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Thanks

I would first like to apologize because this presentation is part of work in progress à propos the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It cannot yet be held as a theory, but rather an attempt to present the originality of their work and suggestions about the way it could enrich our collective thinking about Reconceptualizing Childhood. I had the privilege to know and in the case of Guattari to work with him from 1965 to 1992 when he died. I also kept close contact with Deleuze until he died in 1995.

As a working hypothesis I would like to posit that their intellectual endeavour (adventure) is mainly based on two fields of interest: one is a Spinozist path and the other is a theorization of the ways and means to escape social and political alienation. They posit not that Oedipus – as an artefact and symptom of capitalism – doesn't exist but that it is one of the ways desire is constrained. In this sense they question both Freudian and Lacanian theories based on the concept of lack. As Spinoza does, they believe life is only positivity – what Spinoza calls power of action (*potentia agendi*). One of the questions Spinoza dealt with was « What can a body (*corpus*) fulfill? ». In his view one can not acquire any knowledge about the *causes* of what occurs, one can only know something about the *effects* these causes have on a body. This is what he calls the first type of knowledge. Another element of Spinoza's philosophy, that I think is important in Deleuze's and Guattari's work, is the way he opposes « sad passions » which lead to what Nietzsche called resentment, and « joyful passions » which lead to liberation. These « joyful passions » occur when a body is affected by another in a way that « suits » it, i.e. that suits the relations that compose this specific body. When I am affected in a way that suits the relations that compose me as a body, I gain power of action (my power of action grows). And this increase in my power of action leads me to more freedom.

On the other hand Deleuze and Guattari dealt with issues of « des-alienation » as did Spinoza: how can I liberate myself from human bondage (Ethics IV)? Guattari was a psychoanalyst who worked in a psychiatric clinic founded by Jean Oury which experimented radical methods and therapies. The Clinic of La Borde was founded by a group of psychiatrists in 1953., , This team wanted to create a place *fit to live in* for mentally ill, mainly schizophrenic, people. To attain such a goal they deliberately challenged « natural » oppositions such as: sick and sane (or normal and pathological), technical and human, professional and lay as well as inside and outside. This work was intended to enable better care for the patients that were usually, in other hospitals or clinics imprisoned in the psychiatric systems and asylums Goffman and Foucault described in their work.

The group argued that most of the time social status and roles (what they call the *molar*

powers or forces) rigidified people's conception of themselves and led to stereotyped and hierarchical behaviours. They decided to favour the crossing of borders, and to rotate the staff. Staff took turns as cooks, as laundry personnel, in handing out pills, in doing the housework, in giving injections, in gardening, in looking after the library, in editing a local paper or in supervising the production of theater or musical events. Not only did everyone (doctors as well as nurses, but also locally recruited lay -non medical- staff and friends and visitors on vocational courses) take part in all the activities, whether they were considered as work (cleaning, medical or psychological care for example) or as hobbies or leisure. All were fully considered as part of the therapeutic task. distributing medicine if the cook was not also a therapist. Jean Oury, the founder of La Borde often said « The doorknob must also be therapeutic ». In addition an unwritten law of La Borde was also that the institution must also care for its staff, who were not regarded as « more » normal than the patients. Therefore as far as possible, in organizational terms, the desires of the personnel were part of the picture. This meant that a hobby or a passion were regarded as strong incentives for somebody to invest in his or her work, and so offering better care for both the patient and him or herself. Changing roles and tasks lead to innovations, experiments that offered everyone the opportunity to change, to build new ways of living, to enable him or her to get rid of unappropriate, alienating or ossified habits and behaviours. This approach helped to empower the patients as well as the staff. It liberated what Deleuze and Guattari called *molecular power* ie not hindered by fixed categories or stereotyped affiliations. It led to the idea that the self is maybe an irrelevant category, and that one is more a multiple being, and moreover an unfinished or virtual multiple being who can change according to encounters and circumstances. As said Rimbaud « I is another ».

Last but not least, all activities, except strictly medical meetings, are organized by staff and patients together ; everyday arrangements ; meetings, groups, and discussion workshops and special events such as a theater festival or a trip. The hospital bus as well as the telephone switchboard are in charge of patients as well as the printing of the local paper or the leadership of the patients club.

