s difference between substance and modification**

Baruch Spinoza – together with Leibniz, Nietzsche and Bergson – is one of the most important philosophers to influence Deleuze (1988, 1992, 2010). In turn, Deleuze is considered one of the most important Spinoza’s scholars. He wrote and gave lessons on the Dutch heretic philosopher, particularly concerning his “affects theory”.

There are three statements in Spinoza’s *Ethics* that I find particularly relevant. Firstly, Spinoza writes “[b]y eternity, I mean existence itself, in so far as it is conceived necessarily to follow solely from the definition that which is eternal” (Part I, Definition VIII). Then, in Proposition I of Part I, he states that “[s]ubstance is by nature prior to
modification”. Finally he also writes: “[b]y mode I mean the modifications [in Latin, Affectiones] of substance or that which exist in, and is conceived through, something other than itself” (Part I, Definition V).

With these statements Spinoza makes a clear distinction between eternity and modification, a distinction between what remains intact – that is sub-stantia – and what changes – affectiones. For him, these are two different dominions: substance, which is self-caused, and existence, which is conceived by something else. Substance is something that has no need to be conceived by something else (for it is “conceived through itself”) and has infinite attributes. As humans, we have access to just two of the infinite attributes of substance: thought and extension, which can be declined in soul (or mind) and body. These two attributes are independent of each other, while at the same time they are mixed and confused in different ways. In Part I, Proposition VIII, Note II, Spinoza clarifies such a distinction:

No doubt it will be difficult for those who think about things loosely, and have not been accustomed to know them by their primary causes, to comprehend the demonstration of Proposition VII\(^52\): for such persons make no distinction between the modifications of substances and substances themselves, and are ignorant of the manner in which things are produced; hence they may attribute to substances the beginning of which they observe in natural objects. Those who are ignorant of the true causes make complete confusion-think... So also those who confuse the two natures, divine and human, readily attribute human passions to the deity, especially so long as they do not know how passions originate in the mind... modifications exist in something external to themselves.

Spinoza’s “Theory of affects” concerns modification, and introduces the body as an attribute of essence, which belongs to the extended thing. Body acts within the dynamics of the encounter: “For instance, if the motion which object we see communicate to our nerves be conductive to health, the objects causing it are styled beautiful; if a contrary motion be excited, they are styled ugly.” (Appendix to Proposition XXXVI in Part I).

The sense of smell perceives fragrance, or fetidity; the same could happen concerning taste, touch, hearing, gaze, proprioception, movement, etc. Any one of these affections makes a difference. The nerves are affected by these differences and transmit such differences to the mind. It seems an anticipation of Gregory Bateson’s (1979) concept of “difference, which makes a difference”. Spinoza stresses the importance of the intimate relationship between mind and body. As Descartes (2000) is the philosopher of the

\(^52\) Prop. VII. Existence belongs to the nature of substances. Proof. – Substance cannot be produced by anything external (Corollary, Prop vi.), it must, therefore, be its own cause – that is, its essence necessarily involves existence, or existence belongs to its nature.
separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, Spinoza is that of the reunification of mind and body. Nevertheless the mainstream of philosophy remained, in its dominant conception, Cartesian. Phenomenological philosophy itself was entangled within this distinction. Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, in trying to overpass Descartes, remained caught within the pre-category and pre-reflective position of the “I” as the ontological premise that grounds the ontic horizon of the sciences. Eventually Husserl, and then Merleau-Ponty, located the pre-categorial in the body, as corporeal schema. Even the attempts of this later Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to rescue the body from philosophy remained incomplete (Foucault, 1996). The only two modern philosophers who inspired Deleuze in the enterprise of “saving the body” are Nietzsche and Bergson. Nietzsche with the two apparently contradictory concepts of *Wille zur Macht* and *Ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen* (Will to Power and Eternal return), and Bergson’s rejection of “the conventional division between a material and an intelligible world.” (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 14)

In Spinoza, the first step in such a direction is the dynamics between affects (*affectio*) and feelings (*affectus*), which is the primary dynamics of the encounter. For Spinoza, *affectio* is about an encounter of an “external body”; *affectus* is the way in which the encounter gives rise to a variation, or “disturbance of the soul”. In Descartes, the mind has a primacy over the body; the mind moves the body to act. Contrary to this, Spinoza gives three examples in which the body produces gestures and acts by itself: children, the inebriate and the somnambulist. These examples show there is no primacy of the mind over body and that body acts independently of mindfulness. There is no way of being completely aware of myself. In the example of the somnambulist, during sleep the somnambulist does things that she/he would not do in waking life. In dissidence to the mainstream philosophy of his times, Spinoza criticizes the idea that the mind can fill the body gap through conscious purpose. Deleuze gives a synthesis of this critique in one of his lectures:

> The point of view of an ethics is: of what are you capable, what can you do? Hence a return to this sort of cry of Spinoza’s: what can a body do? We never know in advance what a body can do. We never know how we’re organized and how the modes of existence are enveloped in somebody. (Deleuze 2010)

The Spinoza of Deleuze claims that desire is a positive movement in a plane of immanence, a concept that Deleuze borrowed from Henri Bergson and, later on, from Gregory Bateson. It is what Deleuze and Guattari call the work of the unconscious or the “unconscious at work”. Desire is neither a temptation of the flesh, nor a subject lapse consequent to primary repression. Desire is ethically connected to “what can a body do”.

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A literary example of Capitalism and Schizophrenia

No doubt that, in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 1987), “desire” is a key word. What Deleuze and Guattari mean by “desire” is explained in the expression “desiring machines”. “Desiring machines” are the vehicles – to use a kinetic expression – for describing the unconscious “at work”. The unconscious at work is a desiring machine. Deleuze’s definition of desire stands opposite to what Aquinas means by “desire” and also stands opposite to what the psychoanalytical mainstream means by it. In Scholastic philosophy, as well as in Scholastic psychoanalysis, “desire” is in relation to something missing: the expulsion from Eden (due to original sin) as well as primary repression (due to the entrance of the Father into the dyadic relationship).

By contrast, “desire” in Deleuze and Guattari has nothing of transcendence, nothing external to itself that constitutes it as lacking. It is not a lapse located between Ego and reality. “Desire” is something working within a plateau of immanence; “desire” is nomadic, is a positive and productive instance. Furthermore, “desire” is always in horizontal de-territorialized movement. “Desire”, in more than one sense, is kinetic and it is rhizomatic in that it moves in a horizontal way. Hence, if we make a parallel between Chapter 7 of *What is Philosophy?* and the whole work on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, there is already enough material that requires clarification.

Two roads diverge

There are different possible ways of clarifying the issue concerning the use of the word “desire”. In Aquinas’ (1970) conception, “desire” is the lapse of man [sic] in facing up to “temptations”; for Scholastic Philosophy, desire is moved by concupiscencia carnis (desire of flesh). Aquinas considers “desire” as opposite to the concept that Spinoza and Deleuze have in common.

I should also mention an affinity between the notion of “desire” in Aquinas and the notion of the same term within psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis, primary repression is the consequence of the infant’s encounter with Father/Language. In Lacan’s terms, at the very moment of the encounter with Symbolic Order, the subject starts to exist, and he – this is valid ‘only’ for men, because *la femme n’existe pas tout*, by definition53 –

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53 This is a confronting point in psychoanalytical theory that requires careful consideration. In Lacanian theory, there is an expression: *la femme n’existe pas tout*. This expression means that the woman, in order to encounter the Father (which is not the dad, but a significant inside the symbolic order), has to make a second turn. In other words, such an encounter is not direct, as in the male. The advantage of this position is that *la femme*, in difference form the male, is not entirely trapped into the categorial symbolic order. She lives in the singularity and does not exist as a whole, but always into the contingency. In this sense Lacan’s position concerning the feminine world is similar to Spinoza’s (and
exists as barred Subject ($). The symbolic order places the subject under the Law and divides him [sic]. The action of language, as a razor, places the subject under a transcendental order of Language. In more traditional psychoanalysis, this is the entrance of the Father into the Oedipal triangle, what Freud called the “castration complex”. As in Aquinas, under different forms, “desire” has a negative connotation as something that is missing.

What psychoanalysis considers a universal destiny of the (neurotic) subject, for schizoanalysis is the consequence of sub-jection into the oedipal-capitalist society. The universal condition of humanity is transformed, by schizoanalysis, into a particular gesture of sub-mission (instead of sub-stance) within capitalist society, a historical form of submission, equivalent to that of Aquinas in medieval times. This road will consider Thomist philosophy and the mainstream of psychoanalysis as two historical ways of sub-mission, that is, as two forms of constitution of the sub-ject.

Desire theory and desire production

At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned Joyce’s idea of “desire” and the affinities between him and What is Philosophy? in the aesthetic approach. Joyce’s idea of desire depends on a double influence: the philosophy of Aquinas and psychoanalysis. We should consider the notes written by Joyce on art and aesthetics in the Portrait as a critique of the idea of “desire” as concupiscencia carnis (Aquinas, 1970) as well as the idea of manque à être; a critique to the main conception of desire at that time, of desire as a sin or a lapse.

Let us go back to the Portrait for a while. In the main philosophical tradition, “desire” is something to be fulfilled. This is the meaning that Joyce also gives to “desire”. Joyce quotes Thomas of Aquinas in italic letters:


Joyce disagrees with Saint Thomas (Aquinas), however over the meaning of claritas as the “divine purpose in anything” or a force that renders the aesthetic image universal. On the contrary, in Joyce, “radiance” means quidditas (whatness). This is Joyce’s sacrilege. As Stephen Dedalus states:

The instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the

Deleuze’s) position concerning the world as “life”.

mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure... (ibid)

Joyce twists the theological position of “divine purpose” into the aesthetic gaze. Here, Joyce is close to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of desire, which is different to the mainstream of Aquinas: the wholeness of aesthetic pleasure is far from being something pornographic.

In order to see that basket, said Stephen, your mind first of all separates the basket from the rest of the visible universe, which is not the basket. The first phase of apprehension is a bounding line drawn about the object to be apprehended. An aesthetic image is presented to us either in space or in time. What is audible is presented in time, what is visible is presented in space. But, temporal or spatial, the aesthetic image is first luminously apprehended as self-bound and self-contained upon the immeasurable background of space or time, which is not it. You apprehend it as one thing. You see it as one whole. You apprehend its wholeness. (p. 264)

I think that this is the same compound mentioned in What is Philosophy? Wholeness seems to be something that goes far beyond the subject as observer or creator of this specific Work of Art. The Work of Art surpasses the subjectivity of the person. Between the oedipalized sub-ject – the conscious purpose – and the work of art there is an unbridgeable gap, because the work of art is a production of the unconscious.

It is interesting that the future author of the most anti-oedipal work of art in the history of literature (Finnegans Wake), during his youth, was already close to establishing another approach to conceiving “desire”, and at the same time remained entangled with the idea of desire as something missing that, to be excited, needs pornography. It is a matter of fact that, during the years of his youth, Joyce was fascinated by Freudian psychoanalysis.

It is not by chance that I started my essay using Joyce as a comparison point with Deleuze and Guattari. Something like Finnegans Wake could be considered the most illuminating example of the unconscious at work in the entire history of literature. Among other definitions of this massive work, Finnegans Wake can be defined as a family delusional

54 The same destiny fell to Merleau-Ponty – as Foucault (1992) observed – who, in re-evaluating the issue of body, remained entangled in the notion of “corporeal scheme”, which, notwithstanding the notion of “ante-predicative”, already contains the awareness of the organs as being in an organism (p. 34).

55 The issue of translating, or transforming Humpy Dumpty from Lewis Carroll to Antonin Artaud, is widely treated by Deleuze in Logic of Sense. Humpty Dumpty and the issue of portmanteau words are however two of the main nomadic instances of Finnegans Wake, much more present, twisted, distorted, perverted and schizoanalyzed than any other example of literature ever.
incestuous disorder, a never-ending babelish and chaosmotic family dream. *Finnegans Wake* is the absolute paramount of the work of the unconscious. It is composed by a multiplicity of languages, including port-manteu words, apparently non-sens; non-sense that, in time, scholar have discovered as having hidden meanings with multiple references to different Authors, historical episodes and philosophical theories.

**Psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis: theory and production**

In one of Lacan’s last seminars, Joyce appears as the *Sinthome*, an old French word that, in a pun, means, at the same time, “symptom”, and “saint man”. Joyce is considered the subject who has been able to become his own father, avoiding schizophrenia, putting schizophrenia on the written pages, particularly throughout his own writings – *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Following the mainstream of philosophy, psychoanalysis argues that the existence of “desire” is constitutive of the impossibility to get complete pleasure in human life. The Western subject is a divided Self, always missing the fullness of pleasure, always submitted to the principle of pleasure. The “principle” submits “pleasure” to the Law (of capitalistic society).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, this conceptualization is a big mistake.

First of all, there are two different ways of missing as human being: the anthropological and the psychoanalytical. In the anthropological, and biological sense, humans are neotenic animals. They are animals that live within a long period of infancy and childhood. In contrast to this evidence, the manqué à être of psychoanalysis refers to the impossibility of fulfilling the wholeness of pleasure. The possible overlapping of these two different gaps is probably at the base of the mistake concerning “desire”. Is “desire” immanent to human animals, as in the anthropologic and ontological sense? Or is “desire” the consequence of the primary repression, as is proposed in psychoanalysis?

First position: The nomadic animal – the ontological condition as “missing animal” (mängelwesen) – is what the empirical observation concerning human life shows, from 450,000 years ago until now. If incompleteness is constitutive of life, the “missing animal”, in anthropological sense, is the one who is involved into a second fold: neoteny and nomadism are two faces of the process of becoming other. They probably are the most important examples of how the unconscious works, producing without product.

Second position: The psychoanalytical idea of having a lapse – a gap that moves desire towards pleasure – is far from being evident from an ontological perspective that considers humankind beyond the Victorian era of capitalism or, to the same effect, of
other Western historical practices of creating docile bodies (Foucault, 1976), of constituting the sub-ject. Sub-ject originally means servant, or slave, and in English language, the word maintains the same nuance (in Latin sub-jectum = lie down).

