Recasting the theory of systemic family therapy : reading Bateson through Foucault and Deleuze

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Recasting the Theory of Systemic Family Therapy:

Reading Bateson Through Foucault and Deleuze

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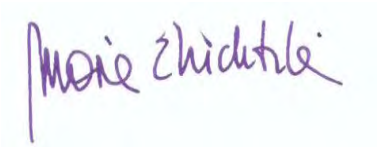
Signed 

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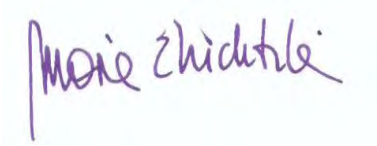
Signed 

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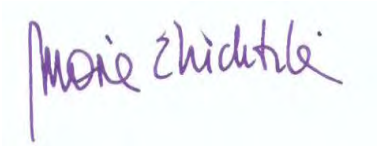
Signed 

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Preamble

"Eleven years ago, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, one of the outstanding poets of our time, enlightened this audience with his word. Since then, the Europeans of good will - and sometimes those of bad, as well - have been struck, with ever greater force, by the unearthly tidings of Latin America, that boundless realm of haunted men and historic women, whose unending obstinacy blurs into legend. We have not had a moment's rest. A promethean president, entrenched in his burning palace, died fighting an entire army, alone; and two suspicious airplane accidents, yet to be explained, cut short the life of another great-hearted president and that of a democratic soldier who had revived the dignity of his people. There have been five wars and seventeen military coups; there emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meantime, twenty million Latin American children died before the age of one - more than have been born in Europe since 1970. Those missing because of repression number nearly one hundred and twenty thousand, which is as if no one could account for all the inhabitants of Uppsala. Numerous women arrested while pregnant have given birth in Argentine prisons, yet nobody knows the whereabouts and identity of their children who were furtively adopted or sent to an orphanage by order of the military authorities. Because they tried to change this state of things, nearly two hundred thousand men and women have died throughout the continent, and over one hundred thousand have lost their lives in three small and ill-fated countries of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. If this had happened in the United States, the corresponding figure would be that of one million six hundred thousand violent deaths in four years.

One million people have fled Chile, a country with a tradition of hospitality - that is, ten per cent of its population. Uruguay, a tiny nation of two and a half million inhabitants which considered itself the continent's most civilized country, has lost to exile one out of every five citizens. Since 1979, the civil war in El Salvador has produced almost one refugee every twenty minutes. The country that could be formed of all the exiles and forced emigrants of Latin America would have a population larger than that of Norway.

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude." (García Márquez, 1982, para. 4-6)

Those were the words of Gabriel Garcia Marquez on receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature in late 1982. His words were spoken in the wake of the defeat of the Argentinian forces in the Falklands, a defeat that afforded the ease of tensions between the Argentinian and the Chilean regimes – both dictatorships. The threat of war between the (unofficial) ally and the opponent of the UK receded to the relief of many citizens in both countries. That year also witnessed me, as the present author, studying psychology in Chile. This was the year also when I first heard the name of Gregory Bateson whilst studying psychology of communication.

I commenced my tertiary studies in 1981, the same year that a process of privatization started in tertiary education as one of the many faces of the dictatorship's neoliberal plan to 'modernize' the county. The university I attended – Universidad de Chile, the longest established tertiary institution in the country – continued to offer subsidized education but also suffered significant transformations.

Psychology – my choice of studies – was only provided in Santiago, the capital of the country. This meant that I had to leave behind my family who lived in Valparaiso. My family was supportive of us children completing education and they supported my choice despite the disappointment of my father who would have preferred me to have accepted a scholarship to study locally. Despite the fortune of getting a subsidized position at university, going to Santiago was not without sacrifices for the family however, for my father had lost his job in 1975 as part of the second wave of repression and socio-economical changes. In some ways, my father lost his job because of political reasons. Not that he was involved in politics but that politics involved him: he was in charge of the Health and Safety of the ports of Chile and, like all those in 'strategic positions' for the country, he was given a redundancy package and replaced by either a

senior member of the armed forces or a newly graduated 'Chicago Boy.'[1] I believe that the plan was for my family not to be 'punished' with the change, for my father was offered at the time a senior position somewhere in the USA. I am not clear whether the reason my father chose not to accept this position was not to put his children through the dislocations that he himself experienced at a similar age when he migrated from Europe, or whether, like many others, he was then still of the belief and the hope that the dictatorship in Chile was going to be short lived.

These were 'interesting' times to engage in studies regarding the human condition and they shaped these studies in significant ways. In hindsight and although I was aware of the reality and the everyday meaning of the dictatorship, I was deeply unaware of the insidious consequences that such a regime had on the social fabric of the country in which I grew up and developed a sense of self. Going to Santiago was a violent awakening to the fortunes of my country. It was an equally violent realisation of the dangers of being different (to the authority's expectation), an awakening that saw me having repetitive nightmares until the moment I decided to leave.

These times did however provide me with a unique opportunity to approach the study of psychology as a genuine social science, that is, a study where the human condition is intimately connected with the geo-politics of its time. Having made a conscious choice early in my studies to avoid engagement in violent activities, an unfortunately common and in many ways understandable fact for many of my friends, I devoted instead an equal amount of passion to my academic studies, with a conscious desire to make sense of the madness that my country was experiencing. Yet, notwithstanding the academic

[1] I mention my father's specific area of management to highlight how the change was done systematically, even in areas that many might think were rather negligible in terms of political significance.

success that such pursuit provided me with, my restlessness did not subside but grew stronger. The unbridled reality in which I was undergoing these studies made me acutely aware of the limitations of the vast majority of theoretical assumptions informing the study of the mind that were available in the West.

Bateson was one of the few who stood the test of the times. I read and re-read his ideas often finding solace, even hope, in his critical call for a relational and ecological type of knowledge. In line with Garcia Marquez' yearnings, Bateson's words provided a means to understand the outsized reality of my times and provided a way to render the lives of both myself and those I loved (and still do) not only believable but with hope for healing and reparation.

