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Educational Philosophy
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Seize the Opportunity to Think Differently!
-A Deleuzian approach to unleashing becomings in education

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Review

Seize the Opportunity to Think Differently!

-A Deleuzian approach to unleashing becomings in education

Why theory and concepts must face *the virtual*

This article argues that theory may be seen as a tool for practices of freedom, in the sense that it may help thought in thinking differently from what habit and convention may otherwise propose (Fornet-Betancourt, Becker, Gomez-Muller, & Gauthier, 1987). This article challenges the convention that theory should take on the submissive role of redoubling the powers of already dominant regimes by explaining practice through concepts that already make up and support these practices as dominant. Thus, in their book, *What is philosophy?*, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari determine philosophy's task as that of creating concepts that make it possible – but not necessarily compulsory – to think differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). They conceived of theory as a sort of toolbox that serves thought by helping it to expand its repertoire. They argue that theory could be a rebellious practice, and its concepts become like bricks, helping us to build houses, or to rebel and smash windows, as necessary (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002e, pp. xii-xiii).

Such an approach makes *the actual* problematic, by hinting at the potential of taking *the virtual* as a vantage point (Hardt, 2007; Massumi, 1992). In our daily practices, our thoughts, minds, and bodies are usually so emphatically caught by routine and habit that often, we do not sense the myriad impulses, cracks and fractures that always already surround us in a virtual sense. Evoking the immense potential of the virtual, and taking it seriously as the construction site on which this actual practice arose, and was turned into a specific choice, may actually sensitize us to all those potentially useful choices that were left out. Evoking the virtual simultaneously affirms that life cannot be fixed by language and concepts that stabilize by stratifying – or even ossifying – what must necessarily flow. This approach resonates strongly with other current philosophical theory, for instance, with Karen Barad's agential realism that gave us an instrumentarium of performative concepts, by suggesting that words, matter, and affects may also be seen as intra-acting in onto-epistemo-ethico diffractive patterns that indicate the immense creative potential of thinking that is constantly, necessarily,

and immanently involved in becomings – world-making (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 2002e).

From a vantage point of theory, this article suggests experimenting with the idea of thinking and mattering teacher, student learning, and school differently (Semetsky, 2006). Remaining too tightly caught in the conceptual strait-jacket of the school machine will just force us to continuously re-enact rituals that do not joyfully appreciate the great potential of other possible entanglements that always already spring out of the kids, the outside worlds and the worlds within (e.g. Davies & Gannon, 2009). This extends the capacity to think, and possibly perform, differently, in the context of what are inherently non-stable entities that we currently call ‘the professional teacher,’ ‘student,’ and ‘school.’

Getting started

Betty (teacher) enters the classroom. Trains of thought crisscross her head at hazardous speeds. The school machine says: ‘Now there must be peace and order, so that teaching can start.’ The parent machine says: ‘So, again, Pete has not slept enough, and arrives in untidy clothes!’ The generational machine says: ‘Tuck away all those iPads and smart phones right away!’ The education reform machine says: ‘We must have the student plans assessed so we can document that our school is up front among the best.’ The animal machine barks like a dog after some naughty puppies, and the desiring machine yearns for fun hikes in the woods with the kids. Betty’s thoughts, mind, and body jump from teacher, to mother, to adult position, to HR staff, to dog, to dreamer, and back again, and student bodies flash by her eyes and ears, assuming rapid transformations from students to children, to inattentive young objects for evaluation, to rotten kids, to objects for dreams and fun, and back again.

So, what does it mean to think differently?

Betty the teacher shows us that conceptual entities such as ‘the teacher’ and ‘the student’ lose their stability when the concept of the machine is applied. In a very concrete sense, they change their form and meaning with the speed of thought. They are only kept on track and given direction by the penetrating order words of the school machine that permeates the

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situation, and requires thought, minds, and bodies to unify purpose and behavior. But when thought is potentially so lush and wild, as suggested above, could it not be then thought that school life is potentially filled with lines of flight that could make it possible to think and perform ‘teacher,’ ‘student,’ ‘learning’, and many other entities differently? Such options are often missed, and force us into zombie-like modes in which we do not hear or sense the echoes of the many pulsating organisms around us in the form of kids, the outside world, and the world within.

It is important to emphasize that all existing practices are not necessarily in need of being considered or performed differently. Furthermore, efficiency in coordinating purpose and activities in social situations as complicated as a school demands plenty of routine, habits, and pre-organized role expectations. However, who can argue against the potential benefits for thought of having access to a larger repertoire of scenarios, when relevant and complex educational issues are to be dealt with? Might this not be theory’s golden opportunity to systematically explore what is different, without necessarily having to copy existing practices and their embedded understandings and problem horizons?

The perspectives and concepts we employ to name the objects and situations around us, simultaneously produce these objects and situations as something particular, and thereby limit what we can see and do. On the one hand, this is necessary for us to act efficiently in everyday life. On the other hand, this closes our eyes and thoughts to all the potential that could have been, but was not actualized. This echoes what Deleuze calls ‘transcendental empiricism’, that is, a given situation is always already co-produced by the concepts that actualize it as just this particular situation, and vice versa. Ontological and epistemological assumptions cannot be dissociated from one another, as they function and mutually co-produce, making actualized situations what they are. In order not to be caught in the simplistic trap of everyday representationalism, that is, the claim of a one to one relationship between empirical situations and the common sense or policy-ordained concepts that explain them, we must preserve the right to a diverse repertoire of concepts for thought, and the room to experiment with diverse becomings that such a repertoire allows. We must be able to systematically decode how a particular perspective, for example, about Betty the teacher, her work and students, is constructed, in order to realize the ‘truths’ that such a perspective requires to be obeyed. Only then is it possible to see these ‘truths’ as just a set of truths among other possible sets of truths. Evidently, such a rejection of a submissive relationship of a theoretical practice to an existing dominant practice does not itself remove

powerful alliances among policy, science, and markets that prioritize specific theoretical paradigms and interpretations, when, for instance, a dominant regime decides what research says about ‘evidence’ and ‘what works’ in education (e.g. Krejsler, 2013a).

The principle of *immanence* makes us aware that what appear as truths to us reflect the immanent or inherent reality by and of which we are always already made up, and simultaneously co-producing components (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, 2002g). What may happen in school is structured mostly by the dominant discourses that are considered legitimate, and our mutual daily reproduction of these discourses, in terms of how we stage school in legitimate ways. And – not surprisingly – these discourses configure and interact closely within the larger societal context and its dominant regimes, which they mutually make up. This ensures that the truth and power effects of the dominant regime are considerably enhanced, and reach out into the corners of society and individuals (e.g. Foucault, 1971).

In summary, if we want to see something that we do not already know about school, teachers, students, and their practices (which is not always the case), we need to fundamentally reconsider whether the concepts by which we see/frame the world suits our needs. We need to reconsider whether we must create new concepts which resonate better with what we are looking for, or at least empty and refill current dominant concepts with other content, or combine it in new ways (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). This is not as simple as it may seem. For, in the midst of our desiring new becomings, we are struck by the logic of immanence: that is, while wishing to act differently, our minds, thoughts, and bodies are always already simultaneously expressing the truth regimes that produce us as subjects. Of necessity, these regimes format and discipline our thinking according to knowledge and procedures that we cannot avoid, if we want to be perceived as accountable teachers, students, principals, and parents. Some ‘choose’ to overperform in relation to what they think is expected of them. Others take chances, and set out to explore the scope of potential becomings that are always already virtually available to us, and just waiting to be actualized.

