

affect and philosophical inquiry with children¹

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abstract

Matthew Lipman's *Thinking in Education* develops an approach to philosophical inquiry with children (PwC) that claims to develop critical, creative and caring thinking. With Lipman, these kinds of thinking are primarily tied to analytic-logical commitments, and as such, his approach concerns only one way to conceptualize thinking. To address this issue and create space for another understanding, I introduce the concept of affect based on the work of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. From a theoretical perspective, affect helps to deepen the relationship between thinking, the body and experience in PwC; in addition, from a practical standpoint, it expands and enriches facilitation practices and curriculum design. To explore affect, I first show why PwC would benefit from such a theoretical expansion while also looking at connections already present within the literature on PwC. After a brief overview of affect theory and some of its initial applications to education, I propose a reading of Deleuzian affect augmented by thinkers like Claire Colebrook and Brian Massumi. Finally, I explore philosophical inquiry through affect and suggest how facilitation practices and curriculum design can respond in lieu of this conceptualization. This response examines several areas: inquiry, concepts, the community and ethical-political engagement.

keywords: affect; pedagogy; deleuze; children; lipman.

afeto e investigação filosófica com crianças

resumo

Thinking in Education, de Matthew Lipman, apresenta uma abordagem para a investigação filosófica com crianças (FcC) que busca desenvolver o pensamento crítico, criativo e cuidadoso. Para Lipman, esses tipos de pensamentos estão ligados principalmente a compromissos analítico-lógicos e, como tal, sua abordagem se preocupa apenas com um modo de conceitualizar o pensar. Para direcionar esse problema e criar espaço para outros entendimentos, apresento o conceito de afeto baseado na obra do filósofo francês Gilles Deleuze. A partir de uma perspectiva teórica, o afeto ajuda a aprofundar as relações entre o pensar, o corpo e a experiência na FcC; além disso, de um ponto de vista prático, ele expande e enriquece as práticas facilitadoras e a concepção curricular. Para explorar o afeto, primeiro mostro porque a FcC se beneficiaria de tal expansão teórica, enquanto examino as conexões já existentes na literatura sobre FcC. Após um breve resumo sobre a teoria do afeto e algumas de suas aplicações iniciais para a educação, proponho a leitura do afeto deleuziano ampliada por pensadores como Claire Colebrook e Brian Massumi. Por fim, exploro a investigação filosófica através do afeto e sugiro como as práticas facilitadoras e a concepção curricular podem responder no lugar dessa conceitualização. Essa resposta examina diversas áreas: a investigação, os conceitos, a comunidade e o compromisso ético-político.

palavras-chave: afeto; pedagogia; deleuze; crianças; lipman.

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afecto e investigación filosófica con niños

resumen

Thinking in Education, de Matthew Lipman, desarrolla un enfoque de la investigación filosófica con niños (FcN) que pretende desarrollar un pensamiento crítico, creativo y cuidadoso. Para Lipman, estos tipos de pensamiento están ligados principalmente a compromisos analítico-lógicos y, como tales, su enfoque se refiere sólo a una forma de conceptualizar el pensamiento. Para abordar esta cuestión y crear espacio para otra comprensión, introduzco el concepto de afecto basado en la obra del filósofo francés Gilles Deleuze. Desde una perspectiva teórica, el afecto ayuda a profundizar en la relación entre el pensamiento, el cuerpo y la experiencia en FcN; además, desde un punto de vista práctico, amplía y enriquece las prácticas de facilitación y el diseño curricular. Para explorar el afecto, primero muestro por qué FcN se beneficiaría de dicha expansión teórica, al tiempo que examino las conexiones ya presentes en la literatura sobre FcN. Tras un breve repaso de la teoría del afecto y algunas de sus aplicaciones iniciales a la educación, propongo una lectura del afecto deleuziano ampliada por pensadores como Claire Colebrook y Brian Massumi. Por último, exploro la indagación filosófica a través del afecto y sugiero cómo las prácticas de facilitación y el diseño curricular pueden responder en lugar de esta conceptualización. Esta respuesta examina varias áreas: la investigación, los conceptos, la comunidad y el compromiso ético-político.

palabras clave: afecto; pedagogía; deleuze; niños; lipman.



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introduction

Matthew Lipman (2003), together with Ann Margaret Sharp (1987), developed the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI), a revolutionary pedagogical concept that, by combining tools of philosophy with pragmatist ideas, brought the “teaching of thinking” into education. The CPI as the pedagogical cornerstone of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program concerns Lipman’s distinction between critical, creative and caring or “multidimensional” thinking.³ Behind this approach are philosophical—ontological and epistemological—commitments to, amongst others, analytical philosophy, pragmatism and logic. Together, they accentuate certain ways of producing subjectivity and a certain way of conceptualizing the link between thinking and experience. Hence, philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz (2017) writes that “[o]ntologies have ethical and political implications” (p. 3). In fact, with the elevation of logic, cultural theorist Claire Colebrook (2005) warns us that “logic defines the very form of experience” (p. 28)—it becomes common sense (*doxa*). Like cultural differences leading to different sensitivities and ways of experiencing, different philosophical commitments lead to different modes of existence. In other words, philosophical commitments change the way we think, act and experience – they transform life. Meanwhile, such transformative potential creates interesting openings for CPIs.