It was because of these readings that I enrolled in further studies in family therapy as a clinical specialty. This very intuitive engagement with these ideas has supported my continued clinical work and reflection for now more than twenty seven years in three quite distinct countries (Chile, Australia and New Zealand) where I have worked in a multitude of different clinical settings: in Chile, and until my departure in 1989, I worked in a private institute of family therapy both teaching and working as a therapist; in my first stay in Australia – in Adelaide, South Australia from 1989 to 1997 – I worked both providing clinical supervision in family therapy and as a clinician, as a family therapist and marriage counsellor, in a non-government organisation – CentreCare – and, later, as a student counsellor at a university; in New Zealand – 1997 to 2002 – I was actively involved in the development of a diploma in family therapy, where I again provided direct supervision to students using a one-way mirror, and worked as a family therapist and a manager for CAMHS and, for a brief period of time prior to my return to Australia, as a psychologist in an alternative program for youth;

and since my return to Australia (this time to Melbourne, Victoria) in 2003, I have continued working with young people and their systems of support both in CAMHS and at a university.

Through this time, I have witnessed a number of conceptual movements in the field, movements that often related to the unique ways in which ideas were articulated in different geo-political environments as well as the expected conceptual variations that emerge through time. It seems necessary to indicate that these movements have had different effects on me, at times, supporting further depth/complexity in the gaze and, at others, filling me with significant disquiet.

This thesis attempts to constructively and reflectively engage with this conceptual trajectory so as to honour both the times in which they became meaningful for me as an emerging clinician and the dilemmas that present today to the field. These are dilemmas that are not as "unbridled" as the ones in which I saw their value but perhaps even more insidious in terms of their dangers.

This thesis is constructed in two parts. The first part articulates an understanding of the field of family therapy as intimately connected to Bateson's project. This understanding presents both the force of its emergence as well as my current disquiet. The second part presents a constructive engagement with the ideas of Foucault and Deleuze as a way to (re)connect with Bateson's project in a manner that responds to current critical sensibilities. The main argument of the thesis is that these authors – Foucault and Deleuze – provide a powerful way to read Bateson, one that is very different to the currently more mainstream social constructionist readings within the field. In this alternative way of reading Bateson, the practice of family therapy connects with

Bateson's considerations on ethical practice through the insights of a philosophy of difference as articulated by Foucault and Deleuze.

Part I is organised in four chapters. Chapter 1 – *Positioning Bateson within family therapy history* – articulates the problem that structures the thesis, a problem that I claim is best described as a double irony in relation to the reading of Bateson's ideas. As I explain in this chapter, the first of these ironies is the one at the base of Bateson's discontent with the type of knowledge that dominated Western science at the time he was writing. This was a discontent that that led him to embrace the emerging science of cybernetics which, in turn, became the conceptual apparatus that gave shape to systemic family therapy. The second irony emerges when considering recursively the position that Bateson's radical insights have in current systemic practice. I close this chapter commenting that this double irony is an ongoing reminder of the difficulties inherent in a genuine engagement with a systemic gaze.

The remaining three chapters in this part explicate, through a genealogical investigation of the field, the problem articulated in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 – *(Mis)Reading Bateson and the rise of the cybernetic metaphor* – looks at Bateson's work both in its early intimate connection with the emergence of the field as well as after his disheartened departure, and his further work in the applications of his insights into an ecology of mind. Chapter 3 – *Governing whom? Second order (and the fall?) of the cybernetic metaphor* – looks at the developments in the field that ran parallel to Bateson's later work, in particular the work known as second order cybernetics. Chapter 4 – *The rupture with Bateson: The surprising appearance of social constructionism* – completes this genealogy by looking at the dramatic changes that have taken place in the field since the decade of the 1990s. These changes speak back to the double irony exposed in

Chapter 1, by articulating the manner in which an engagement with Bateson's insights was lost with the introduction of these ideas relegating his work to an iconic yet mystified position within the field. Through the development of the explorations across the first four chapters, Part I in its entirety offers the definition of the problem of this thesis.

Part II brings forward an alternative way to engage with Bateson, not as an icon, but as a seminal thinker with current validity. As such it is an invitation to a dynamic reading of his ideas vis-à-vis contemporary critical sensitivities. Chapter 5, *(Re)Reading Bateson: in search of a poststructural ecology of mind*, articulates this alternative reading by (re)focusing on the critical elements in Bateson's project – elements that had been obscured in the move to social constructionism – namely, a critical engagement with science and Bateson's nuanced engagement with (ethical) action and purpose. It is in the context of these considerations that an engagement with the work of both Foucault and Deleuze is relevant.

Furthermore, this reading attempts to honour Bateson's methodology of double description by engaging with two authors who, although having a longstanding intellectual friendship, pursued quite distinct projects. The remaining six chapters in this part run in parallel, with three chapters each establishing a sequence for both the authors. This sequence moves from an introduction of their unique projects to a full engagement of their ideas in relation to Bateson's ideas. Chapter 6 – *Foucault: Power/knowledge and the care of the self* – and Chapter 9 – *Deleuze: The articulation of a philosophy of difference* – set the scene for the encounter of these authors with Bateson by providing a presentation of their projects, similar in approach to the presentation of Bateson's project in Chapter 2. Chapter 7 – *The birth of a new type of*

knowledge: Archaeological investigations of discourse and (human) life – and Chapter 10 – *Becomings of life* – investigate the appropriations of these authors in contemporary family therapy highlighting that, as with Bateson, there have been a number of (mis)readings of these authors' projects. These clarifications open the opportunity to explore productive connections between these authors and Bateson. It is in these chapters that the divergences start to become visible.

