Unmeasuring ourselves´: Deleuze's contributions for a psychology to come

Maria Nichterlein

Austin Hospital & University of Melbourne

Melbourne, Australia

Abstract

This paper aims to introduce key Deleuzian concepts as they engage with the discipline of psychology. This will be done through an exploration of his work, in particular the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia co-written with Felix Guattari. As with Deleuze's project itself, the paper has a critical element and a constructive one. Critically, it identifies the concerns that Deleuze alerts us in relation to the three main traditions within psychology (behaviourism, psychoanalysis and phenomenology) and provocatively introduces the notion of stupidity to signal the ways in which psychology has lost its intellectual horizon, by putting itself at the service of State and religious norms through a number of assumptions that are taken for granted, assumptions that constitute the silent and insidious common and good sense that holds the so called 'rational project' glued together in modern science.

The second, more constructive, part aims to introduce key elements in Deleuze's project as a way to engage with the possibilities that Deleuze brings to the discipline. The elements considered include a shift from an emphasis on epistemology to metaphysics, the centrality of difference (and variation) instead of identity (and stability), a shift to a relational type of knowledge rather than one that is representational and the articulation of the tensions between history and processes of emergence (becomings). Ultimately, the Deleuzian provocation to the discipline is to engage with a psychology to come through the articulation of a renewed and radical empiricism.

Keywords: Deleuze, Critical Psychology, Stupidity, Difference, Empiricism

Why on earth Deleuze?

Deleuze is a name that has been 'circulating' within critical and intellectual circles for some time and, indeed, the rumblings produced by his name have much to say concerning the potential of theoretical psychology in relation to current philosophical debates on

'acceleration' and its direct impact on a 'measured life', the parameters of this conference. Deleuze is considered to be "one of the founding fathers of contemporary accelerationism' (2020, p. 93, making reference to Srnicek and Williams, 2013, Noys, 2014, and the 'more popular introduction' by Beckett, 2017). Yet, in line with the transformations in his own project, one can notice a shift away from an overemphasis on acceleration to a more articulated complexity of what is at stake. Although Deleuze identifies intensity as crucial, he also clarifies that intensity is not an issue of mere acceleration – with or without resonances – but of thought and of active resistances to the banality of everyday life as it is presented in the saturated hyperreality in which we are living. As he wrote, '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. 108).

Having said this it seems appropriate to note that, despite this current interest in Deleuze's project in philosophy and cultural studies, the introduction of his project to psychology has been more challenging. The difficulties inherent to this engagement could be summarized in two strong arguments. Firstly, Deleuze is a difficult philosopher to read and, secondly, he has been very critical of psychology.

Regarding the first of these arguments, Deleuze's work is highly technical and he that does not limit his references to philosophical works but also *uses* references and topics from the humanities[1] and the sciences[2] alike. The use of italics is to clarify that he refers to a non-hierarchical relationship (Woodward, 2016) that produces a non-localizable productive interference in the relevant domains (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 217). This positioning of the workings of a philosopher vis-à-vis other forms of knowledge makes a good example of a transdisciplinary thinker.

Furthermore, he actively questioned the disciplinary 'order of things' (Foucault, 2004) and, despite his orthodox training as a French philosopher, he purposefully looked at ways to creatively resist the cannons informing the discipline. This resistance was through a nuanced genealogy at the foundations for his work. As he states in an often-quoted reference:

> I myself 'did' history of philosophy for a long time, read books on this or that author. But I compensated in various ways: by concentrating, in the first place, on authors who challenged the rationalist tradition in this history (and I see a secret link between Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, constituted by their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces and relations, the denunciation of power… and so on). (Deleuze, 1990/1995, p. 6)

This (secret) orientation in his research, this nuanced reorganization of the (philosophical) order of discourse, provided the conditions to re-evaluate – with significant force – long held disciplinary assumptions. It is then not surprising that his project would smoothly complement that of Felix Guattari – an activist and psychotherapist – spreading his/their project wider so as to address 'the socius' – the social frame. The two volumes of *Capitalism*

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[1] For secondary sources looking at specific connections between Deleuze and the humanities, see Bogue (2003a, 2003b, 2003c and Flaxman 2012, Sauvagnargues, 2016 and 2018)

[2] For secondary sources looking at specific connections between Deleuze and the sciences, see Buchanan (2008) and Protevi (2013)

and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus (1972/1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987) – provide a powerful alternative to the worldview that has informed the west since Descartes and indeed since Plato.