From Aquinas’ *Seven Capital Sins*, to the mainstream of psychoanalysis, perversion and madness have been considered the benchmark limits for desire. From temptation, to castration, passing through Puritan society, the body has been considered no more than a locus of lust, sexuality and excess. In Christianity, the withdrawal of Self – where the Self was the main source of sin – was the only possible way for acquiring grace (Bercovich, 1975, Foucault, 2005). Within modernity, sexuality is the possible explosion of transgression and madness. Sexuality, one of the sources of “perversion”, needs to be repressed in order to reproduce capitalistic society. In terms of modern psychiatric discourse, from infantile masturbation to homosexuality, the image of the debauched man, and the one of the prostitute, all are dangerous for the reproduction of the everyday manual work in factories.

The so-called “pan-sexuality” of psychoanalysis, seems to join the Puritan idea of the body as a taboo and sex under a prohibition that, paradoxically, generates pornographic desire. Following Foucault (1976), psychoanalysis seems to be the path for transforming incestuous desire into discursive practice. This is the reason why psychoanalysis ends up considering the body as an obstacle. “Body is the main obstacle to love”, declared Jacques Lacan in a conversation in Milan with the Ferenczian psychoanalyst Elvio Fachinelli (Fachinelli, 1989, p. 201, Barbetta, in press).

Deleuze and Guattari’s position switches the mainstream of psychoanalysis from “desire” as something transcendent or missing, into “desire” as immanent and positive. Some psychoanalysts (David-Menard, 2005) have taken a fresh view of schizophrenia and perversion through this reversal. The concept of “desiring machine” is at the core of the distance that Deleuze and Guattari took from mainstream psychoanalytical discourse during the 70s and the 80s.

The *Anti-Oedipus* that Deleuze and Guattari propose consists in the subtraction of the authoritarian principle of oedipalization from the analysis, proposing instead a kind of anti-subjection. Schizophrenia does not take name, religion, nation, race, language or gender. In schizophrenia the possibility of being Napoleon, Jesus or Mohammed is always open. Schizophrenia seems to be the line of flight from being a subject: no race, no gender, no name, no religion or belonging to someone. The *Anti-Oedipus* is not simplistically claiming that schizophrenia is something like a *joie de vivre*. In the *Anti-Oedipus*, the argument is against the disrespectful way in which psychoanalysis, on the basis of the psychiatric mainstream, uses the diagnosis of “schizophrenia” both, as an incurable disease and as a radical impossibility to be admitted within the “human society”. In this sense, for the two authors, the distress of schizophrenia is more
connected with the way schizophrenia is treated by psychiatry and abandoned by the mainstream of psychoanalysis.

The Anti-Oedipus can be also view as a practical application - the field of Schizoanalysis - of what Deleuze considered more theoretically in Difference and Repetition (Deleuze, 1994, p. 67): the stability of the equivocity of Being. The affinity with Gregory Bateson is astonishing when one considers schizophrenia as a process of creation due to a trans-contextual exit from the double bind, as in Bateson (Bateson M.C., 2005).

In Deleuze, the work of art, percepts and affects are the ontological conditions of possibility for any affections and feelings, and affections and feelings are two of the vehicles of desiring machines, precisely the ones coming from art.

Conclusion

This work should have continued with other references to Nietzsche’s “eternal return” and Bergson’s “movement and duration”. These authors helped Deleuze in his work into philosophical concepts on movement and time, particularly important for his two volumes on cinema. Given space constraints, I am not able to establish these connections. Neither will I be able to touch on the influences of the artists that inspired him: Francis Bacon, Antonin Artaud, Pasolini, Antonioni, Godard as well as Anglo-American Literature and Japan, amongst other.

Aware of these limitations, I chose to include a comparison with James Joyce’s literary production for various reasons, including: the affinity of Joyce’s Portrait and Deleuze/Guattari’s What is Philosophy? concerning the stability of work of art; the affinity between Finnegans Wake and Schizoanalysis; and the difference between Joyce and Deleuze/Guattari in reference to “desire”, a distinction that introduces the difference between desire as a lapse of psychoanalytical primary repression – the manque à être – and desire as the unconscious at work. The principal reason for the unusual parallel between Joyce and Deleuze is however that they both use the portmanteau word chaismos, a word that, in joyful synthesis, contains the stability of the Work of Art and the chaotic world of schizophrenia, and, at the same time, recognizes that schizophrenia, like a Work of Art, can become “a joy forever” – as in John Keats’s Poem Endymion – when it is able to connect in a singular and affirmative chaismos.

Returning to Joyce, the meaning of “desire” is connected to the mainstream of western philosophy (as Joyce himself recognizes by quoting Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas). It is the negative connotation of desire as a lapse – a lapse in obtaining full pleasure – that continues in different forms, under the guise of pornography, during the era of capitalism. At the same time through all of Joyce’s literature, the “epiphanies” are
nothing else but the full joy of this same lapse: “what a body can do”. In a kind of reversal of the psychoanalytical mainstream, Joyce’s epiphanies are the joyful connections with something distant, or in some way, unreachable: the life of the positive desire at work. A kind subjectivisation, were the (im)possible relation with the other emerges. That is the work of art, a different way for considering therapy as the art of connection.

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THE RISKY TRUTH OF FABULATION
DELEUZE, BERGSON AND DURKHEIM ON THE BECOMINGS OF RELIGION AND ART

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This does not mean that madness is the only language common to the work of art and the modern world...; by the madness that interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself (Foucault 1973, p. 288).

Abstract

Based on a close reading of relevant works of Gilles Deleuze, and informed by Emile Durkheim and Henri Bergson's writings on religion, this paper articulates a novel concept of 'fabulation' which has significant implications for psychosocial theory. Beginning with a discussion of Jean Rouch's classic film ‘Les Maîtres Fous’, a distinction is drawn between a Deleuzian vision of fabulation as a profound fiction at the heart of the real, and an objectifying version which always contrasts fabulation with a supposedly external standard of reality. This latter version is clearly expressed in the literature of the psy-disciplines, but is also expressed in cultural forms such as the 'cinema of reality'. After sketching the connections between Deleuze’s more risky yet also profound version of fabulation, Rouche’s ‘cinéma vérité’, and Scholes’ ‘fabulator’ tradition in literature (Vonnegut, Durrell, Navakov etc.), this concept of fabulation is traced back to Bergson’s critical encounter with Durkheim over the question of the sacred. With help from the recent work of Ronald Bogue, the paper ends by emphasising the tight connection between fabulation and the dynamics of becoming.

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Introduction: The Mad Masters

With footage shot using a hand-held camera, the viewer is shown the bustling city streets of Accra, then capital of Africa’s Gold Coast. A French narrator introduces the viewer to several different categories of labourer at work: the dockers at the port, those who clear the gutters, mine the tin, etc. The film then takes the viewer to a rural location at which a selection of these workers proceed to enact a religious practice, with origins in Niger, called Hauka. Nominated initiates perform a circular dance to the tune of a one string violin and percussion. A substance-assisted trance ritual follows in which selected participants, wide-eyed and sometimes frothing at the mouth, become possessed by what the narrator describes as figures associated with the British colonial rulers of the region. A man possessed by the Corporal of the Guard rises and jerkily shakes hands with those present, carrying a piece of wood shaped like a rifle. As the Corporal flails and staggers around, Gerba the train conductor comes striding through the trees into the clearing, frothing at the mouth and clutching his shorts, making loud retching sounds before collapsing in front of a circular stone bloodied by a sacrificed bird. Captain Malia, who had been seated with eyes rolling, lurches to his feet and begins a slow parody of a military march. Various leadership challenges follow until, after much commotion, a round-table is called, featuring the sacrifice and eating of a dog, some eaten raw, and some boiled in a pot from which the flesh is pulled with bare hands. The film ends with the people driving home to resume their ordinary working lives, with shots mundane work juxtaposed with flashbacks of the same people enacting the ritual.

The passage above is a synopsis of Jean Rouch’s highly controversial and much debated 1955 film ‘Les Maîtres Fous’. As well as being an ethnographer, Rouch pioneered the cinematic genre known as ‘cinéma vérité’. Some consider this film the preeminent anti-colonial movie. Its title ‘The Mad Masters’ expresses the perspective of Rouch’s narration to the effect that the Hauka parodies the manners and ceremonies of the colonial rulers, scrambling the codes of the asymmetrical power relations between white colonial authority and black subjugation. Although this interpretation has been challenged, it is supported by the fact that it was immediately banned by the colonial rulers. Others, however, wanted the film burned because of the way it reinforces Western stereotypes about African people (Lim, 2002).

My intention is not to attempt a judgement that might settle this controversy. Rather, I begin with Rouch’s work because of the significant role his ‘cinéma vérité’ plays in Chapter 6 of Gilles Deleuze’s book Cinema 2 (1989), entitled ‘the powers of the false’. That chapter discusses a change that occurred within cinema through the ‘cinéma vérité’ of Rouch, the ‘cinema of the lived’ pioneered by Pierre Perrault, and the ‘direct cinema’ of Shirley Clarke and Cassavetes. For Deleuze, this change was effectively the discovery within cinema of a profound insight that had also flashed upon Nietzsche. In Deleuze’s (1989, p.149) words, the core of this insight is that: ‘the ideal of the true was the most
profound fiction, at the heart of the real’. I will return shortly to examine the meaning of this quotation from Deleuze in more detail, but for now I use it - and the Mad Masters - as a way of introducing the concept that will be the focus of this article: fabulation. Any most profound fiction at the heart of the real must be \textit{fabulated}.

In what follows I extend my recent work (Stenner, 2017a) and offer an account of fabulation that I hope will be useful for scholars working at the transdisciplinary interface between psychology and Deleuzian philosophy (see also Barr, 1992, Braidotti, 2000, Brown, 2010, Kruger and Le Roux, 2017, Nichterlein and Mosss, 2017). Fabulation is not one of Deleuze’s core concepts and is perhaps not a fully-fledged concept at all. In fact, unlike better-known Deleuzo-Guattarian (1988) inventions like becoming animal, de/re/territorialization and line of flight, Deleuze uses ‘fabulation’ rarely and in a fragmentary manner. My discussion of fabulation builds upon literary scholar Ronald Bogue’s (2006, 2010) excellent efforts to piece together these fragments.\footnote{I would like to thank Maria Nichterlein for alerting me to Bogue’s work.} Bogue’s main concern is to see if his assemblage can illuminate some recent novels (which it certainly can). I build on this through a number of steps. First, I provide a rapid overview of how psychology has ‘disciplined’ the concept of fabulation through a contrast enabled by an objective disciplinary standard. I then show how variations on this same disciplinary device are discernable, first in what Deleuze calls ‘the cinema of reality’ and, second, in Durkheim’s sociology of religion. I present the latter as an important but rarely acknowledged influence upon Bergson’s account of fabulation, which inspired Deleuze. Finally, my aim is to show the sense in which Deleuzian fabulation affirms a creative and transdisciplinary relation to the truth that is more ‘risky’ than the disciplinary approach allows.

\section*{The Masters of Madness: fabulation in the ‘psy’ sciences}

Bogue defines fabulation as follows:

\begin{quote}
Fabulation... is closely associated with fiction, invention and the ‘power of the false’... [it] comes from the Latin \textit{fabula}, which may be rendered as ‘talk’, ‘conversation’, or ‘small talk’, but also as ‘story’, ‘tale’, ‘myth’, or ‘legend’. In this regard, \textit{fabula} resembles its Greek counterpart, \textit{mythos}, which may be translated as ‘word’, ‘speech’, ‘story’, or ‘legend’... \textit{La Fable}, according to the Robert dictionary, may refer to ‘the set of mythological stories as a whole’ (2006, p. 214).
\end{quote}
The word fabulation evokes the ‘fable’ and carries forward the connotation of a folk story that is not intended to be taken as true because of certain evidently unbelievable components. The word ‘fabulous’ shares the same root for similar reasons. Aesop’s fables, for example, involve fabulous animals engaging in activities nobody would seriously expect of animals. Perhaps the point of a fable is that everyone knows that it is not ‘true’ in the sense that mice don’t really talk to lions and help them escape from nets, and foxes don’t really give soup to storks. If the teller of fables is nevertheless able to express something true, then perhaps this is not despite, but because of this freedom from the demand to faithfully relate actual events in their material unfolding. It might even be said that the distance afforded by fabulous animals protects the ‘truth’ of the fable by pulling it into closer proximity. But this ‘fabulous truth’ is not the ‘correctness’ usually implied when people think of a representation which accurately matches its object. Fabulous truth, unlike representational correctness, carries no guarantees of veridicality and in fact is never far from falsehood. The first words spoken to Hesiod by the Muses of Mount Helicon, for example, were a clear announcement of this risky relationship: ‘Rustic shepherds, worthless reproaches, mere stomachs, we know how to say many lies like the truth, and, whenever we wish, we know how to tell the truth.’ (Hesiod, and Caldwell, 1987, p. 27). As we shall see, this ambivalent and risky relation to truth is lost entirely from the concept of fabulation crafted within the ‘psy’ sciences.

In the context of psychology and the ‘psy’ sciences more generally, fabulation shares a family resemblance with a range of concepts including suggestibility, imitation, confabulation and, to some extent, somatization. Jean Piaget (1972, p. 202), for example, used the term ‘fabulation’ in the context of child development to indicate a phase during which children have difficulties distinguishing ‘between fabulation and truth’, ending, he proposed, at around 7 or 8 years of age. Piaget’s usage can be considered paradigmatic of the approach from the ‘psy’ sciences in so far as fabulation is construed solely from the perspective of deviations from accurate cognition. Far from being a means for truth, fabulation becomes its opposite.