The differences become significant in the two remaining chapters – Chapter 8, *The Foucault-Bateson assemblage: Cybernetics as an engagement in critical thought and (human) life as a sacred aesthetics requiring care,* and Chapter 11, *The search of a 'human(e)' life: Deleuzian applications to systemic family therapy*. As Bateson's idea of the double description implies, these differences afford the emergence of a conceptual (systemic) field. In both these chapters, the aim is to articulate further the insights of the previous chapters by articulating a fully relational project emerging out of the encounters between these three thinkers.

Part I

Chapter 1 – Positioning Bateson within family therapy history: A double irony

It can be said that family therapy, as it has evolved during the last twenty years, is in our opinion not simply a new, additional treatment *method*, but first of all *a new way of conceptualizing human problems*. (Watzlawick and Weakland, 1977, p.xii)

Make no mistake: the shift from an individual to a systemic perspective was a revolutionary one, providing those who grasped it with a powerful tool for understanding and resolving human problems. (Nichols and Schwartz, 2007, p. 7)

What quickly happened within and outside family therapy practice, and what persists, is that family therapy is often identified with the social configuration it expressed, the family, rather than the ideology it reflected, system theory. Confusing the social configuration with the ideology contributed to family therapy's designation by some as a technique, a modality, or a subspecialty rather than as a way of thinking about human systems that informs all clinical practice. Distinctions such as technique, modality, and subspecialty miss or subvert the paradigmatic shift. Family therapy is not simply about the family as a target-of-treatment (Anderson, 1999, p. 2)

The intention in this chapter is to introduce the research problem that will frame the theoretical exploration of this thesis. As a chapter, it is not interested in moving a claim along a determined logical line of argument, or of introducing new (testifiable) material that might help in a possible resolution of the problem, but instead to highlight the tensions – and consequent possibilities for theoretical exploration – of a certain state of affairs. This gesture is meaningful within a post-structural methodology of problematization. It will be further argued, that not just Chapter 1 but also the whole of Part I aims to problematize the field, with Chapter 1 being an introduction and a schematization of the gesture that is explained through Chapters 2 to 4. The definition of the problem throughout this first part of the thesis sets the ground for the proposed way forward, namely the use of Foucault's and Deleuze's philosophical projects to (re)read both Bateson's ideas and systemic sensibilities.

Through such a framing activity, this chapter – and the whole of Part I – constitute a genuine and important part of the creative yet accountable work of the author. This is so because the problem to be explored in a thesis is not a free floating, factual, and/or transcendental problem, but a (specific) distinction made by the researcher. The researcher's observation attempts to capture the problems that are present in the times in which she lives and in the times in which she wants to contribute. In such complexity, there is a need to declare and explore both the conditions of emergence of the problem at hand as well as its genealogy, instead of taking the conditions for granted through either 'good' or 'common' sense[2] within a so-called 'neutral' and 'objective' observation.

[2] This connects with the ideas of Deleuze as will be discussed in Chapter 9.

The problem chosen for the thesis – a problem that resonates with my personal interests as explained in the preamble – is what will be described as a *double irony* vis-à-vis Bateson's position within the field: the first irony refers to Bateson's own discontent with the state of knowledge at the time, a discontent that is at the base of the move towards a systemic understanding; the second irony refers to how these insights seems to have been lost within the evolution of the field, despite the apparent importance of his ideas.

In line with the need to make the conditions of emergence accountable to the reader, this first chapter aims to explain why is it that the notion of double irony seems appropriate as a definition for the position that Bateson occupies in current family therapy theory and to explain each of these ironies.

This chapter is organised in the following sections:

Section one is an extension of the above-mentioned need to define what is usually taken for granted: it interrogates the notion of 'reading.' Reading – in this particular instance, reading family therapy theory – is not a passive but an active engagement that serves a number of uses that will be described in this section. *Section two* is a "necessary (yet brief) detour" into a mainstream description of Bateson's position in the field. Such a description provides a conceptual anchor/connection of this conceptual exploration into some familiar landscape. *Section three* posits the double irony proposed as the research problem and explains each of these two ironies in their relevant contexts. This section will also explore the effects of collapsing these different ironies into one reading so as to support and introduce the need for a renewed reading of Bateson's ideas.

1.1 Reading (family therapy) history

> History, or 'the past,' is by definition a construction. There are facts, which are more or less objective; but their grouping, the way they are highlighted, and the shadows that are left are the product of the historian's present position. (Minuchin, 1987, p. 5)

Flaskas (2010) comments on how teachers/educators of family therapy choose to define the parameters of this practice, especially "in light of the by-now taken-for-granted postmodernist sensibilities [... where] it perhaps goes without saying that any commentary on the history of ideas involves choices and emphases shaped by the context of the enquiry" (p. 233).

Flaskas' words in this article serves as an introduction – a setting the scene – to her exploration of an alternative history of family therapy, one that is not focused on the familiar readings of the field as populated by significant discontinuities – mostly due to the presence of maverick figures – so often quoted in mainstream narrations. Flaskas chose instead to read the field's history according to its continuities. When reading her article however, what caught the attention of the present author was not only the originality of her thought but her style. In her article, Flaskas articulates a further layer of complexity in the reading of the theory informing the field that is both refreshingly creative and also accomplished in terms of its systemic-ness. In her purposeful reference to the recursive nature of our knowledge making, she makes a double gesture, of simultaneously addressing contemporary concerns and sensibilities regarding the transparency and accountability of the statements uttered, as well as holding central to this reading the foundational concepts within our field – namely, that what we are talking about is not transcendental realities but punctuations of the complexity we experience as reality.