It is through a close study of these two volumes, in particular the second one, that we can see their work in its most productive dimension. If, as they claim in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), the work of philosophy is 'the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts' (p. 2), then there is no doubt that this second volume is a powerful philosophical work that unsettles the structures of knowledge and of power in the West. With *A Thousand Plateaus*, the world of ideas in a cave is left behind and one is confronted with a chaosmic world of constructive schizophrenia.

Deleuze-Guattari's world is not one that is pre-ordered, requiring a disciplined intellect to decipher, but a continual vibration and affirmation of material life: life, thinking and affirming itself. As Foucault stated in the preface to the first volume, '[i]t would be a mistake to read Anti-Oedipus as the new theoretical reference (you know, that much-heralded theory that finally totalizes and reassures…)' (1983, p. xii). There is no final answer to the problem of knowledge and of living but an ongoing mutual engagement: there is a life to be (socially) lived through a continual self-(in)forming process. It is in this sense that we introduce Deleuze (and Guattari) as being of this earth. They are material and earthy… very material and earthy! Or, as they provocatively stated in the opening lines of *Anti-Oedipus*:

> [they are] at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. (1972/1983, p. 1)

With these considerations in mind, it is perhaps understandable that some would argue that Deleuze's project is more 'political' than psychological in nature (definitely not psychological!). It is important to mark however the irony of this claim, since Deleuze has sustained throughout his work an engagement with psychological themes, in particular in its clinical implications. The issue is not a thematic problem but a conceptual one. Deleuze critiques the psychology that we are familiar with and offers a quite different proposal for the discipline, one that ironically returns us to an engagement with (a transformed) empiricism.

A second, and perhaps more substantive argument accounting for the evasiveness of Deleuze's project for psychology is his critical stance on the social sciences and on psychology in particular. Interestingly, this problematization can be seen as productively useful for a critical encounter with his ideas as a way of furthering our disciplinary definitions. I would like to start this paper by addressing this second concern as a way to engage with the first one (stylistically, this 'upside-down' approach fits well with Deleuze's own style)

Critiques of psychology

It is indeed true that Deleuze, with and without Guattari, has been critical of psychology. A recent example of this apparent disposition can be read in Skonieczny: 'One of the most visible tenets of Gilles Deleuze's work is his virulent opposition to the psychological and psychiatric thought and practice of his day' (2020, p. 90). Deleuze's project includes direct

critiques of the three most prevalent methodological and conceptual frameworks within the discipline

Critiques of psychology as the empirical study of human behaviours

In his doctoral thesis *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994), Deleuze was relentless in his attack on 'the illusions of psychology, which made a fetish of activity' (p. 73). In understanding this critique, it is important to be aware of Deleuze's long standing admiration of empiricism as a philosophical orientation (Deleuze and Parnet, 1997/2006, p. vi). To understand this apparent contradiction, it is important to make a distinction between Deleuze's and mainstream psychology's uses of the notion of empiricism. His critique came after he had written on Hume and of his admiration of empiricism as a critical element in his resistance to the rationalist tradition so pervasive in continental philosophy. The critique is not against empiricism but against the way the discipline had appropriated empiricism so to reduce it to 'a kind of radio quiz' (p. 150) obsessed with 'artificial or puerile situations' (ibid).