One way to refashion thinking and the potential in Lipman’s approach in an exciting new way is through the concept of *affect* or a body’s degree of power in terms of a capacity to affect and be affected. When thinking is reconceptualized as affective, Lipman’s model concerns sensitizing children to one kind of logic. Other logics and sensitivities can supplement this approach by cultivating new territories; for example, the relationship thinking has to sympathy, cultural

³ In this essay, “P4C” refers to Lipmanian programs and the movement in general. See also the editorial introduction of *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children* (2017). By now there are alternative names like philosophy with children or philosophical praxis. Although there are differences, what lies behind it is the contentiousness of philosophy itself. See also Haynes and Murriss (2017, p. 174).

sensitivity, processes of racialization, capitalism and gender discrimination. In that vein, political theorist Brian Massumi (2002) emphasizes that “affect is a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late capitalistic system, as infrastructural as a factory” (p. 45). Therefore, the questions of how to think affect and how to engage with it in relation to CPI are at stake here.

A key problem that the concept of affect addresses concerns subjectivity or the way in which experience is given to a subject. From the Cartesian and Kantian “I think” to the 20th-century analytical philosophers, pragmatist concerns and the phenomenological subject, one of the questions that remains beyond inquiry, as Colebrook (2005, p. 72) points out, is the one *who* experiences. Rephrasing the “I think” as “I *experience* thinking” leads to questions like whether the “I” *is* thinking and whether the experiencing of the “I” itself is the outcome of what is meant *by* thinking. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1994a) deals extensively with this problem termed representation and writes that “[t]he ‘I think’ is the most general principle of representation” (p. 138); it concerns a representational capacity and only one way of “thinking” experience. Therefore, “thinking” needs a non-anthropocentric approach beyond the “I think,” that thinks thinking differently. The purpose of this essay is thus to expand CPI through the concept of affect, especially as created by Deleuze. To contextualize the issue, I briefly discuss Lipman and the movement he inspired with his colleague Anne Margaret Sharp. Next, I look at some of the ways in which affect-related ideas are already part of the P4C literature. From there, I explore Affect Theory, how it has been used and unfold a conceptualization of affect through Deleuze. The essay ends with potential areas of expansion or “bloom-spaces” for CPI.

philosophical inquiry with children

Matthew Lipman fused thinkers of democracy like Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey with ideas from psychologists George Herbert Mead and Lev Vygotsky, and methods of classroom discussion by Justus Buchler, resulting in a pedagogy that is now the hallmark of a worldwide movement commonly referred to as philosophy for children (P4C).⁴ Part of the significance of Lipman and

⁴ See, for example, Philosophers and P4C experts Maughn Gregory and Megan Laverty (2018, p. 1).

Sharp's efforts, and that of his colleagues, has been to bring a form of philosophy into schools. To achieve this, Gregory, Haynes and Murriss (2017) explain, "Lipman and Sharp took the controversial position that teachers with no formal philosophy education could be prepared to engage their students in meaningful, rigorous philosophical inquiry" (p. xxvi). The result was a P4C curriculum consisting of philosophical novels for children accompanied by instruction manuals following an analytical-logical form of philosophy *and* combining this curriculum with a pedagogy based on democratic principles now widely known as the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI). With Lipman and Sharp's notable developments of the CPI as its pedagogical cornerstone and the philosophical novel for children, P4C has found its way into classrooms, community centers, colleges, prisons and many more places than they might have imagined.

Theoretically, Lipman's CPI is rooted in a rational and pragmatist framework of logic working towards the formation of a "reason-able" individuals prepared to participate in a representative democratic system. Within this context, they learn the "principles" and "practice" (Lipman, 2003, p. 272) of *judgement* as applied to experience. It gives a conceptual impetus to questions like what it means to think, what it means to be an individual, and how this individual takes part in social life. Together, these questions bear on the relation of an individual with their experience. Despite the inclusion of community as concept and emphasizing social aspects of individual development, Lipman's CPI starts from this *individual subject* both ontologically and epistemologically.⁵ But, with new generations of "P4Cers" emerging, challenges and change have been on the horizon.

Reaching more places over time, P4C shed some of its initial skin and transformed, as Vansieleghem and Kennedy (2011) have noted, along the way. This "second generation," including, amongst others, Barbara Weber, David Kennedy, Jennifer Glaser, Joanna Haynes, Magda Costa Carvalho, Karen Murriss, Maughn

⁵ Further explicating or reading the work of George Herbert Mead into Lipman's concept of CPI would go some way to address sociality and relationality. See, for example, Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980, pp. 23; 24) or Lipman (2003, pp. 33; 84-86; 129). However, Mead works with concepts like intersubjectivity (e.g., Mead, 1934, p. 225) and self-consciousness (e.g., Mead, 1938, p. 367) that may lead to other conceptual challenges in trying to move beyond representationalism.