Flaskas is insightful in noting that, despite the discontinuities that have been favoured through the more traditional accounts, there are also many continuities that have been shadowed if not overlooked. She is equally insightful in noting that these discontinuities – and their shadows – have been represented differently during the evolution of family therapy theory. As with films, where the representations of cowboys and indians as well as of knights and damsels-in-distress not only represent the characters' epoch, but also that of the film, the theories we use to describe and explain the so-called facts in study also portray the style, the preoccupations and the fashions of the writer and his/her times.[3]

In words that perhaps serve the purpose of the present author better, the act of description is not just an analytical act but also an artistic one that presupposes – often in invisible and unaccounted ways – a creative act of connecting fragments into some coherent form. Such poetic activity implies the presence of tensions of sorts – blind spots, acts of erasure, acts of emphasis, acts of sheer poetic transformation, etc. – between what is experienced and what is written, that gives the event to be described its texture and complexity, as well as giving the concepts used to attempt to represent such an event a certain elasticity. This peculiarity of the 'act' of writing has no exception in the writing within our field. Concrete examples of this dynamic in the field include the 'disappearance' of Christian Midelfort as a significant pioneer (Gurman and Kniskern, 1991, p. 23, see also Nichols and Schwartz, 2007, p. 40) with a perhaps less dramatic example in Hoffman's comments on the role of Harry Goolishian[4] in the development of the field (1992, p. 101). An even better example becomes apparent when one reflects

[3] These comments connect with Foucault's notion of *savoir* (1976b) as will be discussed in Chapter 6.
[4] Goolishian will become a critical figure in Chapter 4.

on how such history is often presented as if it was equivalent to the developments of the movement within the USA.

These tensions and inconsistencies also allow for a second set of dynamics to take place, which perhaps is of greater importance to the purposes of this thesis than the former. The tensions – the gaps, the connections and the often tenuous associations that the writer tentatively experiments with – also create the space for the possibility of future alternative combinations and further (re)readings. In other words, they allow for the life of the text to take place through the emergence of new readings. According to Derrida (n.d.), this is where the responsibility of any author lies: not to bring an iteration of a canon to bear, but to inject life into the reading so as to produce renewed vitality in the timeless questions that confront our existence – questions that are not only abstract problems, but also concrete existential dilemmas vis-à-vis the times in which we live.

Having this focus and this responsibility in mind when reading the theory and the ideas that have populated the field of family therapy, there is one problematization central to the practice of family therapy that has not yet been explored. This is the problematically ironic position that the English anthropologist Gregory Bateson occupies in the field.

1.2 Bateson and the Mental Research Institute (MRI)

> I think it is very true that MRI began before it came into existence. It began not really from, but in a way, out of Gregory Bateson's project on communication. (de Shazer and Berg, 1995, p. 2)

Bateson is an iconic figure in the family therapy field and is well recognized as the theoretician par excellence of the family therapy movement (e.g. Krause, 2007, p. 915, Launer, 2001, p. 158, Nichols, 2008, p. 20, and Ray, 2007, p. 859). It was his work that led the articulation of systemic ideas that not only were the foundation of the

interactional model developed at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) but also served as inspiration for what was to become the "systemic framework" (Stratton, 2003, p. 119, and de Shazer and Berg, 1995, p. 249). Before addressing Bateson's position within the field, it seems appropriate, as indicated earlier, to provide a brief introduction to his work and the therapeutic context that is mainly associated with him. This inevitably points us to the work of the Palo Alto Group and the MRI.

In 1952, Bateson secured funds from the Rockefeller Foundation to establish what was to be known as the *Palo Alto group* in some circles and as the *Bateson group* in others. The grant was to investigate "Paradoxes of Abstraction in Communication" (Lipset, 1980, p. 200). He invited into the team John Weakland, who was his student in anthropology after Weakland's initial studies in chemical engineering; Jay Haley, who had approached Bateson in relation to his work on fictional films whilst doing his Masters Degree in Communication at Stanford University; and William Fry, who had Bateson as a teacher while he was a psychiatric registrar at the Veteran Administration Hospital in Menlo Park, California. The completion of the group took place two years later in 1954, when Bateson attended the Frieda Fromm-Reichmann lecture given by Don D. Jackson on family homeostasis (1957). Bateson was impressed by the parallels in their researches and, given Jackson's expertise in schizophrenia, he invited Jackson to be a consultant to the group (Jackson, 1968, p. v). The group became famous through their research in a communicational approach to the aetiology of schizophrenia and their notion of *double bind*, published in 1956 (Bateson et al., 1956, Sluzki and Ransom, 1976, and Berger, 1978).

In 1959, Don Jackson established the MRI[5] in Palo Alto, California. Paul Watzlawick arrived in 1960 and Haley and Weakland joined the Institute in 1961 (Weakland et al., 1995, p. 10), once the Palo Alto group disbanded. The MRI applied and expanded on the insights of the Palo Alto group. It is worth noting that the MRI was not a 'family therapy' research institute. As Lipset remarked, family therapy was an "inadvertent outgrowth" (1980, p. 219) of the insights and new conceptualizations around cybernetics and communications theory developed by both the Palo Alto Group and the MRI.

The MRI became one of the traditions with the strongest presence in the field, with many key figures and writings being quite central to the movement (to name the best-known, Haley, 1963, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1984, 1987, 1997, Watzlawick et al., 1967, 1974, 1977, 1978, 1984, Wilder-Mott and Weakland, 1981, Weakland and Ray, 1995, Fisch et al., 1982, Ray, 1991, 2005). It was initially through these writings that Bateson's ideas became more accessible to practitioners, positioning him as the family therapist's theorist par excellence.

Another important feature of MRI has been its proliferation: through the years, a number of new and highly influential approaches can be traced back directly to the influence of the early ideas of the MRI. These include the brief therapy project within the centre,[6] the further developments in Haley's work once he left the MRI, and the creative developments in the Milan group (Weakland and Ray, 1995).

[5] The initial group was originally composed of four people: Jackson, Jules Riskin (a medical practitioner), Virginia Satir (who later became an eminent practitioner of what was loosely named the experiential school of family therapy) and their secretary.

[6] This project established itself as a distinct branch within MRI in 1967 and, since its emergence, it has been equally heuristic, seeing the birth of the solution focused approach out of the work of some of its students.