A thought exercise: Observe the trains of thought that traverse your body and mind, drawing on the initial example of Betty the teacher. Observe how configurations constantly change, as though they were volatile meteorological phenomena. In one moment 45% teacher, 15% male, 10% professional expert, 3% Chinese, 8% dog, 5% female, 11% Dane and so forth. Shortly afterwards, 30% fetishist, 20% dog, 10% officer, and so forth. Later, 35% religious, 10% yoga practitioner, 5% pack animal, 8% health fanatic, 8% cosmopolitan. And fourth,

30% internet surfer, 20% lifelong learner, 20% cyborg, 10% shaman. The plasticity of becomings, in relation to pulsating organisms or communities of which they are a part, is amazing (for inspiration, see Deleuze & Guattari, 2002f). Nonetheless, any experiment in thinking differently is always already situated within the immanent restrictions that were described above. Otherwise, such attempts would easily turn into a kind of delirium or naïve romanticism, which are hardly fruitful for maintaining the minimum of stability that a life also demands, that is, optimal coordination with prevailing truth regimes around oneself.

The art of caution: Balancing between strata and the Body without Organs

Criticism has been directed at Deleuze and Guattari for idealizing change with their consistent focus on deterritorialization, becomings, and the practice of thinking difference. In my view, this is not necessarily the case. First, in *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), they restrict the endeavor of creating concepts that enable you to think differently to philosophy, which differs from science, art, and other social practices. Second, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002b, 2002c), there are several warnings that you should not take the painstaking exercises for evoking the intensities of the plateaus, presented in the book, too seriously, in the sense of having everything at stake simultaneously, in a concrete life practice.

What they term their ‘pragmatics’ or ‘schizoanalysis’ is, surely, a practice of freedom. However, Deleuze and Guattari also call such philosophical practice an ‘art of caution,’ and exemplify it as follows:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times... (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, p.161)

Translated for our purposes: When you come across aspects of your life practices that do not resonate well with you, you have the option of opening yourself up to the virtual; that is, the fragments of semantic and material elements that are always already there, but are not

currently actualized. Experiment with the bits and pieces available, until you reach a field of intensity, a plateau that appears worth sustaining, and possibly maintaining. We speak of a desiring-production guided by the desire to become other. However, this is an art of caution. On one side it, is a reaching out for the pure, virtual space of endless potential becomings. Here, the concept of the Body without Organs comes in handy, as an attempt at conceptualizing the pure space of potentiality that would be there, if all the segmented layers of roles, knowledge, and practices that tend to ossify our space for maneuvering were destratified, and reappear as pure virtuality, pure potential. This is a helpful concept for reminding us how much our thinking and action are stratified into almost geological layers that pile up, one upon another, until our scope for thinking differently becomes severely restricted by habit and dominant order machines. However, this does not mean that this is also a fruitful option to think and act by, as a life practice. Here, the art of caution is required, in the sense that you can challenge habits, segmented knowledge, and roles, bit by bit, but never all at once. In the latter case, you would be pulled into the black hole of the cancerous Body without Organs, where you destratify too rapidly, and end up rejecting the life practices that support you. Deleuze and Guattari mention the drug addict, the alcoholic, or the psychotic, as cases of playing with practices of destratification that have too much at stake at once, and thus erode a life that cannot be sustained.

The BwO [Body without Organs] is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into the black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe. Staying stratified is not the worst that can happen... (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, p.161).

On the one hand, stratified layers of habits are a limitation to becoming different. On the other hand, the same layered habits constitute the strategic arsenal for dexterity in dealing with the social situations at stake that allow one to enter the game in question in the first place. In short, you must be a normalized teacher or principal, in order to inhabit a legitimate position at a school, which in turn allows you to question, and possibly alter, structures. Or, at least, being a pupil or a casual outsider would make such endeavors so much more difficult, out of sheer lack of strategic and tactical resources to systematically impact the prevailing order

without instantly being defined as a subject to be disciplined and corrected. And, being a normalized teacher who has too many issues at stake simultaneously would surely result in this teacher being instantly disciplined or fired. In short, the art of caution is a precondition for thinking differently, in ways that constructively make a difference.

The school – a compelling order machine

We return to the school, and considerations of how to conceptualize school, teachers, and learning within a larger framework that, on the one hand is sufficiently complex, to match the configurations of power with which we are dealing – that is, the strata – and on the other hand, tickling our desiring-production sufficiently to inspire experiments in becomings that would make a difference, and produce joy – that is, pursuing the Body without Organs.

A Deleuzian approach would place school in relation to the capitalist mega-machine and its endless transformations, as we currently see them in the form of the knowledge economy and competition state semantics that reorganize affects, materiality, and signs. Inspired by Marx and others, Deleuze conceives of capitalism as an axiomatic, that is, a deterritorializing mega-machine that has no content as such, but lives off continuously deterritorializing traditions, vested cultures and institutions. Thus, capitalism, as an axiomatic, has no transcendent ambitions such as national or religious assemblages. Capitalism appears able to absorb/subsume any assemblage for its own ends, as long as it produces further growth.

The economy constitutes a worldwide axiomatic, a ‘universal cosmopolitan energy which overflows every restriction and bond,’ a mobile and convertible substance ‘such as the total value of annual production’... capitalism has from the beginning mobilized a force of deterritorialization infinitely surpassing the deterritorialization proper to the state (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002d, p.453).

One could talk about the school ordering machine as an always reforming machine that necessarily interfaces with the more dominant capitalist axiomatic, currently in the forms of New Public Management, globalization, human capital machines, and so on. (Krejsler, 2013b). In line with capitalist deterritorializing moves, Deleuze and Guattari propose a diagnosis of the contemporary, in terms of transitions from so-called ‘disciplinary societies’ to

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3 'post-disciplinary control societies,' which resonates significantly with tendencies in school
4 reform (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002g; Deleuze, 1995).

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6 Disciplinary society's school machine is formatted as a compulsory order
7 machine that offers/imposes upon body, mind, and thoughts a mental and material grid that it
8 operationalizes through a mechanism of binary codes: teacher-student, lesson-break, school-
9 home, discipline-disorder/chaos. It operates by means of what Deleuze terms paranoid
10 technologies that emphasize surveillance, sanctions, and examination, that is, a desire that
11 uniformity in the production of normalized individuals will be realized in demands,
12 expectations, sanctions, and rewards. A disciplinary regime may be defined as a signifying
13 regime, in that it exercises an overcoded and centralized regime of signs that perpetually refer
14 to one another within a closed circuit. The religious sect and school in industrial society
15 exemplify signifying regimes. All positions that one may occupy within a signifying regime
16 and all interpretations of events in the surrounding world are coded as comments that
17 recursively confirm the inherent truth of the central dogma and disciplines, which constitute
18 the core of this regime (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a, 2002g; May, 2005).