The problem for Deleuze was then not with empiricism itself, but with the confinement that psychology imposed on what might be called – following Stengers (2011) and Stenner (2008, 2011) – the *deep adventure of empiricism*. Psychology reduced empirical thinking to a measure of 'error' (p. 148) rather than engaging with the ongoing process of experimentation per se. The triviality that is of such distaste for Deleuze emerges when the act of thinking is reduced to 'a grotesque image of thought' (p. 150), of thought as an evaluation of what is already known[3] rather than as an engagement with what is yet to be known; an engagement with what is not only possible but, perhaps more importantly, what is desirable. From this perspective, information – psychological knowledge – rather than bringing 'news of difference' (Bateson, 1973) about the complexities of living a life worth living, refers us back to what is familiar and predictable or, as Bateson would say, to what 'every Schoolboy knows' (1979, ch. II).

Critiques of psychoanalysis in its explorations of the unconscious

The critique however is not only limited to behaviourism. Deleuze also questions phenomenological and psychoanalytical approaches for similar reasons. It needs to be said that he was more respectful of these traditions and felt that both Sartre and Freud had important insights into the human condition. Yet, for Deleuze, the problem resides in that, as thinkers, Sartre and Freud (as well as many others) stopped short of exploring the full implications of such insights (Protevi, 2010, p. 4).

Since his first collaboration with Guattari – *Anti-Oedipus* – Deleuze became relentless in his critique of psychoanalysis (1973, 1977, Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, plateau 2). They acknowledge the force of Freud's explorations of the unconscious as a central element within the human apparatus, but they are clear that Freud missed the point when he understood it as a 'theatre of representation,' a theatre where familiar dramas are enacted and re-enacted in an untimely 'Groundhog-Day' melodrama. They saw psychoanalysis' preoccupation with mummies and daddies as serving an effective function to constrain and

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[3] Here, Deleuze makes reference to Hegel who – in *Phenomenology of Spirit* – discusses dogmatism as a way of thinking where 'the true consists in a proposition which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known' (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 321, n. 14)

to discipline the productive forces of desire. Psychoanalysis was instead reconceptualized as having a darker side, a side that was serving a useful role in the domestication of desires within Capitalism.

As an alternative, Deleuze and Guattari prophetically announce: 'the unconscious isn't playing around all the time with mummy and daddy but with races, tribes, continents, history, and geography, always some social frame.' (Deleuze et al., 1988, p. 144). They responded to psychoanalysis by means of a neologism: *schizoanalysis*. As we wrote elsewhere:

> Schizoanalysis honours the insights of psychoanalysis in terms of the production of desire. But in schizoanalysis, desire is no longer indexed to the family but to the historical, political, and social world (Deleuze, 1984, p. 238-9). This new way of engaging with desire makes it 'inseparable from its revolutionary component' (Holland, 1999, p. 99). The task of schizoanalysis is 'that of learning what a subject's desiring machines are, how they work, with what synthesis, what bursts of energy, what constituents misfires, with what flows, what chains and what becomings in each case' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983, p. 338).

Critiques of phenomenology in its illusions of a unified and agentic cogito

Deleuze's critique of phenomenology is, again, formal and foundational. Starting with Heidegger's critique of phenomenology (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p.117), he focuses on what Husserl called Urdoxa (Husserl, 1973, p. 28-31, in Wiggins et al., 1990, p. 25). As explained elsewhere,

> The collapsing or merging of immanence and consciousness that Deleuze sees taking place in phenomenology betrays this basic distinction and establishes an *Urdoxa* for experience (Lawlor, 1998, 2012), a type of foundational experience that frames all grounded phenomena and affords intersubjectivity (Rajchman, 2000, p. 10). *Urdoxa* is a portmanteau word, a combination of the German prefix *Ur-* and the Classic Greek word *doxa* – dogma – coined by Husserl to refer to a 'primary' or 'first' doctrine, a foundational experience common to all human beings. For Deleuze, Husserl's claim constituted a new type of dogmatism. Deleuze saw promise in the phenomenological concept of *sense* – in particular, of *making sense* – as a concept that marks a rather intuitive, at times a pre-conscious, type of knowledge as distinct from straightforward information or cognition. Yet he was wary of the totalizing properties of *Urdoxa*. (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 19)