This same feature applies to the closely related notion of ‘confabulation’ which was introduced into psychiatry by Emil Kraepelin (1886). Confabulation indicates a pathological condition where patients provide or act upon information that is evidently false or context-inappropriate. Since patients who confabulate are unaware of this situation, Moscovitch (1989) coined the alternative phrase ‘honest lying’. It is relevant to note that fabulation and confabulation share this feature of being ‘honest’ deviations from accurate cognition with the medical concept of somatisation. In the discourse of psychosomatic medicine, the somatiser, unlike the malingering, is not deliberately misleading the physician about the symptoms they report, but genuinely experiences them, despite lack of demonstrable disease (Greco, 2012). In this sense, both somatisation and psychiatric confabulation have connections with delusion, since all involve the unintentional production of false propositions (Berrios, 2000).
confabulation is an honest addition (a ‘production’) to a report of an experience and not just a reporting error. Failing to report something that did happen is not confabulation (Carruthers, 2018). Some clinicians, however, would characterise delusion as a disorder of belief formation whilst confabulation pertains to memory. The point I wish to extract here, however, is that fabulation and confabulation are considered within psychology either as immature (as in the case of Piaget) or as pathological (as in the case of Kraepelin) conditions.

When considered a matter of pathology, origins are sought either directly in organic damage to prefrontal structures, basal forebrain, temporal lobes or the anterior limbic system, or, alternatively, within the situational demands of highly stressful situations. When considered – qua Piagetian fabulation – a matter of immaturity, fabulation shades into the notion of suggestibility where, for obvious reasons, it has played a key role in debates around false memories and the suitability of children as witnesses in courts of law (see Motzkau, 2009, Brown and Stenner, 2009, Brown and Reavey, 2015 for critical accounts). Suggestibility, however, primarily suggests a susceptibility to influence from what others may have made up, although the word is also used to describe situations where events are actively ‘made up’ in light of suggestions from others.

This difference notwithstanding, fabulation shares with suggestibility a thoroughly paradoxical nature. In her research on the history of the concept of suggestibility within psychology, for example, Johanna Motzkau (2009) explored the paradoxical way in which it was viewed by early psychologists (William McDougal [1911], for example) as simultaneously an irrational expression of manipulability, and as perhaps the most fundamentally distinctive characteristic of human mentality and hence human nature: what makes learning, affection, socialization and social cohesion possible at all. As with the closely related theme of imitation (see Blackman, 2008), the suggestible self is inherently a social self that takes its cue from another, and yet it is only through such socialization that something like an ‘individual’, capable of rationally checking the evidence supporting the propositions s/he entertains, can ever emerge (see Stenner, 2017a).

Fabulation shares this paradox of being simultaneously a highly valued activity associated with some of the peaks of human cultural achievement, and a lamentable pathology. As it is used within the ‘psy’ sciences, however, we have seen that the concept loses this risky and paradoxical relationship with truth. More specifically, within

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57 In Bateson’s sense, this qualifies fabulation as something sacred. For Bateson (1975, p. 25), the sacred is ‘always a coin with two sides. The original Latin word “sacer,” from which we get our word, means both “so holy and pure” as to be sacred, and “so unholy and impure” as to be sacred. It’s as if there’s a scale – on the extreme pure end we have sacredness, then it swings down in the middle to the secular, the normal, the everyday, and then at the other end we again find the word “sacer” applied to the most impure, the most horrible’. The latter part of the current paper exploits this direct connection between fabulation and the sacred by showing the origins of the concept in sociological discussions of religion. See also chapter 5 of Stenner (2017a).
these scientific uses, the concept of fabulation always presupposes an ideal and pre-given standard of truth, against which it can demonstrably fall short. Furthermore, in the case of the variations we have been considering, this standard typically rests upon the institutional epistemic norms, not just of science, but also of law (in the case of the suggestibility of witnesses) and medicine (in the case of psychiatric confabulation and medical somatisation). It is perhaps not surprising if the concept of fabulation loses its delicate and risky relation to truth in these hard institutional settings where it is defined as such only when demonstrably false in light of an objective standard provided by law, medicine or science.

**Fabulating a more risky relation to truth**

I can now return to what a concept of fabulation informed by Deleuze’s statement quoted above – ‘the ideal of the true was the most profound fiction, at the heart of the real’ – might look like. That is, a concept informed by the proposition that the ideal of the true, or the very best of the true, is something fictional. How can an ideal of the true, be at the heart of the real? To approach this risky mingling of ideal truth, fiction and reality we can begin quite modestly by grasping the important change, noted above, that Deleuze associates with ‘cinéma vérité’ (and its variants). The change inaugurated by cinéma vérité can be expressed negatively: it is not about using cinema to challenge fictional falsehoods, embellishments, ideologies and fantasies by confronting them with a pure filmic documentation of how things really are. It is not about contrasting ‘subjective’ fiction with a pre-established objective standard of truth. The ‘ideal of the truth’ that Deleuze has in mind does not involve contrasting an apparently external and material objectivity with an internal subjective representation.

In fact, Deleuze associates just this effort (to use cinema to challenge fiction by contrasting it with a truth delivered by film) with an older form he calls the ‘cinema of reality’. He links this older form with the work of Flaherty, Grierson and Leacock. For Deleuze (1989, p. 149), the challenges to fiction posed by these directors were paradoxical in so far as they preserved an ideal of truth ‘which was dependent upon cinematic fiction itself’. In other words, cinematic fiction itself – inherited and preserved by the ‘cinema of reality’ – provided a neat separation between images corresponding to subject and object. On the one hand, what the camera sees (beyond the purview of a given character) is taken as objective, and, on the other, what is seen to be seen by a given character is taken, by filmic convention, as subjective. Hence a film allows us to see what a character sees (subjective image) whilst also seeing what they do not see (objective image). This contrast creates rich potential for cinematic devices. For example, discrepancies between objective and subjective images can be used to constitute tensions and crises which can then be ‘resolved’ at the film’s finale. We can
‘feel for’ characters because we are placed in the omnipotent position of knowing both what they know and what they don’t know. When this discrepancy is resolved, some sort of ‘identity’ – the identity that was lost during the section of the film when subjective and objective were out of phase – is re-affirmed. Deleuze (ibid) refers to this identity in short hand using the formula: Ego = Ego.

By exploiting this duality, the anti-fictional ‘cinema of reality’ effected the separation of two poles: a documentary pole and a reportage pole. At the documentary pole the cinema of reality can claim to objectively display the real actions of real people in real settings, and at the reportage pole it displays the subjective ‘ways of seeing’ of the characters, showing how they define their problems and issues from their own perspectives. This ‘cinema of reality’ retains clear identities for characters (subjective) and film makers (objective) alike, and it challenges fiction in favour of a reality captured in this way by cinema (‘Ego = Ego’). But since this reality is in fact captured by cinema, the model of truth it retains is a consequence of the very fiction it presupposes. In Deleuze’s account it was just this paradoxical model of truth – with its clear identities for characters and film makers alike – that was systematically unraveled by a number of film makers including Lang, Welles and Pasolini. Pasolini’s ‘cinema of poetry’, for example, erodes and recomposes the distinction between objective and subjective images, creating a new form he calls ‘free indirect discourse’:

In the cinema of poetry, the distinction between what the character saw subjectively and what the camera saw objectively vanished, not in favour of one or the other, but because the camera assumed a subjective presence, acquired an internal vision, which entered into a relation of simulation (‘mimesis’) with the character’s way of seeing. It is here... that Pasolini discovered how to go beyond the two elements of the traditional story, the objective, indirect story from the camera’s point of view, and the subjective, direct story, from the character’s point of view, to achieve the very special form of ‘a free indirect discourse’, of a ‘free, indirect subjective’. A contamination of the two kinds of image was established, so that bizarre visions of the camera (alternation of different lenses, zoom, extraordinary angles, abnormal movements, halts...) expressed the singular visions of the character, and the latter were expressed in the former, but by bringing the whole to the power of the false. The story no longer refers to an ideal of the true which constitutes its veracity, but becomes a ‘pseudo-story’, a poem, a story which simulates or rather a simulation of the story. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 148-149)

Cinema vérité takes off from this unravelling achieved by Lang, Welles and Pasolini and thus departs from the ‘cinema of reality’ with its clear identities of character and film-maker afforded by its (fictional) contrast of fiction with truth. The ideal truth it offers is
not a truth contrasted with fiction but a fiction at the heart of the real. In this process, the Ego=Ego scenario unravels and gives way to the transversal subjectivity of Ego=becoming other. In 1960 Rouch collaborated with the transdisciplinary sociologist Edgar Morin in the making of ‘Chronique d’un été’ (‘Chronicle of a summer’). No less anthropological than ‘Les Maîtres Fous’, this film involved the ‘tribe’ of Parisians. It had no actors, script, plot or scenario, but simply involved walking the streets of Paris with a camera and microphone and inviting passers-by to respond to the question: ‘are you happy?’ This was not a matter of gaining access to an undisturbed external reality. Rouch and Morin were very aware that the presence of a camera, microphone, interviewer and so on were important ingredients in what happened during filming. Some people walked away, some said ‘buzz off’, whilst others talked freely about their joys and sorrows. These were not stories of realities that might have happened had the camera not been there, but of what happens because the camera is there. The camera is ingredient in a living reality in which human beings are not objects, but subjects of the film. The film makers, in other words, considered the situation to be a kind of experiment in which ordinary people were invited to actively participate (or refuse to participate) in a real creation.

In the same way, the question of the authenticity of The Mad Masters – whether it is a faithful depiction of real ritual practices or a show put on to please the pre-conceptions of the inquisitive European visitors - is not, for Rouch and Deleuze, the pressing issue. The issue is the experimental creation of a ‘profound fiction at the heart of the real’: a ‘free indirect discourse’ in which fiction is freed from the representational model of truth (and image of thought) which would seek to eliminate it, and re-connected to the transformative powers of fabulation. At stake here is what Deleuze calls:

the pure and simple story-telling function which is opposed to this model. What is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth which is always that of the masters or the colonizers; it is the story-telling function of the poor, in so far as it gives the false the power which makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster... What cinema must grasp is not the identity of a character, whether real or fictional, through his objective and subjective aspects. It is the becoming of the real character when he himself starts to ‘make fiction’, when he enters into the ‘flagrant offence of making up legends’ and so contributes to the invention of his people. (1989, p. 150)

This activity of fabulation (the ‘story-telling-function’ or ‘making up legends’), far from affirming coherent identities, summons a zone of indiscernibility between the ‘characters’ and the ‘film maker’. Both are involved in a process of ‘making up’ in which who they are becomes inseparable from the before and the after of a ‘passage from one
state to another’. This passage enabled by fabulation, as Deleuze suggests, is not inconsequential, but of direct social relevance, since it ‘contributes to the invention’ of a people. Returning to our film, we can see that each of the ‘characters’ in The Mad Masters becomes another through the process of telling their story or making up their legend ‘without ever being fictional’. Magaria becomes Madame Salma just as the other men become Madame Lokotoro, the Corporal of the Guard, Gerba the conductor, Captain Malia and the Governor. But equally, Rouch the film maker ethnographer becomes with them. ‘With the camera to my eye, I am what Dziga Vertov called the mechanical eye... With a ciné-eye and a ciné-ear I am a ciné-Rouch in a state of ciné-trance in the process of ciné-filming (Rouch, 1989, p. 268 cited in Lim, 2002). Rouch becomes cyborgian ciné-Rouch as he fabulates a film which is itself a passage from a pre-liminary phase in which the workers are introduced and separated from their labours, through the liminal phase of the Hauka ritual, and culminating in the post-liminal re-incorporation back into working life. It might seem as if nothing has changed and that, after the Hauka, the workers and the film maker return to... ‘What they were before’ (Deleuze, 1989, p. 152). But, through this process, has not a new assemblage been formed between ritual and film, characters and film makers, perhaps even Gold Coast and Paris? As it acquires and transforms its audience, does the movie itself begin to fabulate in turn a ‘new people’? If so, then this is not a matter of a pre-established truth, faithfully or unfaithfully depicted by way of a ‘fiction’, but of new becoming, which sweeps up those involved into a new reality whose heart now beats to the pulse of the fabulation that supplies its truth.

Not reality versus fiction, then, but a creative experimentation with what reality can become: an experimentation that activates a process of passage in which clear identities are scrambled as they melt down and are reconstituted. The ‘story telling’ does not reinforce and depend upon, but dissolves the very boundaries that constitute identities and structures and, in so doing, opens up the possibility of contributing ‘to the invention of [a] people’, even if that ‘people’ might not be even thought (as a possibility) yet. It seems to me that Edgar Morin (1985, p.5) expresses precisely this connection between the vérité of this kind of cinematic practice, and a ‘quest’ for solidarity: ‘Can’t cinema become the means of breaking that membrane which isolates each of us from others in the metro, on the street, or on the stairway of the apartment building? The quest for a new cinéma vérité is at the same time a quest for a ‘cinéma de fraternite’.

It is notable that, independently of Deleuze, the US literary critic Robert Scholes (1967) used the concept of fabulation to designate the new style of a specific group of Anglophone novelists. This group, which Scholes calls The Fabulators includes Vonnegut, Durrell, Hawkes, Murdoch, Barth, Golding and Navakov. What is striking here is that

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58 For an application of this idea to novels - and Mann’s Magic Mountain in particular - see Stenner and Greco (2018).
59 Barr (1992) importantly extends this analysis in a feminist direction.
the shift in literary approach examined by Scholes was contemporary with the new style of cinema that Deleuze associates with Rouch, Perrault, Clarke and Cassavetes, and, most significantly, shares with it the theme of a transformed relation between fiction and truth. Scholes work in the field of literature can in this sense be viewed as homologous to Deleuze’s work on cinema. Scholes’ fabulators depart from realistic and conventionally romantic fictional concepts by deliberately blurring the lines between artifice and reality, often through the device of dislocating time and space. Scholes shows how their work shares certain features such as ‘black humour’, the revival of rhetoric, and a questioning of certainties, and yet he discerns a universal ‘vision’ which stems from what he describes as a collision of myth and philosophy (their style can also be compared to ‘magical realism’).