19
20 The disciplinary machine may be fruitfully distinguished from control society's
21 post-disciplinary or post-signifying machine. A post-signifying regime has no center as such,
22 and operates in ways that differ fundamentally from those of the signifying regime. It does not
23 primarily establish a centralized regime that must be obeyed. Thus, the post-signifying
24 regime's main interest consists of impacting individuals' points of subjectivation, that is, the
25 key images and affects that motivate their passions and direct their attention as they think,
26 feel, and act in the world. Deleuze and Guattari exemplify what a point of subjectivation
27 might be, by referring to the power of attraction of the shoe for the fetishist, or the facial traits
28 of the beloved for the lover (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002g). Or it could be the expected glory
29 and rewards of winning, for the investor, or the attraction of salvation for the believer. In
30 other words, the post-signifying regime seeks to support and thereby influence the
31 individual's quest for self-realization and pleasure. As a regime of formatting desires, the
32 post-disciplinary school machine operates by means of passionate technologies that
33 continuously seek to tickle and seduce the learner's points of subjectivation, in order to
34 transform the school's expectations of the lifelong learner into the learner's own expectations
35 of himself and his self-realization. It guides and stimulates individuals' desires by means of
36 individually-oriented supervision, coaching, and possibly even therapy-like approaches
37 (Krejsler, 2007).

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It is important to note that the notions of signifying and post-signifying machines or regimes should be observed as proposals for analytical concepts that make it possible to observe aspects of what is going on in schools in new ways, and not as epochal concepts, in too strict a sense. By that I mean that any concrete school context would contain elements of disciplinary and post-disciplinary machines. Some school contexts would tilt more towards the former, and others more towards the latter. One could reasonably argue that there is an epochal aspect, in the sense that disciplinary regimes are increasingly being replaced by post-disciplinary regimes, according to more a general logic of the capitalist axiomatic and its current deterritorializing moves. However, the point is that both concepts lose their analytical strength to make us see new things in local contexts, if we overemphasize the epochal narrative.

This theoretical gaze and its concepts enable us to make school life as it is lived visible in new ways, in the forms of reorganized architecture, and new organizational and social life. Thus, the post-disciplinary school machine produces in us a grid of needs that makes us desire personal growth, which simultaneously supports the production of competitive knowledge workers and entrepreneurs, eager to realize themselves and the state through lifelong and lifewide learning. Here, school's interaction with the capitalist mega-machine may be diagnosed as part of a larger rearrangement of society, which offers/imposes new narratives and procedures for organizing bodies, minds, and thoughts, and offers/imposes new solutions to their problems.

In summary, a repertoire of new concepts may help us to format our ways of conceptualizing society, institutions, and individuals differently, and thereby potentially interact with those entities in new ways. However, this is only possible as long as the concepts we create are sufficiently complex to match the complexity of the social situations they claim to offer alternatives to seeing.

Machines and desires

In observing a school as an order machine, we put to work a machine that disposes of a repertoire of order words. Through this operation, minds, thoughts, and bodies are territorialized as flows of desire that are channeled by the new spaces made available by the machine. This makes visible how virtually smooth spaces translate into striated, grid-like

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3 structures of what may be said and done as they are actualized into a particular school
4 machine.
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6 In a Deleuzian sense, the theoretical concept of the machine signifies a fluent
7 and flexible device that, in a very real sense, is defined by the relationships that it is able to
8 create and maintain, at any given time (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a, 2002g; May, 2005). The
9 machine creates, and is simultaneously created as an expression of the material elements
10 (artifacts, architecture, bodies, actions, and passions) and collective expressive elements
11 (characters, symbols, declarations, new terminology, and concepts) that it is able to
12 effectively seize. In one sense, the order words of this pulsating school machine and its de-
13 and re-territorializing activities configure and shape students, learning, school, playtime, and
14 so on. In another sense, this order machine only acquires life and concrete form, when our
15 minds, thoughts, and bodies plug into the machine and 'choose' its striated grids to channel
16 and seduce our desires, dreams, and activities. The more the school machine territorializes
17 bodies and environments, and the more the minds, thoughts, and bodies plug desires into this
18 machine's circuit, the more the machine expands its power to traverse and deterritorialize new
19 territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004/1972). And, the school machine takes on different
20 forms, depending on the local contexts it encounters, and the desires that are available to be
21 led. Some schools are more easily remolded when the machine activates elements of the
22 disciplinary school regime that resonate with already existing concepts and practices of
23 teaching, pupils, and teachers. Other learning contexts readily let themselves territorialize
24 through post-disciplinary discourses and practices, eluding lifelong learning and
25 employability as the points of subjectivation of bodies and minds that are continuously tickled
26 with promises of self-realization and dream careers.
27

28 When Deleuze and Guattari talk about desire, they draw in particular on Baruch
29 Spinoza (1632-1677), the rationalist metaphysician, natural pantheist, and ethicist, and
30 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the rebellious, perspectivist philosopher. They understand
31 desire as a primarily productive force that connects material elements and expressive elements
32 that are available to the body, mind, and thought. Desire may be called into service by any of
33 the machines and territorializing regimes that may be available to plug into in the
34 neighborhood and that appear attractive, compelling, or unavoidable. As for Spinoza and
35 Nietzsche, it is important for Deleuze and Guattari to contribute to the development of an
36 ethics that is affirmative in relation to life, or a perspectivism that celebrates the expansion of
37 what a body, a mind, and thought may be able to do (Deleuze, 2005, 2006; Hardt, 2007).
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Therefore, it is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari reject an understanding of desire as representing a lack or a need, as seen in psychoanalysis and its restraining Oedipus father-mother-child complex. Thus, in *Anti-Oedipus*, (2004/1972) Deleuze and Guattari designate psychoanalysis and its functionaries as playing the role of State Philosophy’s new bureaucracy of analytical reason.

The school-machine captures desire by distributing material and semantic particles in ways that gradually stabilize and stratify a field of dominant knowledge. The machine can only produce more, by engaging more subjects and material to plug into the machine, which simultaneously strengthens and expands its reach. No single person or context is ever identical with the school-machine *in toto*. They ‘just’ lend their molecules – again and again – and thereby strengthen or weaken the numerous order machines that crisscross them at any given time. Consequently, an individual such as Betty the teacher, who appears alternately as teacher, parent, HR staff, dog, dreamer, and so forth, should be seen, first and foremost, as a local, individual node that is penetrated by a special configuration of machines, which, over time, tends to be stabilized as an experience – however illusory – of a real identity among body, mind, and thought. Each individual node consists of the complex permutations among – in this case – the school-machine, gender machine, individualizing machine, family-machine, modernizing machine, and all the other order machines, from which a gradually rigidifying individual node borrows, and lends molecules to, over time. In consequence, we are all under threat from the gradual stratifying ossification to which the workings of habit and routine subject us.

The above perspective enables us to critically decenter ourselves from the ideologically charged concept of the unique and well-delimited individual with a so-called ‘core self.’ This conventional concept of the individual permeates our language and makes it hard to think of individual subjectivity as anything other than a kind of well-fortified fortress, which is clearly delimited from its surroundings. It blinds us to the simultaneously produced and co-producing aspects that make up this individual entity. The challenge of the Deleuzian concept of the machine enables us to visualize what we normally call ‘individual subjectivity’ as so many effects of the workings of pulsating order machines that work on, and penetrate a body, mind, and thoughts over time.

The deterritorializing powers of molar machines, such as the school machine, do not mean that individually stabilized bodies, minds, and thoughts do not act and react to the various machines that territorialize them and subject them to their distinctive formatting logic.