Psychology's stupidity

There is a final critique that Deleuze and Guattari offer, one that is wider in its scope – not just for psychology but the whole of social sciences. This critique however is more indirect – it could be argued that it is a critique by omission rather than by commission. 'By omission' because it is in 'one of the more controversial moves in *What is Philosophy?*' (Bell, 2016, p. 158) where Deleuze and Guattari identify science and arts as alternatives to philosophy highlighting, as Brown aptly notes, that 'no corresponding line of thought [to the philosophical concept] exists in [Deleuze's] work for "the business of social science" […] creat[ing] real difficulties for social scientists who wish to engage with his work.' (2012, p. 109). It could be argued however, that this critique should perhaps be better allocated to Foucault than to Deleuze. It is Foucault who, in *The Order of Things* (2004, p.

421-2), questioned the emergence of the study of man, in particular in the context of the emergence of biopower.

Irrespective of whether this third critique should or should not be extended to other so called 'French poststructuralists', it is clear that Deleuze has been harsh with psychology as a discipline. And perhaps, there is something soberingly constructive in such a critique, something that has allowed us to play with the idea of a 'stupid' and 'timid' psychology (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, see also Nichterlein, 2015).

Stupidity [*la bêtise*] is a concept that is present early in Deleuze's work and that has recently resurfaced in relation to the work of Isabelle Stengers. Debaisie comments that Stengers provides a 'new function' (2018, p. 17) to philosophy by further developing Deleuze's use of the term. Debaise (p. 18) traces Deleuze's appreciation of the function of stupidity back to his book on Nietzsche (1962/1986). There, Deleuze refers to the need to separate philosophy from the workings of the established powers of the State or the Church. In this context, philosophy 'is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful' (1962/1986, p. 106). As we wrote elsewhere,

> For Deleuze, more than error, it is 'stupidity [*bêtise*]' that is of concern. Stupidity 'haunts' thinking (1968/1994, p. 151) in ways more disturbing and more foundational than error, for stupidity is a state of thought 'where we possess the simple *possibility* of thought, but do not yet think' (Zourabichvili, 2012, p. 8). Zourabichvili extends this definition by explaining that in stupidity, people negotiate the actualities – the pre-existing possibilities – 'and the relative truths and falsities that came to be inscribed within them' (ibid) without any disturbance of the status quo. In stupidity, movement and differentiation is taken out of the equation of life. Once this happens, what is left is in close resemblance with Foucault's notion of 'docile bodies' (1991): bodies that do not present resistance to the present as Deleuze would say. What is missing in stupidity is not error – a mistake or distortion in thought as a representation – but a lack of individuation (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 151). (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 96-7)

For Stengers, as for Deleuze, stupidity does not refer to a lack of intellect but to a certain unwillingness to think. It refers to a type of capture of the soul. As Stengers explains, Deleuze's '*Bêtise* […] is quite active, even entrepreneurial […]. It refers to the rather horrifying experience you can have for instance when trying to speak [and the disciplinarian] stone-blind eye […] turns against any argument' (2009, p. 34, in Debaise, 2018, p. 18). Stupidity, in this sense is about an unwillingness to think outside of preconceived domains of what is considered to be legitimate knowledge, what Deleuze would define as an 'image of thought' informing 'common and good sense' (1968/1994, ch. 3).

La Bêtise becomes then a useful concept to understand Deleuze's critique of psychology. It also helps us to appreciate the concern that Deleuze has with communication and resisting the present. Resistance here is not against *real facts*; it is a resistance to the reifications made in the name of science. It is a resistance to the canons and disciplinarian definitions that constitute the normality of everyday life, a normality that so concerns scholars researching the insidious effects of biopower. In line with this, resisting *la bêtise* constitutes something more than just an intellectual and/or reflective exercise. As explained elsewhere, [it] 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*. (Nichterlein, 2018, p. 8).