Just as Rouch set up a transversal connection between anthropology and film, Scholes connects the new vision of fiction associated with fabulation to core developments in 20th Century science (relativity theory, quantum theory, systems theory, structuralism, etc.). In the work of the fabulists ‘the tradition of speculative fiction is modified by an awareness of the nature of the universe as a system of systems, a structure of structures, and the insights of the past century of science are accepted as fictional points of departure ... It is a fictional exploration of human situations made perceptible by the implications of recent science’ (Scholes, 1967, p. 54–55). Furthermore, as pointed out in a later work (Scholes, 1976, p. 47), the fabulators write ‘fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way’.

I have sketched a contrast between two very different concepts of fabulation, each associated with a very different image of thought and a very different ‘ideal of the true’. On the one hand, we have a psychological construction of fabulation which is substantially similar to that at play in the ‘cinema of reality’, both of which operate with an ideal of truth that depends upon objective epistemic norms, whether those be the institutional norms of science, law, medicine or the internal conventions of cinema itself. This version of fabulation is precisely denied the sort of delicate and risky relation to truth that is the characteristic feature of the other version that Deleuze finds at the heart of ‘cinéma vérité’ and that Scholes associates with the group of novelists he calls ‘fabulators’. For this alternative version, fabulation is not a subjective distortion of reality but a means to grasp and enact new becomings. This second version gives a significant place to artistic creativity and precisely does not rest upon the secure foundation of an institutionally or scientifically grounded objectivity:

It’s the greatest artists (rather than populist artists) who invoke a people, and they find they “lack a people”: Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Klee, Berg. The Straubs in cinema. Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they’re doing, it’s not their job to create one, and they can’t. Art is resistance: it resists
death, slavery, infamy, shame. But a people can’t worry about art.
How is a people created, through what terrible suffering? When a
people’s created, it’s through its own resources, but in a way that
links up with something in art... or in such a way that art (Garrel
says there’s a mass of terrible suffering in the Louvre too) or links
up art to what it lacked. Utopia isn’t the right concept: it’s more a
question of a “fabulation” in which a people and art both share. We
ought to take up Bergson’s notion of fabulation and give it a political
meaning (Deleuze, 1990, p.1).

Society and the sacred: Durkheim’s influence on
Bergson

In the quotation above Deleuze refers to ‘Bergson’s notion of fabulation’ as a potentially
more useful concept than utopia for getting at this nexus of issues around art, suffering,
resistance and the capacity to invoke and create ‘a people’. A utopia is the imagination
of a kind of blue-print for a desired community or society, but ‘fabulation’ points to a
more messy, liminal and un-predetermined process of transformative passage. As
Deleuze implies, the concept of fabulation more readily opens up a set of questions
around how art might contribute to these political efforts (Braidotti, 2000). But, as we
shall see, the concept notably emerges from debates about the origins of religion and
the sacred, pointing to a zone of indiscernability between the aesthetic and the sacred
(see Stenner, 2017b). A moment’s reflection shows that we have wandered into territory
that is a profoundly transdisciplinary mixture of art, politics, religion, psychology,
philosophy, anthropology and, as we shall see, historical sociology. Much of Bergson’s
philosophy, as Deleuze (1986, preface) points out, ‘was the diagnosis of a crisis in
psychology’, but even if his concept of fabulation contributes to early critical psychology,
it appears in a book called The two sources of morality and religion (Bergson, 1932). This
book can be well considered as a transdisciplinary sociology designed to explain the
emergence of religion.

To understand Deleuzian fabulation and Bergson’s aim in the Two sources, it is first
important to grasp Bergson’s relation to Durkheim. As a convenient simplification of this
relation, we might contrast the transdisciplinary and processual thought of Bergson with
the disciplinarian thought of Durkheim60. The two studied together at a prestigious
Parisian school and Bergson even named Durkheim as his principal adversary (Belloy,
Bergson/Durkheim concern with the sacred was for 20th Century French social theory
(including postmodernism), and Lefebvre and White (2010, p. 458) make a compelling

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60 See Riley (2002, p. 7) for other ways of classifying the two thinkers.
case that Bergson’s ‘Two Sources is written in response to Durkheim’, and specifically to Durkheim’s last and most important book The elementary forms of religious life (1912). Like any interesting rivalry, this one involved a combination of commonality of goal and difference of approach. The common goal was nothing small: to reinvent the religious sacred for modern times (Riley, 2002, p. 244). The differences were subtle but significant. As we shall see, a concept of fabulation (or Durkheim’s equivalent, ‘idealization’) was at the centre of both efforts to explain and rescue the sacred.

The significance of ‘idealizing’ within Durkheim’s elementary forms

Ultimately, Durkheim repeats the gesture, that I have described in Section 2 above, of disciplining a subjective perspective by way of an objective standard. As with Deleuze’s description of the ‘cinema of reality’, Durkheim begins by describing religious experiences in terms acceptable to believers (equivalent to Deleuze’s subjective ‘reportage pole’) and proceeds to explain that experience from the vantage point of sociological objectivity (the ‘documentary pole’). The believer is credited with a genuine experience of the sacred, but Durkheim goes on to show how they fail to grasp that their sacred is really the distortion of a precious representation of society (‘collective representation’). Durkheim thinks he has discovered a law that simultaneously explains religion, proves the pure autonomy of the social, and guarantees the scientificity of sociology as the highest of all sciences. For Durkheim (1912, p. 333) it is ‘axiomatic that religious beliefs, as odd as they sometimes seem, have a truth that must be discovered.’ The truth that Durkheim unveils is that the sacred is society itself and that society itself is sacred.

The revelation of sociology as the empirical science of the sacred is part of a thoroughly disciplinary strategy. At its basis is Durkheim’s insistence that the concept of the social (and hence the subject matter of sociology) be kept pure and sacrosanct, not just by radically distinguishing it from the psychological and the biological, but also by insisting upon its superior and indeed totalising nature. Durkheim insists that the sacred/social is superimposed upon the mundane real as an ideal to which the individual rightly ‘ascribes a kind of higher dignity’ (1912, p. 317). For Durkheim society is this higher reality beyond the individual that emerges into communicable experience only through a process of ‘idealization’. As ‘soon as we recognize that above the individual there is society, and that society is a system of active forces – not a nominal or rationally created being – a new way of explaining man becomes possible’ (p. 343). Durkheim never ceases insisting upon this purified concept of the social which makes of sociology a sacred science and of him its prophet.

Derkheim’s well known premise is that facts are social facts only if they existed before and outside of the psychobiological individual, and only if they ‘penetrate us by imposing
themselves on us’: only if an external constraint ‘forcibly prescribes’ them and they ‘sweep us along in spite of ourselves’ (1895, p. 52-53). Sociology, in affirming the distinctly societal origins of the sacred, allows a new account of the sacred value of society. Unlike most religious accounts, Durkheim’s does not require an unobservable ‘supra-experiential reality’ (Durkheim, 1912, p. 342), but is grounded in actual occasions of experience. Durkheim’s core idea that the sacred is society conceived symbolically is taken from William Robertson Smith (1894, p. 264-5) who wrote that every act of worship expresses ‘the idea that man does not live for himself only but also for his fellows, and that this partnership of social interests is the sphere over which the gods preside’. Robertson Smith also stressed the importance of occasions of experience in which ‘the whole community [is] stirred by a common emotion’ and Durkheim applied this insight in what is perhaps his best known argument: that the sacred/social is actually experienced during occasions of collective emotional ‘effervescence’. The paradigmatic instance here is ritual. The Hauka ritual with which we began provides a good example of a situation in which ‘Man does not recognise himself; he feels he is transformed’ (Durkheim, 1912, p. 317). Effectively, this is Durkheim’s way of grasping how a people, a society, might be invented, or better, how it is possible to have a concrete experience of ‘society’ that can thenceforth serve as the basic representation a collective has of itself, qua collective.

Durkheim, for good reason, ascribes fundamental importance to this idea that ‘when collective life reaches a certain degree of intensity it awakens religious thought, because it determines a state of effervescence that changes the conditions of psychic activity... vital energies become overstimulated, passions more powerful, sensations stronger’ (ibid). These are social facts because such experiences are not possible alone, but also, they are the basis from which a higher, ‘ideal’ world – Durkheim’s world of society – is superimposed upon the supposed profane psychobiological life of individuals. Society, once strictly separated from psychology and biology (assumed to be individual) ‘wields a creative power that no palpable being can equal’ (1912, p. 342), and yet our grasp of it is necessarily distorted by the very conditions (of collective effervescence) under which we encounter it in collective experience. This experience, despite the disciplinarian strategy, thus carries a risky relation to truth since it is simultaneously the most profound truth of which we are capable (society really does exist beyond the individual), and something veiled in distorting mythology. The collective effervescence, for example, is ‘the experience man is interpreting when he imagines malevolent beings outside himself whose hostility, inherent or provisional, can be disarmed only by human suffering’ (p. 307). Out of the clinging mist of the experience of collective effervescence, in short, the shapes of gods and demons, angels and satyrs, are vaguely discerned.

61 Durkheim’s ‘evidence’ is presented in a startlingly authoritarian way: ‘it is sufficient to observe how children are brought up. If one views the facts as they are and indeed as they have always been, it is patently obvious that all education consists of a continual effort to impose upon the child ways of seeing, thinking and acting which he himself would not have arrived at spontaneously’ (1895, p.53).
Collective effervescence, we might say, is the material from which gods are fabulated. This, essentially, is Durkheim’s sociological alternative to the postulation of what he calls a ‘natural faculty for idealizing, that is for substituting for the world of reality a different world to which he is transported by thought’ (p. 316).

Bergson’s faculty of fabulation

Twenty years later, Bergson retained some of these insights, but construed them quite differently. This ‘natural faculty for idealizing’ – freed from Durkheim’s sociologising framework – is precisely Bergson’s faculty of fabulation. I am suggesting that to ‘idealize’ (to use Durkheim’s word) is to fabulate (to use Bergson’s). It is to double reality with a superimposed ideal and thus to create an ideal of the true that, once superimposed, functions as a fiction at the core of the real. The difference behind this commonality is the way of answering the question of ‘where this idealization comes from’ (Durkheim, 1912 p. 316). What sort of actual occasion of experience promotes it? For Durkheim, as we have seen, it derives from, and is renewed by, a type of emotionally heightened social occasion of experience which both comes from and is ‘society’ par excellence and sui generis. Pure society must have no intercourse with psychology or biology. Bergson refuses this absolute divide and rejects any tendency to ‘regard the individual as an abstraction, and the social body as the one reality’ (1932, p. 105). For Bergson ‘the individual and society are implied in each other: individuals make up society by their grouping together; society shapes an entire side of individuals by being prefigured in each one of them. The individual and society thus condition each other, circle-wise.’ (p. 199). Thus when Bergson describes his faculty of fabulation, he emphasises its biological and psychological aspects and – to strike directly at Durkheim’s Achilles’ heel – he gives examples which are precisely not social in Durkheim’s sense.

His most memorable example concerns a lady on the upper floor of a hotel who wished to descend to the lower level. Observing the gate of the hotel lift to be open, she hurried to enter. But a fault had occurred and the gate was open despite the fact that the lift was still far below. As she rushed forward:

she felt herself flung backwards, the man entrusted with the working of the lift had just appeared and was pushing her back onto the landing. At this point she emerged from her fit of abstraction. She was amazed to see that neither man nor lift was there... She had been about to fling herself into the gaping void; a miraculous hallucination had saved her life. (p. 120).

This fabulation is clearly not a social occasion of collective effervescence, since the lady was alone. Equally clearly, it is not just ‘making things up’ but inventing or hallucinating images at an opportune moment as a defensive reaction. The lady fabulated
automatically in the face of a void and this little drama averted a far worse crisis. Bergson is thus inviting us to view the lady’s imaginary lift-attendant as a fabulation no different in principle to an angel, a muse, or a god: ‘Just now, before the open gate a guardian appeared, to bar the way and drive back the trespasser’ (p. 122). Another example he gives is of William James’s experience of an earthquake, whereby James reported inadvertently personifying the geological event with quasi-human features. Bergson’s emphasis, in short, is not on the social nature of the occasion of significant experience, but on its nature as a more or less shocking event. ‘How is it’, Bergson asks, ‘that psychologists have not been struck by the mysterious element in a faculty such as this?’ (p. 196).

Consistent with his psychological focus (which does not exclude the social, but prevents Durkheim’s ‘top down’ social dictation), Bergson proposes an evolutionary function explaining the existence of this faculty. Essentially, fabulation is nature’s way of guarding against dangers introduced by the newfound intelligence of our ancestors: their newly evolved intellectual faculties of judgement and reason. Intelligence is corrosive of any social order held together by biological instinct and unquestioned habit. The intelligent beast pursues rational self-interest and would reject the irrational demands for collective obligation, were it not for the co-evolution of fabulation. At crucial junctures – where crises might regularly occur – fabulations immunise humanity against the unexpected side-effects of its own powers of intelligence. Thanks to fabulation, phantasmic images and incipient hallucinations arise in the mind to intercept and counteract the direction in which an intellectual train of thought would otherwise take the thinker. If intelligence pursues only facts, the faculty of fabulation responds by generating counterfeit facts of experience which, serving as ‘virtual-instincts’, prevent us from sliding into anarchic disorder. The sociological benefit of fabulation is thus the salvaging of social order. The cost is that the social order that has been won is a backwards-and-inwards looking form that depends on the irrational stock of images and myths that Bergson calls static morality and religion. Having identified the faculty of fabulation as the source of our traditional religious imagery and stories, Bergson is able to define static religion rather emphatically as ‘a defensive reaction of nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence’ (p. 131).