On the contrary, we continue to observe how the body-mind-thought stabilized nodes heroically struggle amidst the complex, and often contradictory, relations of materiality and expressive elements of which they consist, simultaneously perform, and eventually emerge from, as more or less rigidly segmented entities or individual nodes. This theoretical practice appeals to nurturing this resilience, as flows of desire keep on multiplying along the cracks and fault lines that body-mind-thoughts may be able to utilize in the surroundings they make up and exist within. In continuous becomings, the individual body-mind-thought node plugs into semantic and material elements that channel specific desires. This is the fuel that drives the processes of becoming a teacher, student, rebellious or docile, and so forth. Inversely, the order machine depends on the local conditions in the form of individual body-mind-thought nodes that 'choose' to plug into the machine by investing their particular passions in its desiring-production, which is what calls the machine to life (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002b). When the brain and the hand of a Jewish-German writer in Prague (Franz Kafka, 1883-1924) plugged into a pencil and paper, a writing-machine was called to life, which enabled the investment of passion in the production of a new language of minorities, which eventually made it possible to think differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975). When dreams of lifelong learning, self-realization, and future careers in the head of a young boy or girl plug into the school-machine and its repertoire of disciplines, a pupil or lifelong learner is called to life, and guided life projects may start to proliferate (Krejsler, 2007). Observing body, mind, and thought as expressions of always emerging and potentially new configurations of available machines that, over time, stabilize in more or less stratified individual nodes, makes us aware of a never-ending struggle. This struggle alternates between the pole of the rigidly stratified captive of habit, and the pole of the Body without Organs that keeps the multitude of virtual futures afloat. The theoretical practice suggested in this article appeals to struggling in the never-ending, desiring-productions that yearn to affirm what a body, mind, and thoughts may do in the name of joyful passions (Deleuze, 2005).

Competence Nomad: Don't stick to your trade. Build a war machine!

In summary, this article argues that a theoretical practice in the developed sense offers a powerful alternative to theoretical approaches that submit to explaining, and thus reproducing, already-existing practice. It incites thought to think differently by confronting itself and its

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surrounding world in new ways. It brings in concepts such as strata, Bodies without Organs, machines, and desire, in order to make theory and construction of concepts a much wider endeavor. Theory becomes a creative endeavor of inventing concepts that may explore potential lines of flight, and exploit cracks and inconsistencies in current school regimes, when they no longer appear appropriate (Deleuze, 2006). Finally, in this spirit, one could propose the competence nomad as a conceptual persona in the sense of a figure that may help thought to scan innate forces and conceptual landscapes in constructively rebellious ways. This figure is formatted to connect and plug into new becomings, by means of alternative tactics in current learning environments that are already heavily traversed by existing order machines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, 2002f; Krejsler, 2013b).

The competence nomad should be understood as a conceptual persona that an individual or collective body-mind-thought node can seize as a tool to assist him/her/them in building an appropriate war machine, in surveying cracks and fault lines in a local environment that may be useful in developing short-term tactics, as well as long term strategies. The war machine may be understood as a prosthesis for thought and senses that enables you to explore a complex field of forces such as a school, which is intersected by a number of struggling order machines (the family and market machines, creativity, learning and entrepreneurial machines, childhood and individuality machines, etc.), and already expresses disciplinary and post-disciplinary school regimes (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a). The competence nomad is constantly looking for space in which to maneuver, the potential to become something other, which may make a difference. Tactics may include dialogue, camouflage, exploiting abandoned positions and places, the Trojan horse, and many others (Massumi, 1992).

The competence nomad is the expression of a war machine that transforms body-mind-thought nodes into an agonic figure. It draws inspiration from Greek Antiquity and its traditions of rhetoric and dialectic, as well as the scholastic tradition of dispute, and the Renaissance tradition of polemics. The agonic figure refers to characters that constantly find themselves embroiled in complex rivalries with the configurations of machines that make up the narratives of their own subjectivities as more or less stable individual nodes in the environments in which they currently move around. My purpose is to incite readers to produce plateaus of intensities in lived lives that are experienced as affirmative to life, and as such, less oppressive, all circumstances considered.

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3 The agonistic competence nomad is a figure that systematically expands its
4 repertoire, in order master the art of selecting the appropriate weaponry that she needs,
5 depending on the battlefield, in order to be able to live with herself and her visions of 'the
6 good life' and 'the good society.' The competence nomad is a figure that mingles with her
7 colleagues, and looks them straight in the eyes, without marginalizing herself in a field that
8 constantly oscillates between routine, intrigue, dialogue, and commitment. As a dialogue
9 partner, she may commit herself to solidarity and empathetic communication, when the
10 situation is appropriate for that. She may actively commit herself to common struggles, to
11 ensure good working conditions for colleagues, students, and herself. As 'a docile subject,'
12 she may commit to various agreements with her ruler, and enter into various forms of
13 bondage practices that are perceived as necessary, in order to accomplish the purpose of the
14 organization. Hopefully, this allows for scenarios with elements of joy within the limited
15 spaces available for maneuvering in. It is grasped with an ironic distance that is, hopefully,
16 reciprocated with humor by the ruler. Recognizing the elasticity of the body-mind-thought
17 nodes that constitute this 'she,' she may, however, transform into the nomad, should the
18 situation of bondage develop into simple incarceration, where joy and humor become
19 subordinate to simple coercion or exploitation. Here, the competence nomad mobilizes all
20 tactical resources as a war machine. With a cool glance, she scans the strategic battlefield
21 around her, looks for other, alternative grazing fields, and – when the time is ripe – breaks out
22 of her prison, which is no longer perceived as conducive to a dignified existence.

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24 The competence nomad is an inspiration to think differently. It inspires the
25 juggling of bodies, minds, thoughts, affective and material elements. In stratifying and de-
26 stratifying moves, this conceptual persona calls into existence new subjectivities and changes
27 in surrounding environments. In ongoing struggles between the currently dominant and
28 marginalized machines, knowledge, communities and visions are deposited, broken up, and
29 gain new forms; perhaps in order to eventually disappear, or transform beyond recognition, by
30 plugging into other forms of knowledge, and thus becoming other. There is no need to either
31 rejoice or mourn, but rather to reflect upon the conditions for producing subjectivities at a
32 time when everything and everyone is affected by continuous reforms. Understanding a
33 theoretical practice in such a way appeals to dealing with current conditions by means of 'a
34 constructive and affirmative incertitude' (Deleuze, 1995).

Betty the teacher still observes and ponders how body, mind, and thought are territorialized by immense stratifying constructions, as the post-disciplinary school machine simulates reform by exchanging disciplinary regime elements for post-disciplinary regime elements, thereby conjuring up a desiring-producing struggle between ‘reactionary authoritarian teachers’ and ‘coaches in the service of lifelong learning students that realize themselves on personal and work-life levels’. She takes in the deterritorializing logic of a capitalist axiomatic, and the ever-renewed re-staging of her as a teacher, which continuously re-launches her as a teaching machine. As the multitude of machines keep crisscrossing her body and mind, she wonders whether she could plug into other machines in ways that are more affirming of joy, whether more life-affirming practices could be found in the cracks and contradictions between these two regimes and many other machines. She wonders whether a becoming molecular teacher would be possible in conjunction with a becoming molecular kids in ways that are sufficiently sensitive – but not overly submissive – to molar machines and their compelling, configurative power. Here the art of caution consists in avoiding being sucked into the black hole of the cancerous body without organs (e.g. Taguchi, 2013). She attempts to seize the opportunity to think differently!