Resisting *la bêtise* becomes a constructive engagement that is intimately connected with 'living a life'; living a life in a way that affirms difference and differentiation within a complex ecology. A life that 'is not a life of knowledge, a life in accordance with already established rules and ways of being' (Bell, 2016, p. 8) but, on the contrary, it is to forge a unity, to bring about a determinate, individuated phenomenon.[…] 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.' (ibid)

Returning to the earlier comment on Freud and Sartre, stupidity then is not about a sort of laziness and/or a lack of capacity of sorts but, it relates back to an overwhelmed-ness that emerges once one attempts to conceptualize the complexity inherent to a full articulation of knowledge as modes of living: modes of living within immanent fields, that is, modes of living that acknowledge – as equals – both the clinician (e.g. Freud) and the client (e.g. Sacher Masoch), thus establishing the conditions for the most vibrant engagement with the aspirations that Kant and Foucault saw in the Enlightenment (Nichterlein, 2013, p. 172-3).

It is in this spirit, as we said in the afterword of *Deleuze and Psychology* (Nichterlein and Morss, 2017, p. 168), that we are of the strong belief that, if this relentless critique is articulated by Deleuze not as a dismissal of the field but as a provocation – as a goad, a stimulus – to wake the discipline from a certain slumber in which it now rests, and to force us to think our discipline once more.

(Re)Thinking the discipline with Deleuze

This provocation then leads back to the first concern stated: Deleuze's work is difficult to read and to grasp. Indeed so, but perhaps a more constructive exegesis push us to question this difficulty: why is this so?

Asking this question brings us back to the core of the prowess of Deleuze's project. Perhaps Deleuze is difficult to read because, in its commitment to challenge *la bêtise*, his project forces us to take notice of a number of assumptions that are taken for granted in our disciplinary practices, assumptions that constitute the silent and insidious common and good sense that holds the so called 'rational project' glued together in modern science. Deleuze's project for a 'philosophy of difference' is a project that turns our quotidian 'order of things' upside-down and sends us – as readers and thinkers – down the rabbit hole that saw Alice lose contact with her familiar environment (Carroll, n.d.).

It is not possible to provide here a comprehensive description of Deleuze's project so as to understand this 'reshuffle', but there are a number of clues that are helpful to keep in mind:

An emphasis on metaphysics, not epistemology

Deleuze defines himself as a 'pure' metaphysician (Villani, 1999, p. 130). This is a central yet often neglected clue. Deleuze is critical of the turn to language that dominated most of twentieth century philosophy, either in its emphasis on epistemological and methodological issues and on logical rigour called forth by Analytical philosophy (Nichterlein, 2018, p. 87) or through the dismissal of metaphysics via a focus on a phenomenological being that defines the outside as its own extension. Another, perhaps more contemporary form of explaining this is by stating that Deleuze is not part of the discursive turn: what we know is not a storying of sorts.

Instead, what we know – and this is not a 'royal' but a posthuman *we,* what any living organism would know– is intimately connected with what *we* are. Epistemology and ontology are included in the investigations in ways that are different to how they have been related since modern science emerged: instead of a Cartesian subject who rationally evaluates the merits of the objects it studies, for Deleuze, a subject and their world are recursively shaping each other in ways that, more often than not, escape our rationalities and make the pursuit of any identifiable – thus stable – distinction futile. Rather than focusing on the structural duality Descartes was supporting with his method, Deleuze focused on a 'new' monism that explains a world that looks at itself through a multitude of perspectives. Rather than the familiar trinity of cogito-knowledge-representation, Deleuze invites us to an alternative trinity that could perhaps be best described as one of vitality-affects-fabulation (if not divination).

In line with Deleuze's emphasis that thought should be used not to represent but to transform what presents to us (1968/1994, p. xxi), this clue refers the discipline to the need to engage with its topics in a very different from that of mainstream psychology. The 2018 edited issue of the *Annual Review of Critical psychology* introduces some of these changes in more detail (Nichterlein, 2018).

Difference – not identity – as a core concept

A second clue is given by the often-used reference to Deleuze as *the* philosopher of difference. The use of *the* is ironically critical for how can one claim such centrality and, at the same time, focus so fully on multiplicity? Such irony indeed helps us to appreciate the transformations that take place with the shift that Deleuze invites us to undertake in his seminal work, *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994). His thesis is deceptive in its simplicity… what if we locate difference as the core tenet of our knowledge rather than identity? In other words, what if we treat difference as the initial state and identity as that that emerges out of repetition?