Gregory, Oscar Brenifier, Susan Gardner, and Walter Kohan, “welcomed *difference* as a principle of growth” (2011, p. 172; emphasis added). According to Vansielegem and Kennedy (2011), this led to a shift, also influenced by the work of Gareth Matthews on the philosophy of childhood, from philosophy *for* children to philosophy *with* children and from a ‘method’ to “a movement encompassing a medley of approaches, each with its own methods, techniques and strategies” (pp. 178-179). The welcoming of difference opened new territories for theorizing and practicing P4C. However, what potentially limits the idea of P4C, is that Lipman remains central in one key way: the analytical-logical roots. Whether dealing with epistemology or aesthetics, critical, creative and caring thinking remain committed to a kind of inquiry and curriculum that limit their capacity for meaning-making processes and experience. As philosopher Karel van der Leeuw (2009), commenting on Lipman, put it, “[i]t is not immediately apparent, however, how the improvement of analytical skills is conducive to the discovery of meaning” (p. 111). It seems that a Lipmanian approach in P4C to creating a CPI is merely one potential way of “looking for meaning” (Lipman & Sharp, p. 1982). The question then arises: What other ways are possible? To approach this question, it will be helpful to first look at some attempts that move beyond the teaching of analytical thinking skills.

gestures toward affect

Lipman became aware of the need to address affect and emotions in P4C. In the second edition of *Thinking and Education*, Lipman (2003; 1995) added sections on emotion and outlined an argument for caring as thinking. His colleague Anne Margaret Sharp also addressed the concept of care. For example, Sharp (2014) developed the idea of care as a type of Husserlian intentionality, describing it as a “structure which gives meaning to experience” (p. 18). These are not the intentions themselves but “our capacity to have intentions” (p. 18) and concern the “realm of metaphysics, as well as descriptive epistemology” (p. 16). It implies a productive dynamic between meaning and experience. Thus, to foster caring thinking, what matters about the CPI is “the aesthetic and intersubjective form of the dialogue as

a whole—as they experience it” (p. 20). However questions remain about other ways of philosophical inquiry and how they would relate to these issues.

The German philosopher Ekkehard Martens (2003) addressed this gap by developing an approach that welcomed a variety of philosophical lineages called the five-finger model.⁶ Martens would argue that an inquiry into, for example, the concept of racism will look different from a phenomenological, hermeneutical or speculative perspective and that, as a result, different inquiry skills lead to different ways of meaning-making and different ways of experiencing. Philosopher and practitioner Barbara Weber has further developed Martens’ approach. In response to a commitment “to the perfectly reflexive and rational self” (p. 235) in Lipman, Weber (2011) describes “the human as sensuous, embodied and passionate” (p. 236). Drawing on a range of philosophers like Habermas, Rorty and Merleau-Ponty, Weber (2013) includes concepts that emphasize the role of the body in reason, like inter-corporeality and a body’s ability for resonance and emotions.

Following this train of thought, various affective components in the inquiring process can be found in the literature. Magda Costa Carvalho and Dina Mendonça (2017), while putting forward their own original contribution of meta-emotions in P4C, summarize several key contributions, including Sharp’s (2004) work on “emotional maturity” (p. 67), Sprod’s work (2001) on the importance of embodiment in relation to emotions and our lived experience (Carvalho & Mendonça, 2017, p. 130) and the application of Martha Nussbaum’s cognitive approach to emotions in the work of, for example, Lipman. They are, however, still close to a particular representational paradigm where a subject’s representational capacity mediates the relation between itself and the world, a world which then has to be representational in itself. The quest, therefore, for other theories and breaking open ontological assumptions remains.

Some P4C theorists have begun to address this. For example, Walter Kohan (2011; 2016) has drawn on Deleuze and developed concepts like *Aion*, *Chronos* and *de-territorialization* within a PwC context. Through his work, Kohan helps us to

⁶ See Eva Marsal (2014).

rethink the concept of childhood and the child in relation to thinking and educational practice. Haynes and Murriss (2017), drawing on Karen Barad and Rosi Braidotti, orient us towards different ontological priorities: “Individuals materialize and come into being through relationships; as does meaning” (p. 173). In other words, relationality is ontologically prior to identity. This has far-reaching consequences as seen in Darren Chetty’s work. Chetty (2018) shows a link between racism and normative assumptions regarding “reasonableness” in philosophical inquiry with children. What Kohan, Haynes and Murriss, and Chetty do is what affect theorist Brian Massumi (2015) would call looking for ways to “displace habitual ways of being.”

In review, Lipman’s approach is an apprenticeship in a particular philosophical sensibility. At the same time, Lipman’s tentative gestures also provide the impetus for P4C’s own expansion and change. To see P4C or PwC anew, it is not then that we need to dispel rational-logical approaches and create a new system but supplement them with other logics like a “logic” of affect. Following Deleuze and Guattari, we can say that every system finds on its periphery, lines of flight, potential de-territorializations where the system is made to stutter, where we once again become an immigrant in our own land.

a power to affect and be affected

The increased research done on affect over the last 30 years, boosted by the affective turn in the mid-1990s (Clough, 2008), grew especially out of the work done by Gilles Deleuze and was amplified by “the death of the subject” (Terada, 2001).⁷ However, the multidisciplinary nature of affect theory creates challenges in highlighting clear movements. In the *Affect Theory Reader*, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) distinguish eight broad orientations, each with its own concerns, indicating the difficulty in distinguishing different approaches. The suggestions made here are, therefore, not exhaustive.