What can one learn from this experiment ? First that the clear-cut oppositions between patients and staff are not relevant¹ and this I will develop later in relationship to the topic of Reconceptualizing childhood vis à vis adulthood. The second is there is no technical (here medical) knowledge that is not first political, or, to say it in Deleuze's and Guattari's words, « micro-political » ; or, to use their words again « molecular ». A molecular framework or agency enables the emotions and affects to « escape » the framework of role playing or status acting. In other words, the work-setting in La Borde tries to further less alienated relations between patients and staff and, more generally, between all the people that live in the clinic . It is an attempt to make the place *fit for living*. This is favoured by a continuous effort to articulate difficulties and to solve them pragmatically in a real-life situation and not according to norms, regulations or prejudices.

To evaluate the quality of technical knowledge one needs to analyze the *use* that is made of it. In other words the quality of care depends on the way staff *makes use* of whatever techniques, devices or tricks are available. When you care for mentally ill patients or children (or in any other caring relationship ?) nothing can ever be set once and for all, it's always

¹ Insofar that we, as humans, are all alienated. It' in this sense that working with mentally ill patients helps everyone of the staff to recognise and take this in account in leading his or her own life. People who deny this reality, Jean Oury, the director of La Borde calls them « normpaths », people sick of « normality ».

work in progress that requires reflexivity and continuous re-discussion.. You should always be aware that whatever the institution there is an « Outside » that interferes and changes the picture and that it's crucial to let it enter, to let it bring unknown winds, perfumes and music. There is a need for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs in each institution !

Underlying this experiment is an idea of continuum, an idea of overlap, an idea of hybridization. . Deleuze and Guattari have another useful concept called « becoming ». This concept has to do with this idea of mobility (tasks rotating at La Borde), of flexibility (negotiations to swap one activity against another ;, desire as flow, Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of « rhizome »). Opportunities must be snatched to spread out into new possibilities, into new experiencing. « Becoming » is *per se* already a movement outwards. If Deleuze and Guattari talk of « becoming –woman », « becoming -animal » and « becoming-child » and not of becoming-« man », it becomes understandable and clear insofar one keeps what was previously said about the alienation. (I am the policeman and I act as a policeman according to all the stereotypes of the status) of roles and status (that is what we called *molar powers*) in mind. There is no « becoming » for men because they are the « normal » standard for humanity. One could push the argument a bit further : society is embodied in the image of a white, heterosexual man. Feminism has shown this in the most brilliant manner.

« Becoming », Deleuze tells us, challenges the idea of an assigned, fixed identity. He writes about Alice in Wonderland (*Logique du Sens*, 1969 Editions de Minuit). In *Alice in Wonderland* and in *Through the Looking Glass* Deleuze identifies « pure events ». « Alice is growing » it means she's growing taller than she was before, but, at the same time, she becomes shorter than she is now. « Becoming » always belongs as well to the past as well as to the future ; « becoming » means there are always two ways at the same time . There is no contradiction between growing and shortening. In Simondon's work, which Deleuze knew well, he uses the concept of disparation (in french which is a noun linked to disparity). « This word is used in psychophysiology of perception and refers to the production of depth in the binocular vision ; it also qualifies the asymmetry of the retinal images, their irreducible disparity which produces, by resolving their difference, the binocular vision. Each retina is covered by a bidimensional image, but the two images do not coincide because of the differences of the parallaxes, which one can easily test by closing one eye after another. There exists optically no such thing as a bidimensional image which could solve what Simondon calls « the axiomatic of bidimensionality » (two incoherent images)... To solve the bidimensional disparation, the human brain integrates this fact by creating a coherent new axiomatic : tridimensionality ...which is absent in the reticular image... Simondon does not only use (this concept of disparation) regarding the psychophysiologic phenomena of the view, but extends (the concept) to any process of individuation, any production of existence : Each singularity is produced by a process of problematic disparation In other words, conflict, if thought as disparation is difference and not opposition, it is solved by construction, creation of a new dimension, affirmation and not negation ». (Sauvagnagues, 2002 :169-170).