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Seize the Opportunity to Think Differently!

-A Deleuzian approach to unleashing becomings in education

John Benedicto Krejsler

Why theory and concepts must face *the virtual*

This article argues that theory may be seen as a tool for practices of freedom, in the sense that it may help thought in thinking differently from what habit and convention may otherwise propose (Fornet-Betancourt, Becker, Gomez-Muller, & Gauthier, 1987). This article challenges the convention that theory should take on the submissive role of redoubling the powers of already dominant regimes by explaining practice through concepts that already make up and support these practices as dominant. Thus, in their book, *What is philosophy?*, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari determine philosophy's task as that of creating concepts that make it possible – but not necessarily compulsory – to think differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). They conceived of theory as a sort of toolbox that serves thought by helping it to expand its repertoire. They argue that theory could be a rebellious practice, and its concepts become like bricks, helping us to build houses, or to rebel and smash windows, as necessary (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002e, pp. xii-xiii).

Such an approach makes *the actual* problematic, by hinting at the potential of taking *the virtual* as a vantage point (Hardt, 2007; Massumi, 1992). In our daily practices, our thoughts, minds, and bodies are usually so emphatically caught by routine and habit that often, we do not sense the myriad impulses, cracks and fractures that always already surround us in a virtual sense. Evoking the immense potential of the virtual, and taking it seriously as the construction site on which this actual practice arose, and was turned into a specific choice, may actually sensitize us to all those potentially useful choices that were left out. Evoking the virtual simultaneously affirms that life cannot be fixed by language and concepts that stabilize by stratifying – or even ossifying – what must necessarily flow. This approach resonates strongly with other current philosophical theory, for instance, with Karen Barad's agential realism that gave us an instrumentarium of performative concepts, by suggesting that words, matter, and affects may also be seen as intra-acting in onto-epistemo-ethico diffractive patterns that indicate the immense creative potential of thinking that is constantly, necessarily,

and immanently involved in becomings – world-making (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 2002e).

From a vantage point of theory, this article suggests experimenting with the idea of thinking and mattering teacher, student learning, and school differently (Semetsky, 2006). Remaining too tightly caught in the conceptual strait-jacket of the school machine will just force us to continuously re-enact rituals that do not joyfully appreciate the great potential of other possible entanglements that always already spring out of the kids, the outside worlds and the worlds within (e.g. Davies & Gannon, 2009). This extends the capacity to think, and possibly perform, differently, in the context of what are inherently non-stable entities that we currently call ‘the professional teacher,’ ‘student,’ and ‘school.’

Getting started

Betty (teacher) enters the classroom. Trains of thought crisscross her head at hazardous speeds. The school machine says: ‘Now there must be peace and order, so that teaching can start.’ The parent machine says: ‘So, again, Pete has not slept enough, and arrives in untidy clothes!’ The generational machine says: ‘Tuck away all those iPads and smart phones right away!’ The education reform machine says: ‘We must have the student plans assessed so we can document that our school is up front among the best.’ The animal machine barks like a dog after some naughty puppies, and the desiring machine yearns for fun hikes in the woods with the kids. Betty’s thoughts, mind, and body jump from teacher, to mother, to adult position, to HR staff, to dog, to dreamer, and back again, and student bodies flash by her eyes and ears, assuming rapid transformations from students to children, to inattentive young objects for evaluation, to rotten kids, to objects for dreams and fun, and back again.

So, what does it mean to think differently?

Betty the teacher shows us that conceptual entities such as ‘the teacher’ and ‘the student’ lose their stability when the concept of the machine is applied. In a very concrete sense, they change their form and meaning with the speed of thought. They are only kept on track and given direction by the penetrating order words of the school machine that permeates the

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3 situation, and requires thought, minds, and bodies to unify purpose and behavior. But when
4 thought is potentially so lush and wild, as suggested above, could it not be then thought that
5 school life is potentially filled with lines of flight that could make it possible to think and
6 perform ‘teacher,’ ‘student,’ ‘learning,’ and many other entities differently? Such options are
7 often missed, and force us into zombie-like modes in which we do not hear or sense the
8 echoes of the many pulsating organisms around us in the form of kids, the outside world, and
9 the world within.
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12 It is important to emphasize that all existing practices are not necessarily in need
13 of being considered or performed differently. Furthermore, efficiency in coordinating purpose
14 and activities in social situations as complicated as a school demands plenty of routine, habits,
15 and pre-organized role expectations. However, who can argue against the potential benefits
16 for thought of having access to a larger repertoire of scenarios, when relevant and complex
17 educational issues are to be dealt with? Might this not be theory’s golden opportunity to
18 systematically explore what is different, without necessarily having to copy existing practices
19 and their embedded understandings and problem horizons?
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22 The perspectives and concepts we employ to name the objects and situations
23 around us, simultaneously produce these objects and situations as something particular, and
24 thereby limit what we can see and do. On the one hand, this is necessary for us to act
25 efficiently in everyday life. On the other hand, this closes our eyes and thoughts to all the
26 potential that could have been, but was not actualized. This echoes what Deleuze calls
27 ‘transcendental empiricism’, that is, a given situation is always already co-produced by the
28 concepts that actualize it as just this particular situation, and vice versa. Ontological and
29 epistemological assumptions cannot be dissociated from one another, as they function and
30 mutually co-produce, making actualized situations what they are. In order not to be caught in
31 the simplistic trap of everyday representationalism, that is, the claim of a one to one
32 relationship between empirical situations and the common sense or policy-ordained concepts
33 that explain them, we must preserve the right to a diverse repertoire of concepts for thought,
34 and the room to experiment with diverse becomings that such a repertoire allows. We must be
35 able to systematically decode how a particular perspective, for example, about Betty the
36 teacher, her work and students, is constructed, in order to realize the ‘truths’ that such a
37 perspective requires to be obeyed. Only then is it possible to see these ‘truths’ as just a set of
38 truths among other possible sets of truths. Evidently, such a rejection of a submissive
39 relationship of a theoretical practice to an existing dominant practice does not itself remove
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powerful alliances among policy, science, and markets that prioritize specific theoretical paradigms and interpretations, when, for instance, a dominant regime decides what research says about ‘evidence’ and ‘what works’ in education (e.g. Krejsler, 2013a).

The principle of *immanence* makes us aware that what appear as truths to us reflect the immanent or inherent reality by and of which we are always already made up, and simultaneously co-producing components (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, 2002g). What may happen in school is structured mostly by the dominant discourses that are considered legitimate, and our mutual daily reproduction of these discourses, in terms of how we stage school in legitimate ways. And – not surprisingly – these discourses configure and interact closely within the larger societal context and its dominant regimes, which they mutually make up. This ensures that the truth and power effects of the dominant regime are considerably enhanced, and reach out into the corners of society and individuals (e.g. Foucault, 1971).

In summary, if we want to see something that we do not already know about school, teachers, students, and their practices (which is not always the case), we need to fundamentally reconsider whether the concepts by which we see/frame the world suits our needs. We need to reconsider whether we must create new concepts which resonate better with what we are looking for, or at least empty and refill current dominant concepts with other content, or combine it in new ways (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). This is not as simple as it may seem. For, in the midst of our desiring new becomings, we are struck by the logic of immanence: that is, while wishing to act differently, our minds, thoughts, and bodies are always already simultaneously expressing the truth regimes that produce us as subjects. Of necessity, these regimes format and discipline our thinking according to knowledge and procedures that we cannot avoid, if we want to be perceived as accountable teachers, students, principals, and parents. Some ‘choose’ to overperform in relation to what they think is expected of them. Others take chances, and set out to explore the scope of potential becomings that are always already virtually available to us, and just waiting to be actualized.