1.3 A double irony

> Theory development has always been prominent in family therapy, a field that has maintained its creativity since the middle of the twentieth century. With Bateson's work in the forefront, the term 'systemic' has defined the field and empowered the creation of clinical models. But do his ideas continue to guide the field? Anyone who has studied systemic therapy is familiar with the works of Gregory Bateson. But how central are these ideas to recent development in family therapy (or psychotherapy in general)? (Thomas et al., 2007, p. 871-2)

Perhaps due to this historical development, Guerin and Chabot (1997, p. 186) argued that although the Bateson project failed to produce a set of coherent ideas, it did succeed in developing a strong community of ideas, clinicians and researcher. Notwithstanding the merits and positive implications of their argument, it seems to misunderstand a central element of genuine research: that the exploration of yet uncharted conceptual landscapes is neither straightforward nor clear. Many in the field have commented that they find Bateson's ideas difficult to understand. This however should not be surprising for it is consistent and indicative of the painstaking work involved in doing research. Research, by its very nature, is experimental, leading at times to dead ends so that the theory has to painfully rectify itself and learn from its mistakes (Nichols and Everett, 1986, p. 4).[7] Bateson's work was – and continues to be – not a set of technical tools but a conceptual apparatus in development, not yet fully articulated, even in his own mind (e.g. Lipset, 1980, p. 197, and Bateson, 1973, p.441).

Yet, the comment by Guerin and Chabot helps to introduce the problematization that defines this thesis, for it refers us to the tensions present in a reading of Bateson's ideas

[7] This is a point that is well articulated by Deleuze who wrote: "even with respect to pure science, the question must be posed thus: Can we make progress if we do not enter into *regions far from equilibrium?*" (1997, p. 109)

specific to family therapy. In particular, it refers us to issues that have to do with the reflective engagement with theory that is required of (clinical) disciplines. This is a point of ongoing frustration in the field of family therapy (henceforward *the field*) that, perhaps partly due to its pragmatic and radical nature, can tend to see the need of a conceptual framework to be a hindrance.

This tension with theory helps to provide the context in which the double irony that frames this thesis emerges: Bateson's theory was not just an abstract – if not abstruse – theory that sits in some ivory tower detached from daily practice, but a creative and sophisticated critique of the then state of knowledge and its effectiveness to deal with the real problems of everyday living. Applied to the clinic, this 'cultural' critique provided a powerful set of ideas and strategies to deal with complex clinical problems (Clarkin and Carpenter, 1995, p. 208, see also Epstein and Loos, 1989, p. 405, and Nichols and Schwartz, 2007, p. 7-8). Bateson's ideas lie at the conceptual centre of the field's disciplinary practice and, as such, they require ongoing (re)reading and (re)evaluation.

Within this context, the double irony constitutive of this thesis can be best described using the image of speech that Bateson used to support the need to move to cybernetic/systemic thought: "Every schoolboy knows…"

Each of the levels of this double irony involves a different reading of this image of speech: the first level of irony – 'every schoolboy knows... *then'* – was the reading carried out by Bateson himself, and the second level – 'every schoolboy knows... *now*' – refers to a reading of the current status of Bateson's ideas within this field.

1.3.1 'Every schoolboy knows'… then

> It became monstrously evident that schooling in this country and in England […] was so careful to avoid all crucial issues […]. It seemed to me that the writing out of some of these very elementary ideas could be entitled, with a little irony, 'Every Schoolboy Knows.' (Bateson, 2002, p. 3)

As indicated earlier in the chapter, it is well accepted – perhaps even a canon of family therapy theory – that the field represents a paradigmatic shift within psychiatry, a shift that was heavily informed by the work of Bateson and his team on the clinical implications of the emerging science of cybernetics and the sciences of communication. These new therapeutic practices claimed to be radically different to the traditional ones, not only because they moved away from the individual towards the whole system, but also because they moved away from modes of understanding that were heavily informed by Newtonian physics and an imagery of forces and entities (Bateson, 1970a).

In his book *Mind and Nature* (2002, originally published in 1979), Bateson provided a coherent presentation of the ideas that he had sketched in his earlier collection *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (first published in 1972). It is in this later book where he explained the first irony. He used a well-known English phrase – 'Every Schoolboy Knows' – to refer to what he saw as a lack in the then current education, a lack that left students bereft of relevant education. In it, he introduced "certain tools of thought [to address this] lack of knowledge of the presuppositions not only of science but also of everyday life" (2002, p. 23). These tools – ranging from "Science never proves anything" to "stochastic processes" in science and in life – introduced the reader to a theoretical understanding of systemic-cybernetic thinking.

"Every schoolboy... *then*" refers to the conditions of emergence and the ideas that shaped our field via the development of a unique mode of observation: *a systemic gaze*.

This gaze is not merely a "a change of name [but] a change of game" (Haley, 2007, p. xiii).

Looking back at the evolution of the field, it seems that the development of this gaze could be best understood as the emergence and consolidation of a *double description*, one of Bateson's central techniques of observation (Bateson, 2002, p. 81, and Hui et al., 2008). In it, each set of observations refers to a different level of analysis of the clinical complexity: at one level, family therapy arose out of a different practice and, at another level, it implied a different set of conceptualizations.

1.3.1.1 A new modality of work: From individuals to families

> We can no longer afford the error of evaluating the individual in isolation from his usual environment or appraising that behavior in artificial settings. We must study the person where he breathes, eats, sleeps, loves and where he learns his place in society: in the intimate climate of his day-by-day family relationships. It is in this setting that we strive toward the development of a social psychology and social psychopathology of family life. (Haley, 1962b, p. 2)

As indicated earlier, family therapy is clear in stating that, as a theory, it assumes a difference of practice when compared with traditional modalities of therapy. Consistently, the emergence of the field is intimately related to practitioners *doing things differently*: they no longer were working with an individual, but met individuals conjointly with their families. The reasons given for this shift vary in different historical accounts, from being a misunderstanding by Bell of Bowlby's work at the Tavistock in London (Framo, 1996, p. 294), to the need to deal with the constant presence and concerns of relatives of the person being treated (Framo, 1996, p. 291, see also Ray, 2005, p.xvi). What is clear however, is that once individuals were seen in the context of their families, the position and the skills of the clinician needed to be reconsidered and

redefined (Ackerman, 1962, Haley, 1962a). This is where the second description, and the second level of observations, constitutive of this gaze acquires meaning.