Bergson’s process philosophy emphatically rejects Durkheim’s fundamental dualism between individual and society along with related dualisms like body/mind. The future of psychology, he suggests, (p. 105) ‘depends on the way it first dissects its object’. But this also applies to sociology, and indeed any science. To follow the natural joints, Bergson proposes a transdisciplinary distinction between a static nature oriented towards its own conservation (which he associates with abstraction, habit and all things mechanical and spatial), and a dynamically creative nature expressing an ever-emerging vitality (which he associates with intuition and process). This allows him to avoid Durkheim’s tendency to construe organic nature as mechanical repetition in contrast to
society’s ideal obligations. Biology and psychology too can be static and dynamic. Nevertheless, Bergson invariably celebrates the ‘dynamic’ side associated with creation, invention and intuition. In discussing intelligence, for instance, he celebrates the ‘intelligence which invents’ over and above that which merely ‘understands, discusses, accepts or rejects – which, in a word, limits itself to criticism’ (p. 45). When discussing emotion he distinguishes a static and ‘infra-intellectual’ type with which the ‘psychologist is generally concerned’ (p. 44) from a dynamic and ‘supra-intellectual’ type, which alone is ‘productive of ideas’ and ‘the source of the great creations of art, of science and of civilization in general’ (p. 43). Put abstractly, on the one hand, we have an open ‘active, moving principle’ of ‘freely creative energy’ and on the other, the closed ‘matter’ which is merely the more or less refractory vehicle for this moving energy. It is as if the former were an electric current running through the latter. Different animal species are, from the perspective of creative evolution, merely resting points at which this ‘great current of creative energy… came to a stop’ (p. 209). From this perspective, an organism is relatively ‘closed’ like a ‘footprint, which instantly causes a myriad grains of sand to cohere and form a pattern’ (ibid). One footprint is, of course, just a step towards the next on an ‘open’ journey.

When Bergson contrasts closed and open societies, then, he links those types to psychological and biological dimensions. Thus the static religion that generates closed societies has its source in a psychological faculty of fabulation which results from organic evolution, always in societal context. Closed societies use the benign trickery of fabulated ‘virtual instincts’ to conserve their solidarity. Static morality and religion are ultimately negative in that they dull our emergent intelligence by telling humanity ‘tales on a par with those with which we lull children to sleep’ (p. 211). Religious fabulations are not just nice ideas, but ‘ideo-motory’ constructions which, à la Durkheim, demand our unquestioning practical compliance. The strong implication from Bergson is that Durkheim’s entire theory of society remains static. The open society is something different. It is Bergson’s way of rescuing the sacred. Dynamic religion flows, not from the faculty of fabulation, but from intuition. It is not based on imposition but on a mystical love with its source in a direct grasp of the universe, enabled by intuition, as this unified and ever-moving flux of creative energy.

Only the mystic is capable of this intuition, but the mystic can influence all. For Bergson the human mind is limited by its need to transform the real flux into recognisable spatially located objects-for-mundane-use. For this reason, the daily material world is more like a curtain between mundane humanity and a higher truth. What we perceive – the world of matter that has been spatialized – is just a veil. The mystic sees the

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62 In editing this article, Maria Nichterlein made the following insightful connection to a comment from Bateson (in his 1958 epilogue to Naven) on A.N. Whitehead and B. Russell. Bateson wrote of ‘a well-known story about the philosopher Whitehead. His former pupil and famous collaborator, Bertrand
dynamic process beyond the static veil. This vision promises the invention of an open society tolerant of a higher quantity and quality of ‘creative energy’. Bergson is the mystic with a soul sufficiently strong to ‘feel itself pervaded, though retaining its own personality, by a being immeasurably mightier than itself, just as an iron is pervaded by the fire which makes it glow’ (p. 212). With its mystic source, a dynamic religion would transfigure static religion and open the closed society. The bonds between individual, society and life would be re-energised by a joyful affirmation of mutual participation in the creative process of nature. No longer habitually attached to the illusory materiality of particular things, citizens would celebrate life-as-such. No longer attached by partisan commitments to local groups, they would identify with humanity as a whole (p. 268).

The fabled philosopher: the blocked and unblocked passages of Deleuzian fabulation

Returning to the Bergson/Durkheim relation has allowed us to appreciate the scope of the concept of fabulation and its tight connection to the problem of the emergence of the sacred-social. Both thinkers fabulate a new image of society and the sacred which they hope is capable of sustaining and integrating future humanity. Durkheim’s is a disciplinary fabulation. Thanks to sociology, an ever more totalising society can be ‘progressively purified’ of the ‘subjective elements’ of pre-modern religion (p. 340). This purification process will yield a ‘supreme’ and ‘dominating’ trans-personal force that truly deserves the total obedience that, for Durkheim, all social facts demand of individuals: ‘the concept of totality is merely the abstract form of the concept of society: it is the whole that includes all things, the supreme classification’ (Durkheim, 1912, p. 337). In Bergson’s transdisciplinary fabulation, by contrast, the vitalist vision of the mystic will usher in the open society of globally flowing interconnected love. We will take our rightful place – as a unified part of the immanent whole of nature-in-process – in ‘the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods’ (1932, p. 317).

In light of the above, Deleuzian fabulation can be sketched out via a double comparison. The first is a comparison with Bergson’s concept. Deleuze writes little about religion

Russell, came to visit Harvard and lectured in the large auditorium on quantum theory, always a difficult subject, and at that time a comparatively novel theory. Russell labored to make the matter intelligible to the distinguished audience, many of whom were unversed in the ideas of mathematical physics. When he sat down, Whitehead rose as chairman to thank the speaker. He congratulated Russell on his brilliant exposition “and especially on leaving … unobscured … the vast darkness of the subject”.

In *Desert Islands*, Deleuze (2004, p. 11) suggests that ‘rites and mythology’ are the most profound aspects of the collective imagination, and indeed that literature is ‘the attempt to interpret, in an ingenious way, the myths we no longer understand, at the moment we no longer understand them,'
and the focus of his concept of fabulation is on art (cinema, literature, painting). But Deleuze’s ‘artistic fabulation’ clearly expresses Bergson’s mystic vision of the universe as a surging tide of freely creative vital energy that ‘shows up’ temporarily as an array of objectified entities. In this sense, while consistent with it in other ways, Deleuze contradicts Bergson’s argument that intuition is the source of this vision, and precisely not fabulation. For Deleuze, genuine art plays a politico-therapeutic role of releasing life from its static, blocked forms. As Deleuze puts it, the act of writing is ‘an attempt to make life something more than personal, to free life from what imprisons it’ (1995, p. 142–3). The ways of living depicted in literature are taken by Deleuze as symptoms of how vital life might gush forth or get blocked-up or drain away. The death mask of the personal, from this perspective, is one aspect of the illness that literature aims to diagnose and cure. For Deleuze literature is not an effort to impose form on lived experience but a means through which it ‘escapes its own formalization’ (1998, p. 1). Great literature thus has nothing to do with recounting ‘one’s memories and travels, one’s loves and griefs, one’s dreams and fantasies’ (p. 2). These are the travels, griefs and fantasies of the very person that literature aims to dissolve into a becoming other64. Only a neurotic notion of art revolves around the ‘personal’, forever seeking a reassuring daddy-mommy to fix one’s form and to blot out the call of the wild, vital energy. Just as the cinema that Deleuze celebrates serves to replace the ‘Ego = Ego’ formula with ‘Ego = becoming’, so literature ‘is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience’ (p. 1). Literature begins, not with the personal ‘I’, but only when we are stripped ‘of the power to say “I”’ (p. 3). It is only as becoming that art can feed into the political becoming of a minoritarian people to come.

64 This notion of becoming other is key to Deleuze and also to Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 272), for whom becomings other always follow a minoritarian trajectory towards maximal molecularity: ‘A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or –mineral; becomings molecular of all kinds, becoming particles. Fibers lead us from one to the other, transform one into the other as they pass through doors and across thresholds. Singing or composing, painting, writing have no other aim: to unleash these becomings’. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 291) insist that there is ‘no becoming-man’ (p. 291). In this respect, it is interesting to note that the Hauka ritual depicted in ‘Les Maîtres Fous’ does indeed appear to involve becomings that move from minoritarian (subjugated black) to majoritarian (colonialising white). So long as we do not mistake becoming for the simple imitation of a molar subject, this deviation from Deleuze and Guattari’s order might provide an interesting clue for a fresh interpretation of ‘Les Maîtres Fous’ in terms of fabulation. Here, I merely wish to note the direct connection between fabulation and becoming: ‘There is a reality of becoming-animal, even though one does not in reality become animal’ (p. 273).
Deleuze’s encounter with Bergson, therefore, does not leave Bergsonism unchanged. He famously confessed that he viewed ‘the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all the shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed’ (Deleuze, 1995, p. 6). Deleuze gives such a distinctive meaning to Bergson’s fabulation that, when reading the following words, it is hard not to see Gilles approaching Henri from behind: ‘There is no literature without fabulation, but as Bergson was able to see, fabulation – the fabulating function – does not consist in imagining or projecting an ego. Rather, it attains these visions, it raises itself to these becomings and powers’ (Deleuze, 1998, p. 3). For Bergson, as we saw, fabulation can never raise itself to the mystic vision, since it is always a matter of conjuring an opportune falsehood to avert some crisis. Bergson even insists that ‘the mistake is to believe that it is possible to pass, by a mere process of enlargement or improvement, from the static to the dynamic, from… fabulation… to intuition’ (1932, p. 269). In gently unblocking this passage, Deleuze relieves Bergson’s philosophy of the need to fabulate two distinct ‘faculties’, and implicitly unifies fabulation and intuition within a concept of the event, itself partly Bergsonian. An event ruptures prior causality and chronology and – in precipitating the disconcerting and ego-dissolving visions of fabulation – opens a new set of possibilities for becoming other. Deleuze precisely values the disconcerting visions produced by fabulation, since, for him, these can form the basis of works of art through which new political possibilities are created.

Albeit implicitly, Deleuze gives a similar treatment to Durkheim, and this is our second comparison. Certainly Deleuze sides with Bergson’s critique, and prefers Tarde’s ‘molecular’ sociology to Durkheim’s ‘molar’ conception of a purified social (see Riley, 2002, p. 16). But compared to Bergson, who lays stress upon the psycho-biological to refute his rival, Deleuze wants precisely to grasp the sociological and, more precisely, political contribution fabulation makes to what he calls ‘the invention of [a] people’. In this respect he shares Durkheim’s fascination with those occasions in which ‘Man does not recognise himself; he feels he is transformed’ (Durkheim, 1912, p. 317). These experiences of ‘collective effervescence’ are the ‘regions of intensity’ in which the ‘body without organs’ is encountered and assembled on a ‘plane of immanence’. But where Durkheim reaches always for the pristine collective representation emerged fully-formed in its purity like Aphrodite from a sea-shell, Deleuze returns us to the murky event of emergence itself. Deleuze (1990) doubtless had Durkheim in mind when he said: ‘What I’ve been interested in are collective creations rather than representations’. In this sense, fabulation, as I have further discussed elsewhere (Stenner, 2017a), is the passage from transformative event to communicable intuition. The event as pure
actuality of becoming is unstable, ambiguous, volatile and unfinished, and it veers unpredictably now towards a static fascism and now towards a progressive dynamism. But it contains the seeds of a ‘profound fiction, at the heart of the real’. As Deleuze warns, literature ‘is delirium, and as such its destiny is played out between the two poles of delirium. Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims is pure and dominant. But it is the measure of health when it evokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations’ (1998, p. 4).

Conclusion

Through fabulation, Deleuze’s thinking about art implicitly reconnects with the question of the sacred (and hence my choice to begin with the controversial cine-Hauka ceremony). If writing is about becoming, and warrants a concept of fabulation, then perhaps this is a function of the extent to which it approximates the experience of the sacred at play in rites of passage. Perhaps literature is an ingenious attempt to interpret, not just ‘the myths we no longer understand’, but also the rituals we no longer understand ‘since we no longer know how to dream them (Deleuze, 2004, p. 12). Perhaps this is why Deleuze insists that the closer writing comes to becoming, the more it destroys itself as writing, and the more it approximates a vision. In the work of a great writer, language is ‘toppled or pushed to a limit, to an outside or reverse side that consists of Visions and Auditions that no longer belong to any language’ (Deleuze, 1998, p. 5). The language of the writer thus ‘seems to be seized by a delirium, which forces it out of its usual furrows’ (ibid). Antonin Artaud understood this process better than most and saw it as the vocation of true theatre: ‘To shatter language in order to contact life means creating or recreating theatre’ (1974, p. 6). All of these features can be understood as a certain becoming ritual of literature and cinema. And yet, in pointing to a zone of indiscernability between religious ritual, mythology and the arts, we must nevertheless attend to the specificities of the arts which precisely do not entail the total collective participation typical of rituals. Once individuated from their ritual matrix, theatre, painting, literature and indeed cinema presuppose a distinction between the sacred and the aesthetic. The aesthetic implies an audience for the product of an artistic creation whose process may be very lonely and – since art deals with that which is at the edge of semantic availability – may even veer close to madness. Fabulations, as Rosi Braidotti (2000, p. 170-1) suggests, propel becomings by bringing the unthinkable into representation. We thus grasp their connection to mysticism defined as ‘insight into depths as yet unspoken’ (Whitehead, 1938, p. 237).