A thought exercise: Observe the trains of thought that traverse your body and mind, drawing on the initial example of Betty the teacher. Observe how configurations constantly change, as though they were volatile meteorological phenomena. In one moment 45% teacher, 15% male, 10% professional expert, 3% Chinese, 8% dog, 5% female, 11% Dane and so forth. Shortly afterwards, 30% fetishist, 20% dog, 10% officer, and so forth. Later, 35% religious, 10% yoga practitioner, 5% pack animal, 8% health fanatic, 8% cosmopolitan. And fourth,

30% internet surfer, 20% lifelong learner, 20% cyborg, 10% shaman. The plasticity of becomings, in relation to pulsating organisms or communities of which they are a part, is amazing (for inspiration, see Deleuze & Guattari, 2002f). Nonetheless, any experiment in thinking differently is always already situated within the immanent restrictions that were described above. Otherwise, such attempts would easily turn into a kind of delirium or naïve romanticism, which are hardly fruitful for maintaining the minimum of stability that a life also demands, that is, optimal coordination with prevailing truth regimes around oneself.

The art of caution: Balancing between strata and the Body without Organs

Criticism has been directed at Deleuze and Guattari for idealizing change with their consistent focus on deterritorialization, becomings, and the practice of thinking difference. In my view, this is not necessarily the case. First, in *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), they restrict the endeavor of creating concepts that enable you to think differently to philosophy, which differs from science, art, and other social practices. Second, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002b, 2002c), there are several warnings that you should not take the painstaking exercises for evoking the intensities of the plateaus, presented in the book, too seriously, in the sense of having everything at stake simultaneously, in a concrete life practice.

What they term their ‘pragmatics’ or ‘schizoanalysis’ is, surely, a practice of freedom. However, Deleuze and Guattari also call such philosophical practice an ‘art of caution,’ and exemplify it as follows:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times... (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, p.161)

Translated for our purposes: When you come across aspects of your life practices that do not resonate well with you, you have the option of opening yourself up to the virtual; that is, the fragments of semantic and material elements that are always already there, but are not

currently actualized. Experiment with the bits and pieces available, until you reach a field of intensity, a plateau that appears worth sustaining, and possibly maintaining. We speak of a desiring-production guided by the desire to become other. However, this is an art of caution. On one side it, is a reaching out for the pure, virtual space of endless potential becomings. Here, the concept of the Body without Organs comes in handy, as an attempt at conceptualizing the pure space of potentiality that would be there, if all the segmented layers of roles, knowledge, and practices that tend to ossify our space for maneuvering were destratified, and reappear as pure virtuality, pure potential. This is a helpful concept for reminding us how much our thinking and action are stratified into almost geological layers that pile up, one upon another, until our scope for thinking differently becomes severely restricted by habit and dominant order machines. However, this does not mean that this is also a fruitful option to think and act by, as a life practice. Here, the art of caution is required, in the sense that you can challenge habits, segmented knowledge, and roles, bit by bit, but never all at once. In the latter case, you would be pulled into the black hole of the cancerous Body without Organs, where you destratify too rapidly, and end up rejecting the life practices that support you. Deleuze and Guattari mention the drug addict, the alcoholic, or the psychotic, as cases of playing with practices of destratification that have too much at stake at once, and thus erode a life that cannot be sustained.

The BwO [Body without Organs] is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into the black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe. Staying stratified is not the worst that can happen... (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002c, p.161).

On the one hand, stratified layers of habits are a limitation to becoming different. On the other hand, the same layered habits constitute the strategic arsenal for dexterity in dealing with the social situations at stake that allow one to enter the game in question in the first place. In short, you must be a normalized teacher or principal, in order to inhabit a legitimate position at a school, which in turn allows you to question, and possibly alter, structures. Or, at least, being a pupil or a casual outsider would make such endeavors so much more difficult, out of sheer lack of strategic and tactical resources to systematically impact the prevailing order

without instantly being defined as a subject to be disciplined and corrected. And, being a normalized teacher who has too many issues at stake simultaneously would surely result in this teacher being instantly disciplined or fired. In short, the art of caution is a precondition for thinking differently, in ways that constructively make a difference.

The school – a compelling order machine

We return to the school, and considerations of how to conceptualize school, teachers, and learning within a larger framework that, on the one hand is sufficiently complex, to match the configurations of power with which we are dealing – that is, the strata – and on the other hand, tickling our desiring-production sufficiently to inspire experiments in becomings that would make a difference, and produce joy – that is, pursuing the Body without Organs.

A Deleuzian approach would place school in relation to the capitalist mega-machine and its endless transformations, as we currently see them in the form of the knowledge economy and competition state semantics that reorganize affects, materiality, and signs. Inspired by Marx and others, Deleuze conceives of capitalism as an axiomatic, that is, a deterritorializing mega-machine that has no content as such, but lives off continuously deterritorializing traditions, vested cultures and institutions. Thus, capitalism, as an axiomatic, has no transcendent ambitions such as national or religious assemblages. Capitalism appears able to absorb/subsume any assemblage for its own ends, as long as it produces further growth.

The economy constitutes a worldwide axiomatic, a ‘universal cosmopolitan energy which overflows every restriction and bond,’ a mobile and convertible substance ‘such as the total value of annual production’... capitalism has from the beginning mobilized a force of deterritorialization infinitely surpassing the deterritorialization proper to the state (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002d, p.453).

One could talk about the school ordering machine as an always reforming machine that necessarily interfaces with the more dominant capitalist axiomatic, currently in the forms of New Public Management, globalization, human capital machines, and so on. (Krejsler, 2013b). In line with capitalist deterritorializing moves, Deleuze and Guattari propose a diagnosis of the contemporary, in terms of transitions from so-called ‘disciplinary societies’ to

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3 ‘post-disciplinary control societies,’ which resonates significantly with tendencies in school
4 reform (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002g; Deleuze, 1995).

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6 Disciplinary society’s school machine is formatted as a compulsory order
7 machine that offers/imposes upon body, mind, and thoughts a mental and material grid that it
8 operationalizes through a mechanism of binary codes: teacher-student, lesson-break, school-
9 home, discipline-disorder/chaos. It operates by means of what Deleuze terms paranoid
10 technologies that emphasize surveillance, sanctions, and examination, that is, a desire that
11 uniformity in the production of normalized individuals will be realized in demands,
12 expectations, sanctions, and rewards. A disciplinary regime may be defined as a signifying
13 regime, in that it exercises an overcoded and centralized regime of signs that perpetually refer
14 to one another within a closed circuit. The religious sect and school in industrial society
15 exemplify signifying regimes. All positions that one may occupy within a signifying regime
16 and all interpretations of events in the surrounding world are coded as comments that
17 recursively confirm the inherent truth of the central dogma and disciplines, which constitute
18 the core of this regime (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a, 2002g; May, 2005).