1.3.1.2 A new unit of analysis: The (family) system

> Double bind is one of the revolutionary ideas of the twentieth century. While the notion arose originally from efforts to understand a specific problem – the etiology of schizophrenia – its scope is much wider. It constitutes a new approach to psychopathology and leads to a radically different way of thinking and speaking about human behavior in general […] Over the years the logical beauty of the concept has created an illusion of concreteness […] But this misunderstand has led to many intellectual dead ends. (Sluzki and Ransom, 1976, p.vii)

As Weakland would say: *One Thing Leads to Another* (1981). Having a new unit of analysis – the study of human systems rather than of individuals in (artificial) isolation – led to the realisation that new concepts needed to be developed in order to (re)present and articulate the phenomena observed. For these pioneers, the shift implied in this work was, using Kuhn's conceptualization of scientific evolution (Watzlawick and Weakland, 1977, p. 1), incommensurable. A whole new language of observation was developed including the concept of double bind (Bateson et al., 1956) and later the more extensive *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

What constituted this new unit of analysis – as well as the implied practical application of such analysis – evolved through time with significant changes. As Hoffman (1988a, p. 115-6) quite acutely noted , the 1980s saw a tendency to move from the family system altogether to the idea that "the system doesn't create the problem, the problem creates the system."[8] The next move took place during the early 1990s with a shift from

[8] This move was conceptualized differently by different authors and includes the notions of 'significant' (Boscolo et al., 1987), 'meaningful' (Imber-Black, 1985) and of 'problem-determined' (Anderson et al., 1986) system.

‘problem oriented’ to ‘solution focused’ and ‘socially constructed.’ These changes will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 to 4. Suffice to say at this point that it is through these transitions, in particular in the later shift to the ‘socially constructed,’ that the second irony in relation to Bateson’s work emerges.

1.3.2 ‘Every schoolboy knows’… now

> [I]f we had not temporarily lost that sense of “the dialectical struggle with uncertainty, confusion, and doubt, sometimes despair” […] then perhaps […] Bateson would not have sunk below the horizon for many of today’s family therapy trainees. […] Bateson would have known better. (Crago, 2006, p. iv)

> Family therapy seems to be suffering an identity crisis. As teachers and developers of a distinct practice and discipline, we family therapists seem to be losing ground, or at least losing definition. (Beels, 2002, p. 67)

The second irony is visible when evaluating the current state of the field in light of its original interests and definitions. Beels wrote at the end of the article quoted above: “[f]amily therapy [...] appears to be drifting, without much protest, into a varied stream of healing practices where its unique conceptual contribution, ‘systems thinking,’ is less and less asserted or defended” (p. 81).

Perhaps a graphic example of this can be seen in a later issue of a leading journal in the field – *Family Process* – which included an article explaining the notion of scientific validity (Greeno, 2003). This article is relevant both given its importance in terms of the current emphasis on Evidence Based Practice as well as the fact that it positions itself at the heart of some of the epistemological issues addressed by Bateson (e.g., 1978, and, for a more general critique of positivism as scientific methodology 1958a, 1970a, 2002). Greeno’s article however, although acknowledging the struggles for appropriate

measures in the social sciences, does not make reference to the nuanced writings of Bateson on this matter.

This example is no exception. Twenty-seven years after Bateson wrote *Mind and Nature*, Crago (2006) reflected on the lack of knowledge that current family therapists have of Bateson. A year later, Thomas et al. (2007) completed a literature survey investigating the legacy of Bateson and puzzled at the discrepancy between the honourable position that Bateson holds within the field and any actual evidence for this honour. As they wrote: "[i]n the late 1980s, theorists ignored systems thinking (at best) or declared cybernetics to be dead and danced on its grave (at worst)" (p. 880).

The second irony presents itself then, when looking at the current education available to students in the field, an education that introduces Bateson *uncritically* without tracing both the tension – between Bateson's theory and current clinical practice – as well as the often subtle changes in the reading of his ideas through time. This second irony refers then to the lack of a genuine engagement with the conceptual apparatus that informs the field, in particular the nuanced conceptualizations articulated by Bateson; a lack that can leave students bereft of the tools required for its practice. In other words, as a discipline, family therapy seems to struggle to engage meaningfully with a theory that it claims to honour and that is consistent with the practice that defines it.

1.3.3 A double description

> What bonus or increment of knowing follows from combining information from two or more sources? (Bateson, 2002, p. 63)

Collapsing the time between these two images – between "every schoolboy knows…" *then* and *now* – creates a recursive reading of the problem; a reading that, again, is very much in line with Bateson's preferred methodology of double description. Perhaps more

importantly, to engage simultaneously with these two images serves to remind us of the ongoing richness and complexity inherent to systemic thought. The central challenge for any student who ventures into the practice of systemic therapy is how to meaningfully and coherently engage with such complexity.

The argument of this thesis is that such engagement is possible – as indicated earlier – through a constant (re)reading of the ideas that shaped and continue to shape the field; a reading that ought to be done not only in the context of their emergence but also as a reflection and extension of both new sensibilities and the unique problems that present to the practitioner in today's practice.

It is in this spirit that this thesis will now proceed to look at Bateson's ideas in their intimate relation with the emergence and constitution of the field and how his ideas have been (mis)read in the field.