⁷ There is a longer history if we would look at Plato’s *Republic* and how music through “mimesis” may inspire virtue (par. 399 a-b) or Aristotle’s work regarding poetry, comedy and tragedy in the *Poetics* dealing with a form of affective contagion in addition to his work on rhetoric in the *Rhetoric* dealing with mimesis and how affect may influence our judgment (Rhetoric 6 and 2.13). Since Deleuze affect has taken off in various conceptual directions influencing the ‘affective turn’ in the 1990s (e.g., Massumi, 1995; Sedgwick and Frank, 1995).

Three general lines of affect can be distinguished: psychobiological, phenomenological, and metaphysical. Together, they emphasize the necessity for an interdisciplinary evaluation to gain deeper insight into how a concept like affect operates while also helping to develop its various aspects like the registering of affect, its relation to the “subject” and social-political arrangements. All lines inform each other and help to develop insights into the complex ways in which the bio-physical, the social and the philosophical overlap.

The psychobiological line is scientific and includes researchers like Sylvan Tomkins (1962), and Antonio Damasio (1994). Here, affect refers to a “primary motivational system” (Tomkins, 1982, p. 354) and a form of “somatic marking” (Damasio, 1994) that works on processes like memory, perception, thought and drives and so has an orienting function with regard to the body. This line supports the argument for affect-related aspects like its registration, its relation to conscious and unconscious sensation and its relation to forming relationships, whether with objects, people or ideas. Importantly, the ideas in this scientific line provide a ground, as affect theorist John Protevi (2009) concludes, for thinking about the political at the physiological level and how the social and the somatic are imbricated.

The second line concerns a phenomenological and developmental approach. This approach includes thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty, James Mensch, Helmut Plessner, Thomas Fuchs and Barbara Weber. Drawing on these thinkers, Weber (2013) creates a fusion of reason, empathy and embodiment: “The body functions as a sounding board [*Resonanzboden*] for interpersonal understanding and thus a public world of action and meaning. The way in which a person settles into the world through the body ultimately determines how things and the world around him are given to him or how he can intervene politically in the meaning and order of the world” (own translation; p. 66). Consequently, Weber brings an ontological and ethical significance to forms of embodied reason and affectivity.

In the metaphysical line, the producibility of subjectivity and its connection to political-ethical questions play a key role. This includes a sensibility for

structuring processes related to affect and how these lead to ethical-political questions. In the humanities and cultural studies, the metaphysical use of affect is often described following Deleuze's reading of Spinoza.⁸ Gregg and Seigworth (2010) offer an initial definition: "Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass from body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonance themselves" (emphasis in original; p. 1). Relationality and forces are crucial to this conceptualization. In their connection "the real powers of affect" (p. 2) can be found with "affect as potential: a body's *capacity* to affect and to be affected" (p. 2). Affect's "ever-modulating force-relations" (p. 2) harbor a pedagogical potential in the changing of this capacity. There is "an ethical, aesthetic, and political task" (p. 3) regarding the question of how a body comes "to shift its affections (its being-affected) into action (capacity to affect)" (p. 2).

It is important to note the contentious relation between affect and emotions and how the previous three lines can become folded into each other. For Massumi (2002) affect, in contrast to emotion, does not require a subject. Affect is pre-personal and a-signifying while "emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal [becoming] owned and recognized" (Massumi, 2002, p. 28). Yet, there is overlap in the way both emotions and affect have been theorized in the context of control, power, and resistance. For example, the emotions have been recognized as a space for control (Boler, 1999; Hochschild, 2012[1983]; Illouz, 2007). In fact, Sarah Ahmed (2014) re-theorizes affect in relation to emotion and explains that "emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others" (p. 208), the contact leading them to "become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension" (p. 11). Emotions are

⁸ Discussed in the next section.

not simply natural experiences but invoked and imagined in ideologically functional ways. As such, Anna Gibbs (2001) states, “[b]odies can catch feelings” (p. 1). Such “catching,” stickiness or contagiousness, opens the relation between notions like humans, power and society. In this sense, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) write that “[t]he various institutions of modern society should be viewed as an archipelago of factories of subjectivity” (p. 195).