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20 The disciplinary machine may be fruitfully distinguished from control society’s
21 post-disciplinary or post-signifying machine. A post-signifying regime has no center as such,
22 and operates in ways that differ fundamentally from those of the signifying regime. It does not
23 primarily establish a centralized regime that must be obeyed. Thus, the post-signifying
24 regime’s main interest consists of impacting individuals’ points of subjectivation, that is, the
25 key images and affects that motivate their passions and direct their attention as they think,
26 feel, and act in the world. Deleuze and Guattari exemplify what a point of subjectivation
27 might be, by referring to the power of attraction of the shoe for the fetishist, or the facial traits
28 of the beloved for the lover (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002g). Or it could be the expected glory
29 and rewards of winning, for the investor, or the attraction of salvation for the believer. In
30 other words, the post-signifying regime seeks to support and thereby influence the
31 individual’s quest for self-realization and pleasure. As a regime of formatting desires, the
32 post-disciplinary school machine operates by means of passionate technologies that
33 continuously seek to tickle and seduce the learner’s points of subjectivation, in order to
34 transform the school’s expectations of the lifelong learner into the learner’s own expectations
35 of himself and his self-realization. It guides and stimulates individuals’ desires by means of
36 individually-oriented supervision, coaching, and possibly even therapy-like approaches
37 (Krejsler, 2007).

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3 It is important to note that the notions of signifying and post-signifying
4 machines or regimes should be observed as proposals for analytical concepts that make it
5 possible to observe aspects of what is going on in schools in new ways, and not as epochal
6 concepts, in too strict a sense. By that I mean that any concrete school context would contain
7 elements of disciplinary and post-disciplinary machines. Some school contexts would tilt
8 more towards the former, and others more towards the latter. One could reasonably argue that
9 there is an epochal aspect, in the sense that disciplinary regimes are increasingly being
10 replaced by post-disciplinary regimes, according to more a general logic of the capitalist
11 axiomatic and its current deterritorializing moves. However, the point is that both concepts
12 lose their analytical strength to make us see new things in local contexts, if we overemphasize
13 the epochal narrative.

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15 This theoretical gaze and its concepts enable us to make school life as it is lived
16 visible in new ways, in the forms of reorganized architecture, and new organizational and
17 social life. Thus, the post-disciplinary school machine produces in us a grid of needs that
18 makes us desire personal growth, which simultaneously supports the production of
19 competitive knowledge workers and entrepreneurs, eager to realize themselves and the state
20 through lifelong and lifewide learning. Here, school's interaction with the capitalist mega-
21 machine may be diagnosed as part of a larger rearrangement of society, which offers/imposes
22 new narratives and procedures for organizing bodies, minds, and thoughts, and offers/imposes
23 new solutions to their problems.

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25 In summary, a repertoire of new concepts may help us to format our ways of
26 conceptualizing society, institutions, and individuals differently, and thereby potentially
27 interact with those entities in new ways. However, this is only possible as long as the concepts
28 we create are sufficiently complex to match the complexity of the social situations they claim
29 to offer alternatives to seeing.

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 **Machines and desires**

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50 In observing a school as an order machine, we put to work a machine that disposes of a
51 repertoire of order words. Through this operation, minds, thoughts, and bodies are
52 territorialized as flows of desire that are channeled by the new spaces made available by the
53 machine. This makes visible how virtually smooth spaces translate into striated, grid-like

structures of what may be said and done as they are actualized into a particular school machine.

In a Deleuzian sense, the theoretical concept of the machine signifies a fluent and flexible device that, in a very real sense, is defined by the relationships that it is able to create and maintain, at any given time (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a, 2002g; May, 2005). The machine creates, and is simultaneously created as an expression of the material elements (artifacts, architecture, bodies, actions, and passions) and collective expressive elements (characters, symbols, declarations, new terminology, and concepts) that it is able to effectively seize. In one sense, the order words of this pulsating school machine and its de- and re-territorializing activities configure and shape students, learning, school, playtime, and so on. In another sense, this order machine only acquires life and concrete form, when our minds, thoughts, and bodies plug into the machine and ‘choose’ its striated grids to channel and seduce our desires, dreams, and activities. The more the school machine territorializes bodies and environments, and the more the minds, thoughts, and bodies plug desires into this machine’s circuit, the more the machine expands its power to traverse and deterritorialize new territories (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004/1972). And, the school machine takes on different forms, depending on the local contexts it encounters, and the desires that are available to be led. Some schools are more easily remolded when the machine activates elements of the disciplinary school regime that resonate with already existing concepts and practices of teaching, pupils, and teachers. Other learning contexts readily let themselves territorialize through post-disciplinary discourses and practices, eluding lifelong learning and employability as the points of subjectivation of bodies and minds that are continuously tickled with promises of self-realization and dream careers.

When Deleuze and Guattari talk about desire, they draw in particular on Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), the rationalist metaphysician, natural pantheist, and ethicist, and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the rebellious, perspectivist philosopher. They understand desire as a primarily productive force that connects material elements and expressive elements that are available to the body, mind, and thought. Desire may be called into service by any of the machines and territorializing regimes that may be available to plug into in the neighborhood and that appear attractive, compelling, or unavoidable. As for Spinoza and Nietzsche, it is important for Deleuze and Guattari to contribute to the development of an ethics that is affirmative in relation to life, or a perspectivism that celebrates the expansion of what a body, a mind, and thought may be able to do (Deleuze, 2005, 2006; Hardt, 2007).

Therefore, it is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari reject an understanding of desire as representing a lack or a need, as seen in psychoanalysis and its restraining Oedipus father-mother-child complex. Thus, in *Anti-Oedipus*, (2004/1972) Deleuze and Guattari designate psychoanalysis and its functionaries as playing the role of State Philosophy's new bureaucracy of analytical reason.

The school-machine captures desire by distributing material and semantic particles in ways that gradually stabilize and stratify a field of dominant knowledge. The machine can only produce more, by engaging more subjects and material to plug into the machine, which simultaneously strengthens and expands its reach. No single person or context is ever identical with the school-machine *in toto*. They 'just' lend their molecules – again and again – and thereby strengthen or weaken the numerous order machines that crisscross them at any given time. Consequently, an individual such as Betty the teacher, who appears alternately as teacher, parent, HR staff, dog, dreamer, and so forth, should be seen, first and foremost, as a local, individual node that is penetrated by a special configuration of machines, which, over time, tends to be stabilized as an experience – however illusory – of a real identity among body, mind, and thought. Each individual node consists of the complex permutations among – in this case – the school-machine, gender machine, individualizing machine, family-machine, modernizing machine, and all the other order machines, from which a gradually rigidifying individual node borrows, and lends molecules to, over time. In consequence, we are all under threat from the gradual stratifying ossification to which the workings of habit and routine subject us.

The above perspective enables us to critically decenter ourselves from the ideologically charged concept of the unique and well-delimited individual with a so-called 'core self.' This conventional concept of the individual permeates our language and makes it hard to think of individual subjectivity as anything other than a kind of well-fortified fortress, which is clearly delimited from its surroundings. It blinds us to the simultaneously produced and co-producing aspects that make up this individual entity. The challenge of the Deleuzian concept of the machine enables us to visualize what we normally call 'individual subjectivity' as so many effects of the workings of pulsating order machines that work on, and penetrate a body, mind, and thoughts over time.

The deterritorializing powers of molar machines, such as the school machine, do not mean that individually stabilized bodies, minds, and thoughts do not act and react to the various machines that territorialize them and subject them to their distinctive formatting logic.