Chapter 2 – (Mis)Reading Bateson and the rise of the cybernetic metaphor

> The words of Jacques Derrida (1976) apply here: "it would be frivolous to think that 'Descartes,' 'Leibniz,' 'Rousseau,' 'Hegel,' etc. are names of authors . . . each is in the first place 'the name of a problem'" (p. 99). We should approach the question, what does "Gregory Bateson" stand for? (Pakman, 2004, p. 414)

> Incidentally, wherever family therapists turn for new ideas, and however we react against old ideas, all our answers, so far, can be seen to be rooted in the highlighting of some aspect or other of Gregory Bateson's work.[…]Perhaps family therapy will only achieve a 'paradigm shift' once a real alternative to Bateson is discovered! (Jones, 1993, p. 26)

The next two chapters aim to introduce in more detail the conceptual work of Bateson with a particular emphasis on its (problematic) application to the clinic. This chapter will explore his conceptual trajectory including his direct participation in the field. The next chapter will look at the resonances that his ideas had in the field with particular emphasis on the approaches that claimed direct connection to his work. These two chapters, in conjunction with Chapter 4, articulate the problematization identified in Chapter 1.

A clarification is needed prior to commencing this exploration. The method used in the remaining chapters in this part as well as in Chapter 6 and 9 may appear confusing in light of the distinctions made early in Chapter 1, for this analysis seems to revert to a more lineal style of reading theoretical material. In these chapters the aim is to introduce the ideas with as much rigour as possible, providing, wherever possible, direct references to the actual texts, offering a portraiture (Deleuze, 1995, p. 135) of them. This may seem counterintuitive to the current (postmodern) tradition of pastiche where the emphasis is on selectively choosing elements from different authors so as to 'highlight' specific practice-based issues (e.g. Nichols, 2008, p. 316). However, the reading in these chapters serves instead the specific function of establishing a kind of 'foundational reading' upon which the (re)reading in the remaining chapters take place. It is in this sense that the writing in the chapters of Part I and Chapter 6 and 9 can be seen as a specific genealogy. It is a genealogy that will allow for the productive work in the remainder of the chapters.

This genealogy also hope to provide a reflection and an expansion on the conventional description of Bateson's role in family therapy history, particularly noting what often gets obscured: that rather than being 'just' an issue of lack of resources or of difference

of interests (e.g. Haley, 2001, p. 17-8), the dispersion of Bateson's group was due mainly to increasing conceptual tensions amongst the team members and, to a larger extent, between Bateson and the psychiatric field in general. These tensions continue to have significant presence in the field.

This chapter identifies the critical times in the evolution both of Bateson's thought and of its effects on the field in four sections. The first section positions Bateson within the larger intellectual context in which he grew up. The second looks at cybernetics and Bateson's involvement in this emerging science. The third section presents the emerging tensions that the implementation of cybernetic ideas in the field created for Bateson. The last section articulates Bateson's further evolution after the rupture with the MRI took place, for this later development is central in the appreciation of the scope and puissance of his ideas.

2.1 Bateson: The legacy of a scientist?

> Two qualities stand out clearly in my recollection of that evening: Bateson's hearty laugh and the intensity of his gaze. Everything about him was large. (Feinstein, 1982, p. 152)

It seems to be a consensus amongst commentators on Bateson's work that it is hard to position him within traditional academic disciplines, despite all agreeing on his "visionary [status] in late twentieth-century American intellectual circles" (Marcus, 1985, p. 66). In our field, there are some who define him as an anthropologist, some as a biologist and some as a cybernetician. Each of these definitions is equally supported through different lines of argumentation. Bateson himself claimed to "have been a biologist all [his] life" (2002, p. 7) even when he made a conscious decision to move into anthropology after his undergraduate degree in biology at Cambridge and – perhaps

following the steps of Darwin[9] – a trip to the Galapagos (Lipset, 1980, p. 113-4). Yet, he also referred to himself as an anthropologist which he considered to be "a specific type of science" (1974a, p. 270). It was as a budding anthropologist that he wrote his visionary first book *Naven* (1958a). The final definition, the one of him as a cybernetician, seems the least confusing of all categories for readers in the field given his continuous and core involvement with this movement since the first of the Macy Foundation meetings in 1946.

There is however little doubt that, despite of all these differences in definition, the label of scientist is an appropriate one for his endeavours. He consistently defined his activity to be a scientific one. As will soon be explained, for two generations the ethos of his family had been intimately associated with the scientific endeavour and, although he chose to put some distance from the biological career path of his father, his career in anthropology – and later in cybernetics – was one of a committed man of science who, since very early, had penetrating insights not only across these disciplines but also in philosophy of science (e.g., 1973, p. 23-31). In fact, and with the benefit of hindsight, his commitment to the social applications of cybernetics in many ways resembles the work of Darwin, inasmuch as it was painfully open to experimentation, correction and reflection.[10] It was this scientific commitment that accounts also for Bateson's renowned style of 'never getting to the point.' Marcus comments on this:

> Death has imposed a closure on his work that gives it a certain solidity and lends it perspective. Bateson's effort to produce a synthetic cap to his thought in the face of death was a clear indication of his objectification of his lifelong thinking and his desire to end with a statement that was retrospectively holistic. (1985, p. 66)

[9] This connection is of relevance as discussed in 2.1.1.
[10] In this respect, it is interesting to compare Bateson's style with Darwin's long commitment to the studies of worms (1882).

Yet Bateson's scientific trajectory was far from conventional. As will be discussed later, his marriage to Margaret Mead led him to move to the USA, thus leaving his academic status in Cambridge with its familiar sensibilities for more uncertain landscapes in the New World. Lipset defined Bateson's as an "odd career" (2005, p. 899), a career that could perhaps be best described with the qualifier of "invisible" (Lipset, 1980). This qualifier, although appealing at one level, poses difficulties at another for it seems to obscure a very powerful dynamic in Bateson's scientific enterprise: by being outside the establishment, Bateson was able to approach his scientific interests without the academic restraints and expectations that regulated the life of many intellectuals at the time,[11] allowing him to engage creatively with the problems at hand. This distancing, as will be argued later, could be seen as one of the conditions underlying Bateson's ability to engage so fully with the emerging new science of cybernetics, a space in which he was clearly not invisible.