References


Abstract

In his extensive use of literature throughout his oeuvre, Deleuze admits that he was looking for a certain ‘vitality’ that can only be found in ‘a Life’ freed from the constraints of a static subject. Following Nietzsche, he addresses this by examining the process of symptomatology, which forms the basis of his critical and clinical use of literature. In *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1991b), Deleuze explains that ordinary symptomatology subtracts the critical from the clinical, resulting in an incorrect grouping of distinct symptoms, and the erroneous coupling of sadism with masochism, as if they were complimentary and reversible pathologies, when in fact, they are ‘distinct and irreversible’ (Lambert, 2000, p. 138). Deleuze’s critical and clinical project renews symptomatology via ‘the literary approach…[where] the critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning’ (Deleuze, 1991b, p. 14). In Deleuze’s symptomatology, the clinical side entails grouping of symptoms, which are signs of life, and these are combined with the critical, a creative examination of the forces, context and literary style of the writer, to generate a critical diagnosis of health, which he argues ‘is always a question of art’ (1991b, p. 14). Health here is not opposed to illness, but rather, following Nietzsche is a noble ‘commitment to the practice of living’ (Tynan, 2010, p. 154), which entails the search for “vitality” in the patient and the analyst (Deleuze, 2004, p. 142). This vitality is found in certain literary writers whose style makes visible the impersonal forces that make up all phenomena, signs and symptoms (Deleuze, 1983, p. 75), and it is this creative literary critique that may enable artists to ‘become clinicians not only of themselves, but of civilisation’ (1990, p. 237).
Introduction

Deleuze’s philosophy offers a compelling contribution to psychology in his combination of both science and art in his ‘critical and clinical project’. Rather than turning to mainstream usual understanding of clinical presentations – either in the form of early trauma in patient’s childhood, or later trauma such as violence or physical injury or genetic predispositions – to find the cause of an illness, Deleuze instead turns outwards to consider the movement of impersonal forces that constitute all phenomena, signs and symptoms (1983, p. 75). Forces such as impulses, drives and desires are only known through the signs and symptoms they create, and it is the medical doctor or psychologist who groups these symptoms to name an illness in the process of symptomatology. Deleuze’s critical and clinical project takes up the symptomatological method, used for example in Freud’s concept of sadomasochism, and refines it by including both the clinical and critical aspects of the source of this pathology, as demonstrated in the writings of the Marquis de Sade, and Baron von Sacher-Masoch. In the following, I trace Deleuze’s critical and clinical methodology to demonstrate how literature and Life are entwined in those great artists who sought affirmative responses to the difficulties of living. In doing so, I engage with Deleuze’s reading of Sade and Masoch in Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty (1991b) to explore how this work suggests a number of alternatives to Freud’s concept of neurosis and diagnosis, and thus offers to psychology productive alternatives to the binary of health and illness.

Deleuze found in great works of literature, a certain vitality that he argued was lacking in the psychoanalyst and the patient; a vitality that entails a noble response to the tragic conditions of life, regardless of the quality of one’s health. Following Nietzsche, vitality is measured by the tenor of life, which is most evident in those writers who deconstruct the binary between characters and their environments, who examine modes of living freed from the dominance of the Cartesian Cogito. Descartes famous statement cogito ergo sum; ‘I think, therefore I am’, was an attempt to establish what could be known without doubt. By placing this certainty on the thinking subject, Descartes bifurcated the world into mind and matter, prioritising the thinking subject over the materiality of the body.

In contrast, Nietzsche, Deleuze and great writers of literature returned to the body to examine modes of living where the thinking subject is not separate from the forces of life. For Nietzsche, the body guides his philosophy since, as Klossowski states via Smith (2005), ‘the body is a more accessible phenomenon, less surrounded by myth and

65 I have focused on Sadomasochism – a diagnosis that, although central to clinical practices during the years when Deleuze was writing, is no longer prevalent in such form – because it is familiar enough and affords a direct reference to Deleuze’s work on the elements participating in clinical analysis. It is also of value noticing that Deleuze was even more critical of mainstream psychology ‘which made a fetish of activity [because of i]ts unreasonable fear of introspection allowed it to observe only that which moved’ (1994, p. 73).
superstition’ (p. 8). Deleuze asserts that returning to the body as a mode of living requires an active experimentation, an engagement with life on its own terms, no longer dominated by prior concepts that perpetuate the Cartesian bifurcation. This central tenant means that Deleuze’s philosophy is immanent, where mind and matter, concepts and bodies are all seen as encountering on a singular flattened plane. By returning to the body and the forces and sensations that constitute all phenomenon, Deleuze repeatedly questions any transcendent concept that attempts to explain or interpret life in abstract terms. What is most problematic here, are transcendent, static notions of the self, or ego; a form of being that is ontologically prior to life in itself as experienced by the person. Deleuze’s immanent philosophy instead posits a subject that is dynamically enfolded with life in a perpetual process of becoming.

Literature and life

Deleuze’s philosophical writings repeatedly engage with literature, with his famous A Thousand Plateaus (1987) published with Felix Guattari containing over 200 literary references. Yet it was not until the first essay in Literature and Life (1997b) that Deleuze clearly defined his prior writings on his relation to literature and his critical and clinical project. Deleuze’s approach to literature did not take the form of literary criticism, nor did he examine textual or historical elements, but rather he was interested in the way in which literature could be ‘an enterprise of health’, where 'health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people that is missing', creating new modes of living and inventing a 'people to come' (Deleuze, 1997b, p. 228), which has important implications for a Deleuzian psychology, as will be discussed below.

Great literature, for Deleuze consisted of works that did not attempt to represent or give meaning to human experience, as if the complexity of life can be adequately captured in language, but rather sought to deliberately push the boundaries of ‘linguistic conventions’ and social norms (2012b, p. 294). For Deleuze, there are very few writers who meet this criterion, 'who can call themselves writers' (1997b, p. 230). Great writers are only those who experiment with the interpretation of signs and the ‘deterritorialization of language’ (Bogue, 2012b, p. 287) beyond the binary of signified and signifier. The ultimate aim of literature, according to Deleuze is to allow language to be ‘seized by a delirium, which forces it out of its usual furrows' (1997b, p. 229), and can lead to stuttering, ‘making uncoordinated leaps’ that present as ‘snarls, squeals [and] stammers’ (1994, p. 54). Writers such as Kafka, reveal a 'kind of foreign language with language', a 'becoming-other of language' that 'escapes the dominant system' (Deleuze, 1997b, p. 229). Deleuze described this kind of literature as minor, which does not mean less-than, but rather minor in the sense of not-major or mainstream.
Minor literature

Minor literature is characterised by a concern not with concepts developed by individual subjects at the centre of literary action, but rather what is given to perception; the forces encountered by the body, experienced as intensities, percepts and affects from which concepts are constructed. This has important implications for psychology, as minor literature articulates modes of becoming that do not emphasise the individual subject. These intensities, percepts and affects are fleeting and non-representable, where every form that takes shape at infinite speeds vanishes as soon as it appears (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 118). Percepts are not perceptions, but rather are ‘packets of sensations and relations’ that exist independently of an experiencer (Deleuze, 1995b, p. 137). Following Bergson, for Deleuze, percepts are the immediate sensations, the ‘sense-data’ of human experience that become visible when one draws ‘closer to life’, to movement and differentiation (Bergson, 1992, p. 107). When articulated, percepts reveal those ‘invisible forces that populate the universe’ (Smith, 1997, p. xxxiv) from which the subject is constructed. In addition, Deleuze and Guattari explain that ‘affects aren’t feelings’, but are ‘relations of movement and rest’ (1987, p. 261); ‘nonhuman becomings’ (1994, p. 169), ‘that spill over beyond whoever lives through them’ (Deleuze, 1995b, p. 137).

As such, minor literature decentres the subject and instead experiments with what Deleuze and Guattari call the ‘pure being of sensations’ (1994, p. 167), what Virginia Woolf called “moments of the world” (Smith, 1997, p. xxxiv). In minor literature, the subject is enfolded with the object of perception (Berman, 2012, p. 40) and becomes in relation to it. The individual subject gives way to the concept of ‘haecceity’, which is an assemblage of percepts, affects and encounters that is singular but not personal (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 265). As Deleuze and Guattari elucidate, ‘we are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero’ (1994, p. 169).

Becoming with the world is most clearly exemplified in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* according to Deleuze, where Captain Ahab and the white whale become indiscernible in their relations. Deleuze explains that of course these literary characters are still discernible in their individuation, but in these encounters, Ahab enters a ‘zone of proximity’ where he is no longer differentiated from Moby-Dick (1997b, p. 225). This is the result of the intensity of their encounter which produced ‘the power of the impersonal’ (p. 227) whereby Ahab ‘strikes himself in striking the whale’ and the ‘animal simultaneously becomes something other: an unbearable whiteness, a shimmering pure white wall’ (Smith, 1997, p. xxx). Virginia Woolf also articulates this becoming-with, this haecceity, where her characters are indiscernible from the landscape, as Deleuze and Guattari explain; “The thin dog is running in the road, this dog is the road,” cries Virginia Woolf’ (1987, p. 263). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari proclaim that this is ‘how we need to feel’; intersecting ‘forms and subjects’, without beginnings, ends or destinations, but rather ‘always in the middle’, like Mrs. Dalloway, neither this nor that (p. 263).
Vitalism

In minor literature, writers experiment with ‘an impersonal yet singular life’ (Deleuze, 2001, p. 28) via pre-subjective forces, intensities and percepts. For Deleuze, great literature only begins with the impersonal, ‘when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say “I”’, when all the traits of individual literary characters ‘elevate them to a vision that carries them off in an indefinite, like a becoming that it too powerful for them’ (1997b, p. 227). In those moments, writers ‘attempt to make life something more than personal, to free life from what imprisons it’ (Smith, 1997, p. xv), such that literature opens beyond the life of an individual, to ‘A life [which] is everywhere’ (Deleuze, 2001, p. 29, author’s emphasis). This Life, for Deleuze is ‘a non-organic power’ that exceeds lived experience and has a ‘complex ontological and ethical status’, opening up new modes of living sans the personal subject (Smith, 1997, p. xiii), which has interesting implications for psychology that I examine in the following. Indeed, the notion of ‘a Life’ dominated Deleuze’s philosophy as he famously explained: ‘everything I’ve written is vitalistic, at least I hope it is’ (in Smith, 1997, p. xiii).

Deleuze elucidates his vitalistic philosophy most clearly in his final essay *Immanence: A Life* (2001), where he considers a rogue character from Dickens who is dying by the side of the road, and as his personality ebbs away, his individual life ‘gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life ... a "Homo tantum" with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude’ (p. 28-29). He becomes ‘a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil’ where there is no longer his life but ‘a Life’, freed from the constraints of individuation, which only too readily departs once the scoundrel is revived (pp. 28-29). What Deleuze demonstrates here, is the vitalism that becomes apparent when life is depersonalised; it becomes ‘pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else’ (p. 27-28). Life here is not immanent to anything other than itself, as without the *cogito*, life is not bifurcated and is therefore ‘absolute immanence... complete power, complete bliss’ (p. 27).

Critical and clinical

Deleuze’s critical and clinical approach to literature follows this vitalistic thread evident in minor literature by redefining the function of critique via Kant, and broadening notions of the clinical to incorporate a vitality and new modes of existence. As Smith explains, ‘the fundamental idea behind Deleuze’s “critique et clinique” project is that authors and artists, like doctors and clinicians, can themselves be seen as profound symptomatologists’ (1997, p. xvii). In reformulating the symptomatological method via the critical and the clinical, Deleuze brings a greater precision to this ‘active science’
Deleuze argues that ‘in place of a dialectic which all too readily perceives the link between opposites, we should aim for a critical and clinical appraisal able to reveal the truly differential mechanisms as well as the artistic originalities’ (1991b, p. 14). In Deleuze’s symptomatological method, the critical and clinical are combined to engage with symptoms and affirmative signs of life. Deleuze elucidates that his critical and clinical project renews symptomatology via ‘the literary approach...[where] the critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning’ (1991b, p. 14). This combination of the literary and the medical brings together both art and science in the grouping of symptoms to form a diagnosis that moves psychology beyond the pathological, and instead identifies a vitalism that makes it possible to create new modes and conditions for living.

Deleuze’s concept of critique is vastly different to the ordinary use of the word. Critique is normally associated with judgement, which evaluates things according to some transcendent truth. For Deleuze, critique founded on judgement is an ‘abominable faculty’, it is ‘the vengeance of the weak’ (1997c, p. 40), which suffocates new modes of becoming by limiting the forces of existence. What is required, he claims, is to have ‘done with judgement’ (1997d, p. 126), to learn the ‘secret: to bring into existence’ new combinations of forces, to learn ‘not to judge’ (p. 135). Indeed, Deleuze’s critical approach to literature examines the forces, context and literary style of a writer to ascertain what this style is pointing towards. For Deleuze, style incorporates the three separate poles of ‘concepts, or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and construing; and affects, or new ways of feeling’ and ‘you need all three to get things moving’ (1995a, p. 164-165). As such, ‘critique is essentially an active rather than passive process’, as it entails both the ‘joyous destruction of all that is negative and opposed to life’ (Bogue, 2003, p. 13) and an active expression of new modes of existence, new fabulations (Deleuze, 1997b, p. 227). Thus, ‘affirmation and critique are not incompatible’ (Tynan, 2011, p. 51).

On the other hand, Deleuze’s clinical or medical approach to literature follows the medical process of symptomatology, but extends this to include the evaluation of all signs of life, the grouping of which is too important to leave to physicians only. As Smith elucidates, for Deleuze, symptomatology ‘belongs as much to art as to medicine’ (1997, p. xvi). While the scientific aspect of medicine is concerned with the etiology or causation of diseases, symptomatology precedes diagnosis in the naming of a group of symptoms to create an illness or pathology, although it cannot be said that the clinician actually ”invent” a disease, but rather they have ”isolated” it’ (Smith, 2014, p. 206). When a medical doctor is confronted with a set of symptoms in a patient, the diagnostic task is to ‘interpret and decipher the symptoms’ (p. 205). Symptoms such as a headache or fever do not point towards a specific illness, but rather are grouped together with other symptoms and the doctor must distinguish this set of particular symptoms to
arrive at a diagnosis (p. 205). This grouping of symptoms, in contrast with the etiology of disease requires a certain artistic ‘flair’, and therefore, 'symptomatology is always a question of art' (Deleuze, 1991b, p. 14).