As Deleuze writes « The idea of disparation is more profound than (the idea) of opposition...And in the dialectics of Georges Simondon, the problematic replaces the negative » (Recension, G.S., 116). In this view, and on the contrary of Hegel's dialectics where subsumption solves the contradiction, there can coexist two apparently contradictory phenomena. Alice grows only if she becomes shorter, but she only gets shorter if she grows. Past and future are always to the detriment of the present, which is only a tension between them. So fixed identities (in roles or statuses) are an illusion or even a trap insofar they prevent us being on the watch, seizing new ways to gain more freedom in the sense of

Spinoza, of becoming somebody new, a process which is always an enrichment - that is gaining power of action To reach the multiplicities that live in each of us, to discover, as Spinoza writes, all the possibilities a body can experience, it is necessary to abandon roles and statuses and consider life as an adventure or a workshop. But here we have to present another theoretical point in Deleuze's and Guattari's work, that is the « univocity of the Substance».

To say this means there is only one Substance. In Nature there is no hierarchy between the species or the types of knowledge. There is no such thing as a supreme principle that would be a transcendental Substance (God, Reason)(Liane- isn't this exactly Spinoza's argument about Substance yes I apologize ? So they are rejecting it, even although you have argued that it is relevant – I really would drop all the references to Spinoza) . Deleuze and Guattari absolutely refuse any form of thinking that transcends the Substance of things. For them thinking is absolutely immanent to the existing world² that is that of all living beings as well as vegetation or minerals on earth. This positioning implies, at another theoretical level, the absolute questioning of « normal » segmentations between socially constructed « differences » including « becoming-child ».

I will now present two of my research results that were carried out in the light of the above ideas about processes and possibilities.. The research was carried out in France as well in Sweden with groups of 2 and a half year olds (Mozère, 1982, 1992). The teams noticed how very similar were the worlds the children lived in (home and daycare centers) . The furniture, the toys and also the life habits were practically the same in both settings. In this continuum there was little « outside » social life and activities. In this child oriented closed and cosy world everything repeated itself, and children had no opportunity to dream of anything different. By contrast Ariès depicted the social environment of children of the XVIIIth century lived in, mixing with a multiplicity of adults, sharing all sorts of activities In this research I developed participant-observation methods in day care centers, to try to test out whether children were living and dreaming outside of their conventional, limited roles. Did these children have secret, unknown lives ? Filming and observing these children over time led us to understand how they played hooky, how they escaped the adults or played unexpected parts in a plays we did not know anything about. For instance a child who at first glance seemed to be bored, turned out to be elaborating a sophisticated strategy to squeeze in a group or get hold of a toy.

Another striking finding in this respect was the documentation of an event in 1968. In May 1968 a primary teacher Françoise Lenoble-Prédines took care of a day care center in the Sorbonne. It was illegal (it had no legal registration) and that 's why it was called « crèche sauvage » (« wild, a barbarous daycare »). It cared for children whose parents wanted to demonstrate. The children were of mixed ages³ . Anyone (women or men) who wished to help was heartily welcomed. Most of what happened in this place was politically incorrect by today's standards. : Equality between adults and children meant cooperation but also mutual learning ; Absence of sex roles meant equal opportunities for men and women to cuddle or to play. There were no prohibitions against nakedness. Françoise Dolto, a well-known french

² In this sense they firmly distinguish philosophy from both religion and doxa, which can be politically correct, the opinion of the establishment or the party.

³ Daycare in France in supervised centers welcome children from age 0 to three years old. Their parents must be working and children are usually separated in age groups. Until 1968 no parents were allowed into the different wards for fear of microbes. This resulted from the hygienic standards set up after the end of the XIXth century to struggle against infant mortality. It also was, as Foucault depicted in his work, a process of discipline.

lacanian children psychoanalyst who visited the place was struck by the very peaceful and unstressful atmosphere. People involved in this adventure talked about it as a very rich experiment and they often remembered they had learned a lot from the children. Another way of looking at children had emerged.