Nevertheless, thinking affect in the classroom is relatively recent. There is research on pedagogy that concerns the reframing of teaching and learning in affective terms (e.g., Boler, 1999; Cole, 2011; Probyn, 2004; Watkins, 2006; Worsham, 1998). Yet, there are many ways in which affect helps to think through the complexities of education and what it means to do, as in our case, philosophical inquiry with children. For example, the spaces and the curricular content of inquiry will affect children differently, creating what Teresa Brennan (2004) might call a different “atmosphere [which] alters the biochemistry and the neurology of the subject” (p. 1). The use of spaces, curricular content and pedagogies relate to what Ahmed (2010) describes as a politics of “orientation” (p. 162) involving a distribution of “positive and negative affects [that is] pedagogic” (p. 162); or what child educator Marg Sellars (2013) calls “becoming curriculum.” A CPI curriculum could then be understood as a heatmap of affects orienting children’s thinking and influencing their biochemistry. This leads to questions about how pedagogy creates and transforms what Harney and Moten (2013) might call the “hapticality” in which inquiry happens or “the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you” (p. 98). A curriculum then becomes a serial texture with its politics coming to the fore not just in the sense of what Stephen Law (2006) labels the “war for children's minds” (p. 10) but even more so in a fight over feelings. Indeed, as Rebecca Wanzo (2015) writes, “the fight over feelings is, literally, deadly serious” (p. 230), meaning that for a pedagogical revolution, the “affective work is also an essential, radical battle” (p. 231). What an affect-based, ethically, and politically oriented curriculum or pedagogical practice needs then is what Michelle Murphy (2015) calls a “politics of unsettling.”

Even in this brief overview, affect can already be seen to expand the question of philosophical inquiry and reconceptualizing thinking beyond a subject-centered reality. Such philosophical inquiry not only shapes thinking “skills” but also bodies, attention, ideas and imagination – our existential bearings.

deleuzian affect

Deleuze created a concept of affect and a network of affect-related concepts that function like a philosophical toolbox where different tools fine-tune different parts.

Drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze ([1968]1990) explores affect in relation to a “physics of bodies” where a “body can be anything” (Deleuze, [1970]1988, p. 127). Whether a song, a philosophical concept, an idea, a language or a social and institutional body they all have a capacity for affect. Thus, Deleuze ([1968]1990) emphasizes that “[t]he question, ‘What can a body do?’ must be taken as a model” (p. 257). But how can we think such affect? Deleuze ([1970]1988) writes that Spinoza distinguishes between *affectio* and *affectus* where “*affectio* [l’*affection*] refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of an affecting body, whereas the *affectus* [l’*affect*] refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies” (p. 49). The first concerns a body from an *extensive* perspective. For example, a human body as embedded in an “assemblage” (*agencement*) or network of relations where (non)human bodies affect each other. We know our body’s state by the affections it undergoes while encountering other bodies. Some of these encounters lead to composable relations, while others decompose each other; furthermore, these processes can occur simultaneously. The second concerns a body from an *intensive* perspective. Here, a body’s capacity for affect is a degree of power and refers to the passage between experiential states leading to an augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act and perceive. When an encounter leads to a composable relation, it augments our power for affect and we experience “joy,” but we experience “sadness” when our body’s power is weakened. Such joy differs from its usual connotations (happy, positive) and can be disruptive, destructive and painful. Therefore, its meaning is closer to a kind of “intensity” of life. As Deleuze

writes, its variations connect to an “existential function of essence” (Deleuze, [1968]1990, p. 230) that involves “intensive realities” (pp. 212-213). An intensity that is an affirmation of the body and its transformative potential that augments its power of existence. Just like the infant responds to the falling and rising intensities of its mother’s warmth, voice and nutrition, our awareness of this continuous passage becomes our mode of existence.⁹ As such, affect is a body’s continuous experiencing of a state and transition of relationality that simultaneously transforms the body’s power to affect and be affected, continuously producing sense. This continuous experiencing can be further explored through four affect-related concepts in Deleuze: Productivity, singularity, attractors, and sensibility.

In a dynamic of intensities and changing tendencies, the body is first *productive*. Before any categories or identities become relevant, there is “the power of nonorganic life” (Deleuze, [1990]1995, p. 143) as a kind of *vitalism*. Like with the infant, it is a productive force of difference that relates, synthesizes and produces new relations and tendencies. This is not a mystical “ghost in the machine” but a dynamic materialism. In other words, a body, whether human or otherwise, is productive with the potential to latch on to that which is other. Even an “idea” as a body is productive, always being collective and only enacted in relation to other bodies as part of an assemblage. Here, the intensive and the extensive relate to each other, producing bodily tendencies or capacities for affect. As such, these bodies are not just human bodies but also social bodies or assemblages driven by a carnal energy reaching into all aspects of life—love for country, the timbre of a voice, a mannerism.

These assemblages are in constant variation through *singularities*, that is, thresholds or critical points relating to the tendency of a body. Although these derive from calculus, Deleuze uses them as a kind of existential mathematics, where the differential and singularity help think of variations in power. Just like a square has four singular points while all its other “points” are ordinary, water has its unique boiling point, and a person has their own singular points, variations in

⁹ See the wonderful work of infant psychiatrist Daniel Stern (1985) on these intensities and *vitality affects*.

affective power reach a singularity or threshold. These are a body's varying distribution of relational thresholds of intensity. They signal qualitative changes like a child developing different tendencies to cry, to stop playing with certain toys or moving from being anxious to being full of hope. In that sense, a CPI as a body might also produce its own singularities, like a sudden increase in group cohesion or the excitement coming with a new path of inquiry.