On the contrary, we continue to observe how the body-mind-thought stabilized nodes heroically struggle amidst the complex, and often contradictory, relations of materiality and expressive elements of which they consist, simultaneously perform, and eventually emerge from, as more or less rigidly segmented entities or individual nodes. This theoretical practice appeals to nurturing this resilience, as flows of desire keep on multiplying along the cracks and fault lines that body-mind-thoughts may be able to utilize in the surroundings they make up and exist within. In continuous becomings, the individual body-mind-thought node plugs into semantic and material elements that channel specific desires. This is the fuel that drives the processes of becoming a teacher, student, rebellious or docile, and so forth. Inversely, the order machine depends on the local conditions in the form of individual body-mind-thought nodes that ‘choose’ to plug into the machine by investing their particular passions in its desiring-production, which is what calls the machine to life (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002b). When the brain and the hand of a Jewish-German writer in Prague (Franz Kafka, 1883-1924) plugged into a pencil and paper, a writing-machine was called to life, which enabled the investment of passion in the production of a new language of minorities, which eventually made it possible to think differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975). When dreams of lifelong learning, self-realization, and future careers in the head of a young boy or girl plug into the school-machine and its repertoire of disciplines, a pupil or lifelong learner is called to life, and guided life projects may start to proliferate (Krejsler, 2007). Observing body, mind, and thought as expressions of always emerging and potentially new configurations of available machines that, over time, stabilize in more or less stratified individual nodes, makes us aware of a never-ending struggle. This struggle alternates between the pole of the rigidly stratified captive of habit, and the pole of the Body without Organs that keeps the multitude of virtual futures afloat. The theoretical practice suggested in this article appeals to struggling in the never-ending, desiring-productions that yearn to affirm what a body, mind, and thoughts may do in the name of joyful passions (Deleuze, 2005).

Competence Nomad: Don’t stick to your trade. Build a war machine!

In summary, this article argues that a theoretical practice in the developed sense offers a powerful alternative to theoretical approaches that submit to explaining, and thus reproducing, already-existing practice. It incites thought to think differently by confronting itself and its

surrounding world in new ways. It brings in concepts such as strata, Bodies without Organs, machines, and desire, in order to make theory and construction of concepts a much wider endeavor. Theory becomes a creative endeavor of inventing concepts that may explore potential lines of flight, and exploit cracks and inconsistencies in current school regimes, when they no longer appear appropriate (Deleuze, 2006). Finally, in this spirit, I propose the competence nomad as a conceptual persona in the sense of a figure that may help thought to scan innate forces and conceptual landscapes in constructively rebellious ways. This figure is formatted to connect and plug into new becomings, by means of alternative tactics in current learning environments that are already heavily traversed by existing order machines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, 2002f; Krejsler, 2013b).

The competence nomad should be understood as a conceptual persona that an individual or collective body-mind-thought node can seize as a tool to assist him/her/them in building an appropriate war machine, in surveying cracks and fault lines in a local environment that may be useful in developing short-term tactics, as well as long term strategies. The war machine may be understood as a prosthesis for thought and senses that enables you to explore a complex field of forces such as a school, which is intersected by a number of struggling order machines (the family and market machines, creativity, learning and entrepreneurial machines, childhood and individuality machines, etc.), and already expresses disciplinary and post-disciplinary school regimes (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002a). The competence nomad is constantly looking for space in which to maneuver, the potential to become something other, which may make a difference. Tactics may include dialogue, camouflage, exploiting abandoned positions and places, the Trojan horse, and many others (Massumi, 1992).

The competence nomad is the expression of a war machine that transforms body-mind-thought nodes into an agonic figure. It draws inspiration from Greek Antiquity and its traditions of rhetoric and dialectic, as well as the scholastic tradition of dispute, and the Renaissance tradition of polemics. The agonic figure refers to characters that constantly find themselves embroiled in complex rivalries with the configurations of machines that make up the narratives of their own subjectivities as more or less stable individual nodes in the environments in which they currently move around. My purpose is to incite readers to produce plateaus of intensities in lived lives that are experienced as affirmative to life, and as such, less oppressive, all circumstances considered.

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The agonic competence nomad is a figure that systematically expands its repertoire, in order master the art of selecting the appropriate weaponry that she needs, depending on the battlefield, in order to be able to live with herself and her visions of ‘the good life’ and ‘the good society.’ The competence nomad is a figure that mingles with her colleagues, and looks them straight in the eyes, without marginalizing herself in a field that constantly oscillates between routine, intrigue, dialogue, and commitment. As a dialogue partner, she may commit herself to solidarity and empathetic communication, when the situation is appropriate for that. She may actively commit herself to common struggles, to ensure good working conditions for colleagues, students, and herself. As ‘a docile subject,’ she may commit to various agreements with her ruler, and enter into various forms of bondage practices that are perceived as necessary, in order to accomplish the purpose of the organization. Hopefully, this allows for scenarios with elements of joy within the limited spaces available for maneuvering in. It is grasped with an ironic distance that is, hopefully, reciprocated with humor by the ruler. Recognizing the elasticity of the body-mind-thought nodes that constitute this ‘she,’ she may, however, transform into the nomad, should the situation of bondage develop into simple incarceration, where joy and humor become subordinate to simple coercion or exploitation. Here, the competence nomad mobilizes all tactical resources as a war machine. With a cool glance, she scans the strategic battlefield around her, looks for other, alternative grazing fields, and – when the time is ripe – breaks out of her prison, which is no longer perceived as conducive to a dignified existence.

The competence nomad is an inspiration to think differently. It inspires the juggling of bodies, minds, thoughts, affective and material elements. In stratifying and de-stratifying moves, this conceptual persona calls into existence new subjectivities and changes in surrounding environments. In ongoing struggles between the currently dominant and marginalized machines, knowledge, communities and visions are deposited, broken up, and gain new forms; perhaps in order to eventually disappear, or transform beyond recognition, by plugging into other forms of knowledge, and thus becoming other. There is no need to either rejoice or mourn, but rather to reflect upon the conditions for producing subjectivities at a time when everything and everyone is affected by continuous reforms. Understanding a theoretical practice in such a way appeals to dealing with current conditions by means of ‘a constructive and affirmative incertitude’ (Deleuze, 1995).

Betty the teacher still observes and ponders how body, mind, and thought are territorialized by immense stratifying constructions, as the post-disciplinary school machine simulates reform by exchanging disciplinary regime elements for post-disciplinary regime elements, thereby conjuring up a desiring-producing struggle between ‘reactionary authoritarian teachers’ and ‘coaches in the service of lifelong learning students that realize themselves on personal and work-life levels’. She takes in the deterritorializing logic of a capitalist axiomatic, and the ever-renewed re-staging of her as a teacher, which continuously re-launches her as a teaching machine. As the multitude of machines keep crisscrossing her body and mind, she wonders whether she could plug into other machines in ways that are more affirming of joy, whether more life-affirming practices could be found in the cracks and contradictions between these two regimes and many other machines. She wonders whether a becoming molecular teacher would be possible in conjunction with a becoming molecular kids in ways that are sufficiently sensitive – but not overly submissive – to molar machines and their compelling, configurative power. Here the art of caution consists in avoiding being sucked into the black hole of the cancerous body without organs (e.g. Taguchi, 2013). She attempts to seize the opportunity to think differently!

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