I would say it was an opening and a breach in the usual developmental point of the view of childhood which supposes that a child is placed on a long foreseeable road where all crossroads and stops are determined, where the adult knows and leads, the adult having precisely overtaken the child in him or herself. That is exactly what Deleuze and Guattari call the molar organization of society. The univocity of Substance described above suggests there is more to be said about childhood. Deleuze and Guattari revisited the case of little Hans in Freud's Five Psychoanalysis and developed the idea of « becoming-animal » that they claimed underlied, the story. Little Hans dreams about a street scene in which a proud draft horse with a huge penis falls after being hit by an omnibus. He is whipped and bites.

Freud only stresses the oedipian features in Hans's story : the horse's black blinkers are the father's binoculars, the dark fur around the horse's mouth become the father's whiskers and the penis of the horse is a representation of the parents making love. Deleuze and Guattari, on the contrary think that little Hans is discovering what a body (here a horse) can fulfill. « » (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980) He is not the horse, there is no identification to the horse, but there is says Deleuze and Guattari a « becoming-horse » for little Hans that opens an outlet – a possibility until then inconceivable- for Hans, Not being allowed to play in the street like other children means that street scenes for him are highly fascinating. When little Hans sees the horse, as he might watch a play on a stage, he is first struck by the horse's pride and strength, then the horse falls and is whipped, but tries to bite back. All these elements are part of what Deleuze and Guattari call « becoming-animal », little Hans can take from this experience new emotions, new strength to overcome maybe fear (the horse falls and is hurt), maybe boredom because he's locked up in the house, maybe something else. It increases the power of action in him..

« Becoming » does not mean imitation or identification. Nor does it mean feelings of pity or sympathy. « Becoming » means something is at stake that something awakens desire and opens a new path. « Hofmannstahl observes the death of a rat, the rat becomes a thought in the man, a feverish thought and at the same time the man becomes rat, a rat which shrieks and agonizes » (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980 : 315). Kafka wakes up one morning inside a beast in *The Metamorphosis*. He writes as a dog or as a singing mouse called Josephine. Beckett writes about « mineral-becoming », « stones to suck ». Charlotte Brontë uses the wind in her novels in a similar way.. « Becoming » means « un-natural » encounters or encounters connecting heterogeneous things or heterogeneous beings. These encounters are unlikely, improbable.

« Becoming-child » is not imitating ; it is also a process that develops in relation to diverse stimuli and events. Children or young girls do not become ; « becoming » is a child or a young girl. A child does not become adult, nor does a young girl become a woman... The child is the « becoming-young » at each age »(340. Usually one sees children as having to grow « into » adulthood , as « progressing » from the *infant* stage to adult age. ????? its' a quote one must leave it mean staying young, but to extract from one's age « particles and flows that create the youth of *that age* » (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980 : 340). This shows that *a*

child coexists in us, which is not the child we were, nor the child we remember. It's a « molecular » child, it's exactly « becomingchild » what Deleuze and Guattari also call a « block of childhood » (1980, 360).

As Schérer comments « a block is childhood safeguarded, resistant, rising up, as an iceberg, out of the deep sea ; glowing childhood like a crystal –the crystal of time⁴ itself -, and forming a block against corrosion and threatening » (2002, 148). Corrosion is here to be understood as escaping the child of the teachers, the psychologists and the psychoanalysts. To quote de Quincey « Of course several people have heard about Levana, the tutelary power (in Rome) that keeps watch and governs the education of children. Don't believe it's about this education that only reigns through alphabets and grammars ; one must think of this huge and vast system of central forces) that is hidden in the deep bosom of life and that ceaselessly goes right through children, teaching them in turn passion, struggle, temptation, energy of resistance »(255). The romantic authors such as Goethe (« Where you may be, be completely as a child. Then you will be all, you will be invincible » (*Elégie of Marienbad*), but also later Rilke (*Elegie of Duino* « Wer zeigt ein Kind so wie es steht ? Wer stellt es ins Gestirn und gibt das Mass des Abstands ihm in die Hand ? » (156) and Walter Benjamin (*Childhood in Berlin*) who writes « I see people back to their youth », « I gave youth a right to speak ». It is since the time of the Romantics that the natural precedence between childhood and adult age was inverted.