To better understand the relation between a body and its "varying distribution" of singularities, we can look at how such variations occur. When a distribution of singularities solidifies, the body's thinking, feeling and acting reach increasing levels of consistency. In other words, a body produces patterns or tendencies. These consistencies actualize out of interactions when singularities begin to function as magnetizing points or *attractors*, that is, a state toward which the body as a heterogeneous system tends while other points might become *repellers*. Another way to describe it is as the production of a stable rhythm where something settles into place. But it also has the potential for re-distribution and regeneration. Whether significant shifts in ecological systems, political regimes or one's own psychological climate, there is the potential for renewal.

From a social perspective, it includes an accumulation or pooling of energy through the distribution of singularities (attractors) as the body relates to other bodies in a reciprocal dynamical process. Through such "investments," a body is constructed as an assemblage or arrangement of affects. From an ethical-political perspective, this happens through government policies, business marketing campaigns and pedagogy. As such, it produces a topographical map that limits the singularities of a body. A critical consequence is that bodies do not have the same potential for liberation and transformation. As Divya Tolia-Kelly (2006) explains, writing on topics like "race," decolonization and affect, due to, for example, "social positioning and 'enforced' capacities," bodies will "magnetize various capacities for being affected" (p. 215): they concern different intensive realities.

In addition, what undergirds these three concepts from the perspective of the human body is *sensibility*. Deleuze ([1968]1994) is resolute on this point: "It is true that on the path which leads to that which is to be thought, all begins with



sensibility” (p. 144). Sensibility concerns a body’s potential attunement to these forces. Through the relation between sensibility and thought, the question of experience returns. Especially what Deleuze ([1968]1994) calls a “transcendental empiricism” where we leave “the domain of representation in order to become ‘experience’” (p. 56). Through a dynamic of relating, singularities and productivity, a body’s affective power leads to a sensibility for difference and produces its mode of existence. Such difference continuously repeats itself and generates new differences. But this heterogeneous structure is erased when representation, as common sense, is allowed free reign. That is why, for Deleuze, empiricism only becomes transcendental “when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible” (pp. 56-57). The Mojave and Latinx¹⁰ poet Natalie Diaz (2020) describes it beautifully in *The First Water Is the Body*: “The body is beyond six senses. Is sensual. An ecstatic state of energy, always on the verge of praying, or entering any river of movement” (p. 48).

This network of affect-related concepts has consequences for how we understand thinking. For Deleuze ([1968]1994), we only think “under the impulse of a shock” (p. 132) when something “forces us to think” (xvi) awaking a dormant sensibility. To awaken such sensibilities, thinking has to go beyond a logic and reason rooted in representationalism: “The theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction” (p. 276). A revolution that stimulates us to feel more, to see more and to live more intensely expands “the range of affective potential” (Massumi, 2015, p. 36) and “experiential ‘depth’” (p. 6). Transforming thinking and inspiring change, then, requires an expanded understanding of CPI.

the becoming sensible of difference through a cpi curriculum

A consequence of Deleuzian affect is that we cannot think CPI as a closed system. Instead, CPI is better thought of as an open curriculum connecting multiple parts. Therefore, as an example, we look at the 5-day curriculum of a

¹⁰ According to an interview in *The Guardian* (2020) Diaz identifies as Mojave, Akimel O’odham and Latinx.

philosophy summer camp filled with activities and CPIs.¹¹ These curricula have conceptual themes like *Border Busters*, *Difference Detectives* or *The Metamorphs*. The goal is to provide initial openings, a first sketch that can be further developed. In doing so, I propose the term “bloom spaces” to show potential territories for expanding CPI.¹²

bloom-space 1: inquiry, questions & problems

During a 5-day curriculum where CPIs and their questions and problems connect with activities, a different processual quality emerges. “Questions and problems [...]” Deleuze ([1968]1994) writes, “are the living acts of the unconscious” (p. 106). These acts appear as differential forces of activities and bodily interaction. The “I think” and the body take on a different meaning during CPIs. Questions and problems still drive a CPI but do so from an affective perspective. Instead of entering a propositional world with claims, counterexamples or expressions of disagreement, a CPI becomes a passageway into a world of sense. Against this affective background, propositional aspects are still used, but it is the affective background that produces questions and problems. In that sense, every encounter, like a throw of the dice, introduces a distribution of singularities, out of which crystalizes a question. At the same time, each question also leads to a different distribution of singularities. Whether by a facilitator or the child, questions produce affective constellations that serve as the impetus for an inquiry. As Deleuze ([1968]1994) writes: “questions express the relation between problems and the imperatives from which they proceed” (p. 197). In other words, questions have a certain mapping function in relation to the child’s affective milieu.

For example, *The Metamorphs* curriculum begins with children witnessing and responding to a theatrical performance by facilitators, during which the character Gregor wakes up to find himself transformed into a heinous vermin. How does he go about his day? What will people think? Is he still the same on the

¹¹ These curricula are designed by *The Thinking Playground*, an organization that, amongst others, organizes philosophy summer camps for children. For more see <http://thinkingplayground.org>.