Taking difference seriously as a foundational concept, not as the complement and subordinate to that of identity, questions centuries-held traditions in Western thought of a stable world that we know through representation. Deleuze in this sense, aligns itself strongly with those of us who work to affirm a psychology that is process oriented (e.g. Brown and Stenner, 2009, Stenner, 2008).

Alliances however are not to be taken for granted for they can easily return us to a static and reified position. The difference advocated by Deleuze is not a static difference but a difference that is constantly in the process of differentiation. In a nutshell, Deleuze makes us confront a puzzling statement: whatever 'we are' is not a stable entity.

Relational knowledge, relational mind

For Deleuze, the cogito and the subject are 'images of thought' – reifications – that are but a product of a more complex process of vital production. Rather than a core unity, the psychological subject is an epiphenomenon. Deleuze provokes us to tread carefully in our disciplinary considerations when referring to the subject and to do so with a focus that is counterintuitive: rather than a centre or the starting point for our disciplinary elucidations, a focus on the concept of the subject is a dangerous detour or distraction. What is of substance instead – the dynamic that should be our focus on enquiry as perhaps a unit of analysis – is the workings of a complex machinery: *the assemblage.*

The assemblage is fully articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus* and is a transmutation of their earlier concept of *desiring machines* (1972/1983). Assemblages are complex open systems constituted by machinic (material) desires as well as (semiotic-symbolic) enunciations. As a concept, it leaves behind psychoanalytical considerations, decentring the individual and positioning it as one of the many elements constituting the assemblage.

It is in the machinations of the assemblage that a (form of) subjectivity – fully experienced 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 (Deleuze, 1988) and it is a concept that has been applied to the psy-complex (Pulido-Martinez, 2014), thus giving us clues as to its dark side.

It is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari insist that our subjectivity is not an entity but a product. As they say, 'the subject is produced as a mere residuum alongside the desiring-machines' (1972/1983, p. 17). As Holland explains, 'the subject emerges *only as an after-effect* of the selections made by desire […], *not as the agent* of selection.' (1999, p. 33)

What we are left with then as central is the production of subjects within assemblages. Here, more than identity, it is the relational element that is central. This opens up a very different relationship to empiricism as noted before. I will return to this point in the last clue.

The tension between history and becoming

Rather than 'what we are', the critical question for Deleuze is 'what is the becoming that we are witnessing?' Again here, there is a caveat on the use of concepts. Deleuze's 'becoming' is not a humanistic or phenomenological becoming – of becoming who we truly are or could be – but a *becoming-other (than oneself)*. More important than the familiarity we encounter in a recognized – or perhaps more concerning, 'recognizable' – subjectivity as we discussed in the previous point, what matter is the counter-intuitive movement of de-personalization; of becoming-imperceptible, of escaping the grid of significations whose familiarity comes at great cost (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, plateau 10, see also Nichterlein, 2013, section 11.2).

Here, Deleuze makes a critical distinction between *history* and *becoming*. For indeed history is important in shaping the state of affairs in which we live, but such history is not deterministic of our human condition or of life at large. History engages in a nuanced interplay with the forces of events affording the emergence of becomings as critical ruptures that open the horizon to what is yet to come. The becoming that Deleuze is referring to, is a becoming that is synonymous with a constant bifurcation and differentiation of what we think we are, a becoming that opens us up to the world and to the production of new and unexpected combinations. In this sense, this process of differentiation is alike to experimentation: not an experimentation of laboratories where a clearly delineated researcher explores correspondingly delineated variables so as to develop predictability in the world, but an untimely experimentation of what is existentially possible in terms of forms of life.