(Liane, this seems to me like « stream of consciousness » reminiscing. (I don't know about this can you please tell me ? You have to be tighter than this for English and American audiences !)

, « Becoming--child » for an adult (a socially « non-child ») has nothing to do with reminiscence or childhood memories. It has to do with an act of creation. First for artists : for example Baudelaire in *Paradis artificiels* says there is a continuity between what he was « as » a child and what he is to-day, or in other words, that there is a space of coexistence. « Creation is not a souvenir, but a resurgence that childhood haunts through sensitivity and that the writer, the poet expresses. Writing, painting or composing, artists bathe in childhood. He/she is child, or in a better wording, he/she « becomes-a-child » (Schérer, 2002, 148). But, at a second level, for each of us also « becoming-a-child » must be seen as a creation, as an artistic creation of a new way of living, of feeling, of acting, as a creation of new possibilities that help me to escape from the prison social roles and status impose. « Becoming-a-child » is in this sense at the same time a noun and a verb, it's a condition and an action. In other words a process, an access to desire. It's never a loss.

Concerning children, this « becoming-child » has nothing to do with the child « invented » by the adults. (Schérer, 2002, 156). Children are themselves also constrained by molar powers that act through the standard socialization process. It also means that children have to invent and create the ways and means to hear, perceive and make use of the molecular forces that enable them to have access to « becomingchild ». All children are specially skilled to do this because they are not yet totally corsetted in stereotyped thinking or acting. But being assigned to the closed worlds of family and school (or education more generally), children are prevented the opportunity to explore, eventually to get lost in other worlds, to live other experiences., although they usually manage to find breaches and hidden paths. This means that children have to build their « becoming-child » too, but I will come back to this point

⁴ This expression is in Gilles Deleuze's book *L'imafé-temps*, Paris, Minuit, 1985.

shortly. Of course adults attentive to the process of « becoming-child will try to favor this movement when being with children, by « connecting » their « becoming-child ». Experiments like Summerhill could be considered as tentative attempts to address this issue.

But all children do not have the same luck or opportunities.. As Deleuze and Guattari write : « A dried-up child « plays » childish (or acts as a child) all the more no more if no sources of childhood come out of him » (1980, 338). This dried up child is one who conforms to adulthood and the serious life of adulthood. This dried up child is shaped by molar powers - the family, the State, the Institutions- which steal his/her « becoming-child » to manufacture a virtual adult that already haunts his/her life.

From this perspective there is a clear cut and unquestionable opposition that most sociologists have stressed.. Thus Durkheim shows how education is a process of socialisation in which children have to be tamed in order to be able to enter society. The adult is the standard used to train and conform children. Children are taught not to be childish –don't be a sissy for a boy say parents who maybe are denying« becomingchild »- or don't be a tomboy for a girl. , Adults are also advised to refrain acting as children. There is only one way and this supposes knowledge is a down going process, from the adult to the child, denying, at one level, specific, precious and unknown competences and skills of children, and at another, the possibility for adults to learn and gain experience from children. In the Sorbonne, in May 1968, such hierarchically barriers built by society were easily and « naturally » opened. A child, who is more more gifted than an adult has to learn to escape the traps molar powers establish. It is only then there may be a « becomingchild » for him or her.

The child oriented worlds I talked about in the French and Swedish societies in which adults confine children is one of the expressions of the taming they have to deal with. In *Reconceptualizing childhood* this taming of children is, I think, a real issue. Berry Mayall in her recent book *Towards a Sociology for Childhood. Thinking from Children's Lives* (2002) also campaigns for a « children's standpoint ». Instead of focusing on what sociologists call « adolescents »⁵ who play computer games or Dragons and Dungeons in a totally commercial environment, perhaps there is another way of child-adult coexistence where the « becoming--child » of everyone could coexist and help strengthen the power of action in other words make every one freer to act and to be more alive ?

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⁵This word, used by some french sociologists, means they act as well as adolescents as adults.

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