¹² Inspired by Gregg and Seigworth’s (2010) use of the term.

inside? A follow-up activity, like the making of “inside/outside” masks, leads to questions about why we might have an inside and an outside, when and to whom we show this, and who can see which aspects. Such activities inject intensity into thinking and lead to encounters that engage with sensibility. What characterizes the children during these inquiries is less their ability for “conscious deliberation” than an “attraction and repulsion” (Deleuze, [1968]1994, p. 110) of intensive signs that lead toward forming thinking habits.

Such CPIs do not follow representation-based imperatives like “What is change?” that try to catch “the whole” or some overarching meaning and, in the process, cover over the difference within. Instead of such “major” questions, they engage with what Deleuze calls “minor” questions. They are not minor in the sense that they matter less but are questions that deal with immanent modes of existence. In other words, they do not explain the whole but open out to it. Questions like the “Where and when?,” “How” and “Who” that help evaluate or palpate a mode of existence according to its power for affect and, therefore, intervene in processes of subjectivation; put differently, they question the givenness of the given. It is, therefore, important that a facilitator becomes attuned to the community while simultaneously learning to see each child’s questions in relation to immanent modes of existence.

Thus, the complicated task for facilitators during a curriculum is the evaluation and inquiry into modes of subjectivation and the emergence of social formations as they happen. It concerns a continuous appraisal of affect in response to which the facilitator has to take great care in posing their questions (e.g., justifying, synthesizing, identifying). In becoming aware of this, facilitators can modulate the affective background to “force” children to think. Questions then become what Massumi (2015) calls “techniques of relations” (203) and concern “tweaking the interference and resonance patterns” (Massumi, 2015, p. 18) between, for example, bodies, objects and ideas. By intensifying singularities, a facilitator “amplifies a previously unfelt potential to the point of perceptibility” (Massumi, 2015, p. 58), and helps a difference to become sensible. And so, Deleuze ([1962]1983) writes that “[t]he point of critique is not justification but a different

way of feeling: another sensibility” (p. 94). The ethical imperative is to become attuned to the affective lives of others in and around us.

Beginning to cultivate such a sensibility includes an engagement with affect-related philosophical and psychological theory before and during practice.¹³ Then, a facilitator may develop a sense of the affective infrastructure of philosophical concepts and the affective tonality or atmosphere of the community. As a result, they can better use questions to diagnose and probe the communal body as the children live through curricular encounters.

bloom-space 2: concepts

Questions and problems connect to concepts. Deleuze sees concepts as a response to a problem. During the inside-outside inquiry, one child “extracts” (Deleuze & Guattari, [1991]1994, p. 24) a concept like shame (“I need to hide”) while another “extracts” desire/attention (“I want to show myself”). As a response to the singularities in the curricular experience, their creation (like shame or attention) never exhausts a problem and its affective background. Instead, they “resonate” (p. 23) with the problem and have their own capacity for affect creating “intensive ordinates” (p. 25) in thought. Put differently, they initiate movement in thought. Together with the activities, the curricular characters help generate this movement.

For example, throughout *The Metamorphs* curriculum, Gregor becomes the “conceptual persona” (p. 62) or rhythmic character through which concepts are produced and explored as a kind of empirical exercise. Facilitators with a sensitivity to the concept’s intensive qualities, that is, its tendencies (singularities) and capacities (affect), are primed to inject intensity into the inquiry and better diagnose the CPI.

Consequently, activities, poems and other art forms are used as exercises in such empiricism. They dissect and diagnose the dynamic formation and institutionalization of concepts like shame, desire or love as they become cultural institutions *composed of affects* and through their composition *govern and organize*

¹³ For example, Dernikos, Lesko, McCall and Niccolini’s (2020) *Mapping the Affective Turn in Education: Theory, Research, and Pedagogies*.



life. In other words, they explore how shame and desire might be diminishing or augmenting a body's power of existence but also make "us aware of new variations and unknown resonances" (p. 28). In that sense, Deleuze and Guattari (1994b) say that "the concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing" (p. 21).

Lastly, questions and concepts subsist in the body. They 'live' through the language, objects, activities, and the dynamic forces in between making curricular elements resonate—children, objects, games, characters etc.—and turning their distance into intensity. Here, the facilitator's sensibility comes into play again. A concept like shame may, for one child, gain traction during the curricular experience and have a transformational power that may oscillate between, on the one hand, a sense of inhibition and subordination and, on the other hand, a more complex engagement with shame and its potential.¹⁴ A facilitator's response to the intensities of shame may have a great deal to say about its future direction. If it moves toward a new capacity for affect, these intensive resonances allow for a new sense to emerge: An existential transformation leading to a new way of experiencing.

bloom-space 3: curriculum & community

Inquiries and concepts accumulate, giving a qualitative evolution to a curriculum that conditions how new activities are experienced. As it evolves, philosophical encounters produce a feedback loop as if the experience begins to affect itself and becomes *auto-affective*. As an affective reaction, their wonder transcends the individual curricular elements and can cause and reproduce itself as it "possesses" the children (see Massumi, 2005, p. 41). The experiences "telescope" into each other, creating an immersive atmosphere.¹⁵ The community now includes a whole range of curricular experiences that can participate in the "sense" of community – a communal body with a capacity for affect. The children, objects, characters and ideas *resonate* with and *amplify* each other in what Deleuze

¹⁴ For example, Zembylas (2020) "The Ethics and Politics of Traumatic Shame" in *Mapping the Affective Turn in Education: Theory, Research, and Pedagogies*.