Deleuze extends the medical use of symptomatology, following Nietzsche to claim that philosophers and artists are ‘physicians of culture’ (Smith, 2014, p. 201). Deleuze states that artists if they ‘are great, they are more like doctors than patients’ (1990, p. 237), in the manner in which they group together signs and symptoms that ‘reflect a certain state of forces’ as either active or reactive (1983, p. 75). In his Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche substitutes ‘affect for judgement’ and warns that ‘beyond good and evil does not in the least mean beyond the good and the bad’ (Deleuze, 1989, p. 136, author’s emphasis), but rather the good are active forces and the bad, reactive. Deleuze argues that for Nietzsche, affect is an ‘immanent evaluation’ of Life wherein the bad is known affectively because it exhausts and degenerates life. Deleuze explains further:

> The good is outpouring, ascending life, the kind which knows how to transform itself, to metamorphose itself according to the forces it encounters, and which forms a constantly larger force with them, always increasing the power to live, always opening new “possibilities”…Only the good allows itself to be exhausted by life rather than exhausting it, always putting itself at the service of what is reborn from life, what metamorphoses and creates. (p. 136-137)

Artists who capture these affective forces thus become cultural diagnosticians, describing modes of existence that articulate a vitality that increases the ‘tenor of existence, the intensification of life’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 74).

Thus, Deleuze’s symptomatology is concerned with the grouping of symptoms that are the result of active or reactive forces. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze states that the sense of a thing, either human, biological or even physical, cannot be known unless the ‘force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which takes possession of it or is expressed in it’ is discovered, as all symptoms are the result of ‘an existing force’ (1983, p. 3). Yet rather than attributing cause or meaning to symptoms, Deleuze goes further to claim that ‘symptoms are like birds that strike their beaks against the window. It is not a question of interpreting them’ (1997a, p. 63). Rather, what is required is to identify ‘their trajectory to see if they can serve as indicators of new universes of reference capable of acquiring a consistency sufficient for turning a situation upside down’ (p. 63-64). Great artists and writers both articulate these forces evident as signs and symptoms and also group them in novel and productive ways. Hence Deleuze states that artists may ‘become clinicians not only of themselves, but of civilisation’ (1990, p. 237).
Masoch and Sade

In his critical and clinical project, Deleuze argues that medical symptomatology fails to incorporate both the scientific and artistic aspects of symptoms and thus incorrectly groups pathologies that are unrelated. Deleuze first addressed this issue in his 1967 essay *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, which is a systematic and sustained attack on Freud’s concept of sadomasochism. Although sadomasochism is by no means the only focus of Deleuze’s critical and clinical project, it demonstrates Deleuze’s systematic critique of medical symptomatology by offering important lines of flight for a Deleuzian inspired psychology, as I explain.

In the medical sense of symptomatology, once a physician groups certain symptoms to form a disease, a proper name is given such as Parkinson’s disease or Alzheimer’s disease, which does not refer to a particular person as the author of the illness, but instead identifies their role in the grouping of signs and symptoms into concepts (Smith, 2014, p. 206). The writings of the Marquis de Sade produce the term sadism, and Krafft-Ebing, in 1869 used Masoch’s name to ‘designate [the] fundamental perversion’ of masochism ‘(much to Masoch’s own consternation)’ (Smith, 1997, p. xvii). Yet a close reading of each of their works reveals that Freud’s construct of the sado-masochistic complex is ‘not a disease but a syndrome, a false grouping of signs of diverse provenance that have only a name in common’ (Bogue, 2003, p. 16).

In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Deleuze argues that when the literary context, style and artistic flair of writers are not considered (the creative or critical side), the clinical symptomatology (scientific grouping of symptoms to form a disease) that follows is inaccurate. In addition, as Smith explains, the clinical side entails a dissociation of symptoms ‘that were previously confused’ so as to correctly group ‘together symptoms that were previously disassociated and unperceived’ (1997, p. xvi). Unfortunately, in his coupling of sadomasochism, Freud was inattentive to the critical or literary style evident in the works of Sade and Masoch, and so he ‘lost much of the critical force that was specific to their literary production’ (Lambert, 2000, p. 138). In separating the literary from the medical, Freud neglected to consider how the artistic style of each writer contributed to a clinical conception of their symptoms.

In addition, the writings of Sacher-Masoch are considered by Deleuze to belong to the realm of minor literature, in that his works articulate forces and intensities via percepts and affects. Deleuze writes that although Masoch enjoyed ‘having himself pursued, tied up and subjected to punishments, humiliations and even acute physical pain by an opulent fur-clad woman with a whip’, as well as ‘signing contracts with the women in his life’ and ‘making use of all kinds of fetishes and disguises’, his writings are also ‘important

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66 Deleuze also wrote whole books on Proust and Kafka and *Essays Critical and Clinical* could be seen as a collection of different clinical presentations.
and unusual’ (1991b, p. 10-11). Masoch’s work, according to Deleuze, ‘draws on all the forces of German Romanticism’ such as fantasy and suspense, but he also ‘has a particular way of “desexualizing” love and at the same time sexualizing the entire history of humanity’ (p. 11-12). As such, Deleuze argues that Masoch submits language to a ““higher function”’ that affirms alternative modes of becoming-with, that do not rely on a singular individual, all of which is lost to Freud (Smith, 1997, p. xviii).

Deleuze further argues that Masoch and Sade’s universes have nothing to do with each other as their techniques, problems, concerns and intentions are ‘entirely dissimilar’ (1991b, p. 13). Geyskens writes that ‘even a superficial reading of Sade’s 120 Days of Sodom (1784) and Masoch’s Venus in Furs (1870) shows immediately that there can be no question of complementarity or of a possible encounter’ (2010, p. 104). Deleuze argues that ‘both in their art and in their language Masoch and Sade are totally different’ (1991b, p. 34). In Coldness and Cruelty, Deleuze provides extensive examples of these differences, such as Masoch deriving great pleasure in the ritual of drawing up contracts with the women in his life, ‘while the Sadist abominates and destroys them’ (1991b, p. 20). In addition, although both pathologies share a desire for pleasure linked to pain and humiliation, for the masochist, ‘pleasure is obtained subsequently, in that which is made possible by the punishment’ (p. 89), and so the link between pleasure and pain for the masochist is temporal and not causal (Pont, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, in his coupling, Freud assumes that the existence of a masochist implies ‘the existence of an antagonistic sadist who inflicts suffering’ on the masochist (Reynolds, 2006, p. 89-90), which is not the case. Additional examples of the fundamental differences between sadism and masochism are summarised by Deleuze as ‘the contrasting processes of the negative and negation on the one hand [Sade], and of disavowal and suspense on the other [Masoch]’ (1991b, p. 34, author’s emphasis).

Deleuze thus rejects the sado-masochistic complex as an erroneous coupling of the ‘incommensurable worlds’ of Sade and Masoch (Bogue, 2012a, p. 144). Drawing on Bergson’s philosophical method of intuition, which stipulates that thinking requires a precision in relation to multiplicities, Deleuze explains in Bergsonism that the second step of Bergson’s method demands that composites are always divided according to their proper articulations, namely differentiating between those that differ in kind, and those that differ in degree (1991a, p. 22). To achieve this precision Deleuze argues that elements that are ontologically different, that is, those that differ in kind, must be considered separately. In Coldness and Cruelty, Deleuze argues that this is the primary error of Freud, because he combined the pathologies of Sade and Masoch as if they were simply differences in degree (Lauwaert and Britt, 2015, p. 172) and thus Freud misses the ‘psychodynamics of [the] widely divergent universes’ of Sade and Masoch (Bogue, 2012b, p. 288). As Lambert argues, this erroneous combination of sadism and masochism assumes they are ‘complimentary and reversible pathologies’, when in fact, they are ‘distinct and irreversible’ (2000, p. 138).
In summary, Deleuze’s reading of the literary works of Sade and Masoch extends medical symptomatology in three major ways. Firstly, the clinical aspect of symptomatology, which entails the scientific grouping of signs and symptoms is developed by Deleuze into an art form by incorporating the grouping of intensities and signs, which articulate active and reactive forces. Secondly, the clinical side is coupled with a critical aspect whereby symptoms and signs are considered within the literary style and context of their production. Therefore, the literary, or critical aspect is an affirmative or creative reading of the writer’s signs of life. When the clinical and critical are combined in Deleuze’s symptomatology, the grouping of symptoms is more precise due to an accurate differentiation between differences of degree and kind. Thirdly, Deleuze extends medical symptomatology like Freud, by considering not patients with medical conditions, but rather writers of a minor literature that seek to articulate certain modes of becoming-with in creative and vitalistic ways.

As a writer of minor literature, Masoch did not ‘suffer’ from his symptoms like a patient, but rather ‘his literary works isolated a particular way of existing and set forth a novel symptomatology of it’ (Smith, 1997, p. xvii). Although Sade and Masoch could personally be described as ‘perverts’, their literature presents ‘unparalleled configurations of symptoms and signs’ (Deleuze, 1991b, p. 16), which makes them ‘great clinicians’ of perversion’ (Geyskens, 2010, p. 105). In their description of a ‘new and aberrant sexuality’ (2010, p. 105), Sade and Masoch ‘discovered new forms of expression, new ways of thinking and feeling and an entirely original language’ (Deleuze, 1991b, p. 16). This third aspect of Deleuze’s symptomatology means that great writers and artists are ‘also great anthropologists, of the type whose work succeeds in embracing a whole conception of man [sic], culture and nature’ (1991b, p. 16). Lambert contends that certain writers produce novel kinds of symptomatology that may be ‘more effective than psychoanalytic discourse…political or ideological critique… in diagnosing the constellation of mute forces that both accompany life and threaten it from within’ (2000, p. 135). This important point will be discussed in reference to fabulation and the clinic below.

Deleuze and Freud

As Deleuze was concerned with modes of becoming that affirmed desire and created new possibilities for living and new lines of flight, his work, particularly Coldness and Cruelty was a direct critique of Freud and his psychoanalytical lineage\(^67\). In Freud’s

\(^67\) Although Anti Oedipus is also a sustained critique of Lacan, and Deleuze and Guattari indicated appreciation for certain elements in the ideas of Kleinian and Winnicott conceptualisations, I have followed Daniel Smith’s (1997) lead here and chosen to focus on Deleuze’s critique of psychoanalysis and Freud, as it exemplifies Deleuze’s turning away from the negative and inward focus of
writings, Deleuze (and Guattari) found desire as a mode of lack; infantile, Oedipalised fantasies that reinforced the hegemony of the mommy-daddy-child complex; a focus on neurosis, and the pathologizing of sexuality (Deleuze, 1997b, p. 227-28). Although these criticisms may seem harsh, Deleuze demonstrates in his critical and clinical approach to literature that Freud’s insistence on the ego and the id, means that he turns inwards, to memory to find interpretations of events as the cause of pathology, without considering that this process is part of a 'larger, State Machine' (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 147). As Deleuze elucidates:

Were they to talk...they would enter a preformed, prefabricated circuit: the circuit of their myths and fantasies, including the circuit of that psychoanalysis whose ideas everyone today is more or less familiar with, a circuit in which each of us knows more or less in advance what is expected of us, answering "Oedipus" or "mommy-daddy" as soon as we are asked - that world of interiority which we find so tiresome (2004, p. 242).

This emphasis on the inside, on what is lacking, on neurosis and meaning making perpetuates more of the same and becomes what Deleuze describes as the habit of forming 'opinions that [are] already extracted clichés' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 150). Furthermore, an inward focused psychology prevents the vitalistic expression of the forces of life, as Deleuze explains; 'neuroses and psychoses are not passages of life, but states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked or plugged up’ (1997b, p. 228). For Deleuze 'what is so lacking in psychoanalysis today [is] a new relation with the Outside', beyond the myopic view of the individual subject (2004, p. 242).

In contrast to Freud, Deleuze’s great contribution to psychology can be summarised in his turning away from the singular Cartesian self, constructed via internalised conflicts that relate back to the nuclear family and lack, and instead in turning outwards; Life is experienced as forces known via bodily sensations; affects and percepts, which cultivates affirmative and vitalistic modes of becoming. In addition, Deleuze and Guattari posit the notion of desire as affirmative and connective, opening up new modes of living. In opening to the forces of the outside, there is no longer a bifurcation between the inner and outer that is the product of the Cogito. Rather Life is seen as an interplay of encounters or assemblages that are formed on a flattened impersonal plane, where ‘desiring-machines’ replace Oedipal lack (2004, p. 242), as Deleuze elucidates:

Madness, perversion, neurosis - psychoanalysts wanted to know "what did it mean," from the inside. Today we are calling for the rights of a new functionalism: no longer what it means, but how it

psychoanalysis to instead develop new positive relations with external forces and thus new formulations of the life well lived. I consider the implications of this for psychology in the following.
works, how it functions. As if desire had nothing to say, but rather was the assemblage of tiny machines, *desiring-machines*, always in a particular relation with the big social machines and the technological machines.

As such, Deleuze’s philosophy suggests productive alternatives to the binary of health and pathology via impersonal experimentation and encounters with the Outside, found in minor literature whose writers articulate novel encounters with the forces of life. In stark contrast to Freud, Deleuze’s approach does not presume an independent thinker (ego, Cogito) who is at the centre of all experience, but rather the subject is in a perpetual state of dynamic becoming-with, becoming-haecceity; decentred and open to pre-subjective and pre-conceptual intensities and encounters. It is minor literature that articulates the vitalism that is at the centre of these encounters, and thus engaging with great writers via the critical and clinical method offers a new methodology for clinical practice.

Although Deleuze does not directly critique the diagnostic function at the core of psychology, by re-conceptualising symptomatology that occurs prior to diagnosis as affirmative and precise, both client and analyst may become cultural diagnosticians or anthropologists of their own experience. In addition, minor literature offers to the clinic novel ways of conceptualising life, ways that current diagnosis cannot provide. Deleuze would not suggest doing away with diagnosis, as if there as an either/or distinction, but instead his philosophy includes multiple modes of becoming, including becoming-clinic, that allows for both diagnosis and alternatives. Furthermore, Deleuze’s ontology of immanence, where percepts and intensities exist on a flattened plane, does away with abstract, transcendent notions of truth and meaning, and thus a symptomatological methodology cannot create transcendent and generalizable abstractions, and must be applied new each time.