A radical empiricism

This experimentation inherent to *becoming-other* brings us to our last clue: the force of empiricism. As indicated above, Deleuze had a long-standing commitment to empiricism, a

commitment that was apparent since his first book – *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953/1991). It is this commitment that perhaps enables us to appreciate the constructive elements of his critique for psychology. For there is a significant difference between this sense of empiricism and the sense more familiar to mainstream psychology.

One way to explain this difference is by looking at the role of concepts in the production of knowledge. Here Deleuze refers to Whitehead stating that 'the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1997/2006, p. vi).

In mainstream psychology's understandings of empiricism, great effort is put to ensure that concepts are based on measurable *facts*. Implied in this notion of facts lies a certain kind of representational knowledge: *facts* convey a knowledge that is intimately connected with the world 'out there', with a world *as it is*. The notion of *facts* then posits a certain unavoidable necessity in what then becomes the 'right' interpretation. This orientation, if not problematized, leads to a silencing of ideas in favour of concrete examples, a conservative tyranny of *what is?* instead of *what is possible?* let alone *what is desirable?*

For Deleuze, as for Whitehead before him, empiricism is not to be set against concepts per se. Empiricism for Deleuze is not a critique of thought or of theory in itself, but a critique of an *idea of thought* as static and distant from the ever-changing conditions constituting life. Empirical thought, for Deleuze, does not stand on a different level to the outside but, following immanent principles, operates in an open and creative relationship with the outside: with the flow and variations present in everyday life.

Empirical thought then is not a description – a representation – of an essential truth of sorts, but an engagement in the construction – a *sensible* construction – of a sustainable possibility of life. Deleuzian empiricism is about bringing life to our thought through affirming, simultaneously, multiplicity and singularity.

Concluding remarks: for a psychology to come

With these ideas in mind, let me return to Deleuze's irritation at psychology's stupidity and to articulate some of the ways that Deleuze talks to the central concerns of this volume.

Psychology's stupidity lies in its unwillingness to appreciate its own participation in the constructions of the normativities shaping the psy-complex, normativities that insidiously encourage – in the name of health – the creation of measures of our condition, measures that are continually supporting the domestication – if not the subjectification – of our lives (in)to regimes of signs. Rather than amplifying our capacity to live, much of what is done in the name of psychology has gone in the opposite direction, in the direction of telling us what we ought to think*, to* do and to be. For Deleuze, this state of affairs is not out of a disciplinary bad faith or incapacity but, as it has been hinted throughout this paper, out of its deep yet uncritical commitment to representational forms of knowledge.

The move from identity to difference as is proposed by Deleuze's philosophy, implies a move away from these pervasive forms of knowledge, into an engagement with a very different kind of *thinking the discipline*. More than the affirmation of the solution, a solution that often takes the shape of (yet another) true knowledge of a transcendent nature, it is the acute awareness of the thought involved in the positing of a problem that fascinates Deleuze. As he writes: 'a solution always has the truth it deserves according to the problem to which

it is a response' (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).

Yet another way to explain the same point is by stating that, rather than adding to an increasingly problematic disciplinary edifice, what Deleuze provokes the discipline to do is to engage with an ongoing process not of 'knowing' but of re-thinking what has been taken for granted in the foundation and the structure of its edifice, so as to evaluate its elements in terms of their usefulness for each singularity of life in which we are engaging, fully knowing that such evaluation will be infinitively different each time. What Deleuze invites us to do is to be brave enough so as to affirm the complexity of life by challenging the myriad 'stone-blind eyes' that inform our knowledge in order to be able to listen to the infinite challenges – and possibilities – that life throws at us and, in doing so, to be able to engage with responses that are not happy, but 'honourable' in a Nietzschean sense and 'joyful' in a Spinozean sense.

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About the author

Dr. Maria Nichterlein completed her psychology studies at the Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile and her PhD at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. She currently works as a Senior Clinician at the Austin Hospital and also as a private practitioner in Melbourne, Australia. She is also a Clinical Fellow at the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne.

Contact: Child and Youth Mental Health Services, Austin Hospital. Email: m.nichterlein@bigpond.com

ORCID: https://**orcid**.org/0000-0002-7519-137X