¹⁵ Or, as Massumi (2005) writes: "It wraps its time-slip so compellingly around experience that it becomes experience's affective surround" (p. 41).

and Guattari (1987[1980]) call a “transversal movement” (p. 25) where events are propagated forward. Like an expanding cyclical motion, participants revisit and inquire into concepts, appreciating and gaining insight into their complexity. All the while, the facilitator, like a physician, palpates the various affective territories (the language, the group, individuals, etc.) of this generative movement. Therefore, children are not separate from the curriculum but inhabit and *co-individuate* with it in a transversal flow of becoming.¹⁶ The children do not just step into the curriculum; the curriculum flows through their world. We can return to Diaz (2020) to better understand, in a play on Heraclitus’ fragment, the relation between the child, the curriculum and the community: “The river runs through the middle of our body, the same way it runs through the middle of our land” (p. 46).

bloom-space 4: ethics, politics & transformation

How do these insights help to strengthen CPI’s role in ethics, politics and transformation? Through affect, the sphere of the political does not just concern the human body (see Weber, 2013). Instead, the body is part of multiple bodies like ‘social’ bodies (e.g., friends or national groups), and ‘abstract’ bodies like ideas (e.g., nationalism, racism, equality). The body’s processes of subjectivation always individuate within an “assemblage” that cuts across the individual, social and abstract.

Several things follow from this. First, affect helps to think the producibility of subjectivity. Second, producibility is necessarily an ethical-political question: What is the extent of a body’s power? To what extent is a body separated from what it can do? How can it be augmented? Drawing on Deleuze ([1968]1990), we can ask: “What must we do in order to be affected by a maximum of joyful passions?” (p. 273) and “How can we come to produce active affections” (p. 246), that is, how can we minimize the extent to which we as a mode of existence are separated from what we can do? How do we augment, following Deleuze ([1993]1998, p. 137), “the manner in which an existing being is filled with

¹⁶ For more on (co-)individuation see Gilbert Simondon (2013), a contemporary of and influence on Deleuze.

immanence”? Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari (1987[1980]) call this a “micropolitics” (p. 7), which concerns the producibility of subjectivity through the modulation of a body’s capacity for affect. If subjectivity and its related concepts of “I,” self or person, are produced through socially coded affects, they lead to *common* sense. It leads to a key question Deleuze ([1990]1995) asks, and we should ask when working with children: “[W]hat modern processes are currently at work producing subjectivity?” (p. 151).

From the perspective of CPI, therefore, the goal is to, together with the children, “diagnose our actual becomings” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994[1991], p. 112). A facilitator places different emphases with a focus on singularities in concrete social assemblages as they occur in the curricular CPI experience, leading to changes in what Deleuze, drawing on Spinoza, calls their “force of existing” (*vis existendi*) and “power of acting” (*potential agendi*). What may follow from such curricular experiences is what Deleuze ([1968]1990) describes as “our *becoming-active*” (p. 288). The joyfulness of encounters is in the composing of a common relationship with other bodies and, in the process, transform into a more powerful body better able to “cope with bad encounters” (p. 287). When children form an idea of these common relationships, a sensibility to the intensive signs of encounters among bodies, they become active; they begin to comprehend the producibility of being as a logic of affect. It is here that joy envelops its own cause on an immanent plane of forces not externally imposed and separating us from what we can do. Becoming ‘reasonable’ now concerns the affective thinker forming ideas of the composition of relationships as a kind of affective condensation. A “learning process” (Deleuze, [1968]1990, p. 288) where affects become “thinking” and are fed back into a capacity for affect. A process that is suspicious of the commonsensical and concerns a sensibility to relationality, singularity and its productivity, including ways to diagnose such processes. It entails a PwC that aims for thinking to regain its spontaneity—to become para-sensical.

thinking the para-sensical

Looking back, the elevation of common sense (*doxa*) encourages an orthodoxy of normality. It anesthetizes thinking and limits experience. What awakes us from our commonsensical slumbers is para-doxa or a “para-sense” (Deleuze, 1994[1968], p. 194). If we imagine waking up after a night of bad dreams and having turned into a heinous bug, what would that mean for how we ‘feel’ our bodily selves into the day? It forces us to sense differently, not to be common but to welcome slippages, pitfalls and the straightforward strange. Facilitators and pedagogues who aim for such inquiry want to cultivate such a para-sense. It is like falling down the rabbit hole, becoming smaller and larger simultaneously. There, life is in abundance; it overflows and overwhelms but also overjoys.

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