**Health & illness**

In tracing the trajectory of Deleuze’s critical and clinical project, it becomes clear that Deleuze does not follow the path of current psychology in pathologising certain modes of living. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari consider the life of the schizophrenic engaged with the outside as a better model to the neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch (1983, p. 2). Indeed, they describe their turn towards outside forces as ‘schizoanalysis’, whereby reductionistic meaning making is replaced with an exploration of affirmative potentialities, tracing desire as a productive multiplication of difference (Holland, 2002). As I have explained, fundamental to Deleuze’s critical and clinical project is a mode of becoming-with that turns towards vitalistic and affirmative experiments and encounters with Life on its own terms. Therefore Deleuze does not prioritise health over illness, but
rather, following Nietzsche, health entails a noble ‘commitment to the practice of living’ (Tynan, 2010, p. 154) and affirmative ways to participate in the difficulties inherent to the human condition. What is of value to Deleuze, is to set life in movement, to engage in transversal lines of flight, to ‘always open up new possibilities for life’ (Smith, 1997, p. xv), that cut across ordinary and predictable ways of living in the world. As Brown and Stenner explain, what this means for psychology, is a move away from the common assumption of ‘the problem of ‘the subject’, to instead consider the problem of ‘life’, to understand ‘how particular lives are extracted from the modes of existence, relations, normativities and processes which comprise life-in-itself’ (2009, p. 176). Health then is a mode of active engagement with the intensities of life, where desire is coupled to events, encounters and intensities as desiring-machines, always in the mode of producing something new.

Great artists and writers who engage with Life as cultural anthropologists open up aspects of life that may otherwise remain unknown, and it is often these very artists who struggle with ill health. Deleuze suggests, following Nietzsche, that this originates from an artist having 'seen and heard of things too big for him [sic], too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him while nonetheless giving him the becomings that dominant and substantial health would render impossible' (1997b, p. 228). As Tynan explains, health, for Deleuze does not demand the absence of illness, but rather it is affirmative; it is both a 'productive and unresolvable paradox' which includes the experiences of 'health and sickness' and 'life and death' at the same time, orientating us to 'a new vitality but also towards new dangers and impasses' (2010, p. 154 ). Health then does not entail the eradication of symptoms, but rather demands ‘a joyful acceptance of one’s throw of the dice, an engagement where suffering is to some extent inevitable yet is not destructive’, as it becomes ‘a mechanism to understand and engage with larger processes of life' (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 163).

Fabulation

Great writers thus touch on modes of becoming that exceed the boundaries of current modes of existence by creating lines of flight beyond 'an already existing people' so as to contribute to the political task of the 'invention of a people who are missing' (Smith, 1997, p. xlii, author’s emphasis). These people 'must invent themselves in new conditions of struggle’, to create 'unborn people who do not yet have a language', who 'exist in the condition of a minority' (1997, pp. xli-xlili, author’s emphasis). Deleuze writes that:

Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing. It is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people. This is not exactly a people called upon to dominate the
world. It is a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary ... a bastard people, inferior, dominated, always in becoming, always incomplete. Bastard no longer designates a familial state, but the process or drift of the races (1997a, p. 3-4).

These missing people, examples of which have been articulated by great writers, cannot be modelled on something already in existence, but rather by definition, becoming minor, or schizoanalysis, is itself a complex ongoing 'process, in constant variation' (Smith, 1997, p. xlii-xliii). It demands turning away from the axiomatic norms of the majority to create 'compositions (connections, convergences, divergences) that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do the state formation' (p. xliii). As such the 'universal figure' of the becoming-minor constitutes an 'autonomy'; a nomadic figure that triggers 'uncontrollable movements' within the majority while independent from it (Smith, 1997, p. xlii).

Great literature fabulates these missing peoples not by the emphasis on personal pathology and its overcoming, but rather by accessing 'beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal...singularity at the highest point', freed from the power to say "I" (Deleuze, 1997b, p. 227). Literature does not exist without fabulation, a process which does not entail the projection or imagination of an ego, but rather is concerned with raising itself to the powers of inventing new ways of living and new modes of existence (1997b, p. 227-28). Therefore, minor literature does not actually constitute a certain people, which would entail becoming majoritarian, but rather this creation is 'a virtual process' that allows us to 'conceive of new possibilities for collective life' (Tynan, 2012, p. 155).

In particular, Deleuze finds in Melville's writings the invention of the 'Original', who is an extraordinary character, 'a powerful, solitary Figure' that 'exceeds any explicable form' (1997a, p. 83). This character 'projects flamboyant traits of expression that mark the stubbornness of a thought without image, a question without response [and] an extreme and nonrational logic' (1997a, p. 83). According to Deleuze, Originals 'know something inexpressible, live something unfathomable. They have nothing general about them, and are not particular – they escape knowledge, defy psychology' (1997a, p. 82-83). Furthermore, it is the character of the prophet in Melville whose role it is to recognise the Original. As Burns explains, 'the prophet's role is to intuit the play of a singular life ...within a milieu of particular lives', to grasp 'the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason' (2015. p. 169). As such, the great writer – and thus a good clinician - must develop the 'eye of a prophet, not the gaze of a psychologist' (Deleuze, 1997a, p. 82) to identify Originals, those missing peoples to come.
Deleuze and the clinic

Throughout their philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari engage in an ongoing critique of the compromised Freudian lineage of majoritarian psychology, that is based on the oedipal structure of the nuclear family and the concept of desire as lack, both of which keep the capitalist machine spinning. Like the rest of his work on thinking and becoming, Deleuze does not clearly dictate an alternative model that can be neatly applied in the clinical space, as cultivating transcendent norms is an anathema to his entire philosophy. Instead, his extensive engagement with minor literature, and the process of schizoanalysis that explores affirmative potentialities of desire, outlined most clearly in his clinical and critical project, opens up a number of fascinating lines of flight in the clinic, most notably generated from his unique ontology of becoming-haecceity.

The problem with mainstream psychology for Deleuze, is the insistence on the (hyper) individualised separate subject, who relates to their experience of life via abstract concepts and interpretations, constantly attempting to give meaning to the vagaries of human experience. In contrast, Deleuze's immanent philosophy does not prioritise the disembodied *Cogito*, but instead returns to the forces and intensities experienced by a body, a haecceity, that opens to the outside in an active mode of schizoanalysis, or experimentation. What this returns to the clinic according to Deleuze, is a certain vitality that has been lost by both patient and analyst in their scientific focus on diagnosis and treatment.

Rather than doing away with science altogether, Deleuze's critical and clinical project demonstrates how science (the clinical side) and art (the critical) can enter into new, affirmative ways of living and new conceptualisations of health. On the critical side, the clinic can engage in a creative examination of the forces of life; on the clinical, the grouping of signs and symptoms of life by the great symptomatologists found in literature. This reveals alternative possibilities for living by disrupting the real in a manner that may be deemed a sickness, so that these writers can clear the path (Bogue, 2003, p. 22) in order to give 'tomorrow's health' (Deleuze, 1985).

The clinic benefits from these examples in literature, once they are properly conceptualised rather than pathologised, as in the case of Masoch, but also the client and analyst themselves may become cultural diagnosticians or anthropologists; symptomatologists grouping signs and symptoms in ways that 'can serve as indicators of new universes of reference' (Deleuze, 1997a), inventing the people who are missing, the Originals. As Nichterlein and Morss elucidate, change does not occur through the ‘articulation of specific storylines’ in the clinic, but rather ‘through the manipulation of the regimes of signs’ to discover ‘new and often unexpected ways of dealing with’ the vagaries of life, and therefore it is ‘in language rather than with language that change is affirmed’ (2017, author’s emphasis).
Furthermore, when these inventions remain fluid, always in a process of becoming via encounters with the forces of life, they retain the vitality that is only found in ‘a Life’ freed from the constraints of a conceptualised static subject. As such, the role of the clinician is to avoid becoming major via an uncritical allegiance to mainstream forms of diagnosis and interpretation, and instead search for moments of deterritorialisation or schizoanalysis, that constitute a ‘minor psychology’ (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017), that is always in the process of becoming. Thus the role of the clinician can be likened to Melville’s prophet who recognises the Originals, those who are not necessarily freed from their symptoms, but rather ‘know something inexpressible’ and ‘live something unfathomable’ (Deleuze, 1997a, p. 82), a people whose time is yet to come.

References


Concepts become. This is the first lesson we should heed from Samantha Bankston whose 2017 study on Deleuze’s notion of ‘becoming’ essentially opens up for us the inherent problem of attempting to divine a concept in any static, singular sense. Concepts are subject to their own internal self-differing. They alter and change, are infinite and absolute. In order to answer the question, ‘What is becoming?’, or indeed to provide a comprehensive survey of the concept within Deleuze’s formidable body of work, we have to enter into the logic of becoming itself. Herein lies the first major test for a study that takes Deleuze’s concept of becoming as its sole focus. The concept inherently becomes across Deleuze’s philosophical output with little regard for the chronological publication of his writing. It is a test, however, that Bankston responds to admirably. Given that this notion of becoming is of such fundamental value to Deleuze’s ‘transcendental empiricism’ and his overall ontology of difference (ranging as it does from his earliest works through to his latest texts with Felix Guattari) it is perhaps surprising that it has taken quite so long for a book length engagement covering this component within his thought to have appeared in English. The wait appears well worth it and Bankston’s contribution will surely provide a major touchstone to anyone wishing to delve into this complex but no less crucial aspect of Deleuze’s philosophy.

The book takes as its starting point Deleuze’s infamous critique of representation. Deleuze, we are told, was primarily invested in constructing a ‘system of becoming’ that was not beholden to the four shackles of representational thought as Bankston frames it. The four shackles consisting of identity, analogy, opposition and lastly, resemblance. These shackles, Bankston maintains, are associated for Deleuze with a strictly temporal error that underwrites them; an error that posits change in terms of mechanistic causality alone. Change, we are reminded by Bankston, does not equate to becoming. Far from it. Representational thought often depicts change solely as a movement between two states that can be perceived or sensed. Bankston demonstrates that for
Deleuze, influenced heavily by Bergson, it is the internal difference within concepts, objects or bodies themselves that brings about alternations in how we perceive or sense them. As she writes, “change is continuous and does not move in discontinuous leaps; it is not created externally but is internal to that which is undergoing change” (p.18). Rather than a passage from one state or moment to another, becoming is the dynamism conditioning this very process of change or transformation.

In order to rectify the temporal error that posits the idea of change in terms of mechanistic causality, and the associated framework holding representational thought together, Deleuze has recourse to two philosophers who provide the foundation for a critique of chronological time. Friedrich Nietzsche whose ‘Death of God’ brought traditional metaphysics to a halt and essentially overturned a hierarchal transcendental ordering of concepts (Being, Truth, Reason) in favour of immanent processes and Henri Bergson whose notion of ‘virtual memory’, likewise, posits a form of empty time which is at odds with the temporal underpinnings of representation. Nietzsche’s ‘eternal return’ and Bergson’s concept of ‘duration’ are the primary philosophical reference points that Deleuze appropriates to construct his concept of becoming. And it is these two thinkers and their associated work on differing forms of time that Bankston uses to essentially structure her work. Demonstrating how Deleuze co-opted their systems of thought to formulate the concept of becoming is undoubtedly one of the book’s major strengths. Bankston unpicks this tight relation within Deleuze’s textual output to arrive at two differing forms of becoming that parallel the two primary philosophers supporting his system of non-representational thought. They correspond to ‘becoming’s’ which expresses a re-appropriation of Bergson’s duration whilst ‘becoming’ is aligned to Nietzsche’s eternal return. These are subsequently then referred to as ‘sensory becoming’ and ‘absolute becoming’ respectively throughout the remainder of her study. Although there is a danger here of possibly overcomplicating an already dense and challenging idea, this differential does serve to disentangle the important distinctions inherent to becoming across events as opposed to bodies for example, or becoming at the level of surface versus becoming at the level of depth. The best illustration of these differences is played out for Bankston via Deleuze’s analysis of memory or ‘anti-memory’.

If Bergson and Nietzsche provide the essential coordinates to map out the concept of becoming for Bankston, then the figures of Badiou and Zizek serve to separate it from the alternative theoretical framework of becoming offered by G. W. F. Hegel as well as the accompanying critiques of Deleuze derived from him. In singling out Zizek’s work, in particular his analysis of Deleuze’s ‘quasi cause’ which leads him to advance two supposedly contradictory sides of becoming (between Being and Event, Surface and Depth or Actual and Virtual), Bankston argues that Zizek has in fact unknowingly restored Deleuze’s project to its rightful place. Rather than forming two contradictory
processes as Zizek would hold, these dualisms conditioned by the two faces of becoming establish complementary logics which differ only in kind. As she writes,

Absolute becoming differs in kind from the becoming-mad of the depths of sensory becoming and exhibits zero duration, giving rise to surface effects. The project of connecting the surface of absolute becoming with the depths of sensory becoming is part of the project Deleuze undertakes – an attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of a truly immanent ontology of becoming. (p. 57)

For Bankston, Zizek falls into the same trap of aligning both sensory and absolute becoming within one particular temporal process. By situating Deleuze’s system of becoming against one of his most prominent critics of recent years and ultimately by providing more than a convincing reply, the book undoubtedly plays a vital role in restabilising the worth of Deleuze’s philosophy within the realm of difference, repetition and the non-all which have been so central to recent debates concerned with ontology.

Essentially, Bankston’s study offers significant inroads into the question ‘what is becoming?’ whilst never diverting far from the philosophical and literary influences that Deleuze drew upon to formulate his different unfolding temporal logics. The fact that clarity and theoretical rigour is not lost over the course of a book dealing explicitly with the inherent flux internal to concepts themselves ensures that Bankston’s work will become a major reference point for any serious engagement with Deleuze’s overall system of thought.