One final comment in relation to Bateson's figure is needed before discussing his intellectual trajectory. It relates to the need to understand his work systemically, that is, to understand his work as belonging to a larger intellectual context. Prevalent conceptions of intellectuals as heroic figures – geniuses of sorts – that almost single-handedly further the state of knowledge, shadow the intimate connection that Gregory had with a fine and nuanced debate that had informed scientific knowledge in England – if not the Western world– since at least Darwin. This was a connection that allowed Bateson to engage powerfully and creatively with the emerging developments of the social sciences in post-war America (Heims, 1991).

[11] This is a comment that has also been made of the conditions of emergence of structuralism (Dosse, 1997, vol. 1), of Deleuze (Lechte, 1994) and Maturana's own reflection in relation to his decision to return to Chile instead of staying in the USA.

2.1.1 Running in the family

> But it was only in the midst of this party, among my closest friends, that I realised that I would be travelling back to the family I had grown from – those relations from my parents' generation who stood in my memory like frozen opera. I wanted to touch them into words. A perverse and solitary desire. (Ondaatje, 1993, p. 22)

Perhaps the best way to grasp the complexities often associated with Bateson's persona is by starting this reading by commenting on the fine intellectual tradition held in his family. This seems in line with his own advice[12] and an understanding of his ideas as belonging to – as in the midst of – a larger debate that has defined Western thought since the Renaissance.

Since this time, or more specifically since the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, men of knowledge have been attempting to understand the human condition according to its own measure instead of the then-dominant feudal ideas of knowledge as divine signs. It is in this wider world of ideas where Descartes' mind-body dualism became foundational for science and where his Cartesian functions supported the dominance of quantity and numbers over patterns and forms – a prevalence that Gregory heavily critiqued (e.g. Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 11). It is also this context that framed a dialogical relation between Cartesian rationalism – prevalent in continental Europe – and the British empiricists' emphasis on observable data, affording the later emergence of scientists like Newton and then Darwin. Finally, it is in this context that the Batesons later became a renowned family in Cambridge.

To attempt to expound in detail the connections of this historical complexity exceeds the scope of this thesis. Suffice to indicate however that this is what is meant about

[12] "It is important to see the particular utterance or action as *part* of the ecological sub-system called context and not as the product or effect of what remains of the context after the piece which we want to explain has been cut out from it" (Bateson, 1973, p. 309).

belonging to an intellectual elite, in this particular case, the one into which Bateson was born and in which he grew up. The identity of the 'Cambridge Batesons' was intimately connected with the emergence of biology – and zoology – as central sciences after Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). It was a family that had, as part of its identity, a profound acquaintance with the nuanced and powerful debate between the emerging project of evolution and the established tenets of Christianity. Within this context, Darwin – like any great intellect – was not a static figure but a set of ideas that the Batesons kept alive by reading him in problematic ways, both respecting and critiquing it in the light of other works, particularly Lamarck and Butler.

The Batesons belonged to the British intellectual elite that included – as guests they entertained – families like the Darwins, the Huxleys, the Keynes and Whitehead, someone who will become relevant in later chapters. Gregory's paternal grandfather – William Henry Bateson – had been the Master of St John's College. He was a well-known Libertarian and university politician (Lipset, 1980, p. 14) who "led modernizing forces at Cambridge University, in the midst of the famous cosmological and political controversies between the authority of religious and scientific explanation that followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*" (Lipset, 2005, p. 900). Indeed this period of reform became known as "the age of Bateson" (Miller, 1961). His father, William Bateson, was a well-known and well respected zoologist – itself an emerging science born out of the impetus generated by Darwinian ideas – who coined the name Genetics the year after Gregory was born (Lipset, 1980, p. 13). It was William's admiration of Mendel's work that led to the newborn being called Gregory (ibid).

Gregory Bateson was born on 9th May 1904, the youngest of three boys. With parents who were "relentless in their eagerness for knowledge" (Lipset, 1980, p. 43), the

Bateson children grew up in a highly didactic household. Religion – so prevalent within Cambridge academia – was replaced, with equal fervour, by an atheistic and materialist investigation of life. Not surprisingly then, Bateson comments: "I grew up in the middle of natural history and beetle collecting" (in Lipset, 1980, p. 44). This was an educational context that provided Gregory with an almost unconscious ease vis-à-vis the living world. One must not forget however that such ease was not at all something 'natural.' Quite the opposite in fact, this alternative lifestyle required ongoing affirmation and was certainly not the secularization as we understand it in current times, but a restrained and highly educated position where the head of the family would read passages of the Bible as part of the breakfast rituals (Bateson, 1970b, p. 313). This social positioning is significant, providing a continual overarching frame in his work – a direction focused on the articulation of an immanent sacredness of life.

As the youngest of three children, Gregory held the least promise according to his parents. Yet, misfortune saw his older brother – John – die during WWI and his second brother – Martin – commit suicide quite publically on the anniversary of John's death. Lipset's biography comments that Martin's suicide was also linked to difficulties in getting support from his parents to move away from science into the arts. This tragedy perhaps shaped both Gregory's wish to distance himself from his father's studies[13] and the reduced resistance that his father showed against him doing so. Perhaps an indication of the subtle balance that Gregory held at this time was his description of his move to anthropology as not entirely a rupture but a *variation* within zoology; where the people of the world were the "most interesting fauna" (Bateson in Lipset, 1980, p. 114).

[13] This 'distance' is however a somewhat inadequate description since the Bateson family had a long tradition of admiration for the arts too.

Once he finished his studies in Cambridge, Bateson moved to Australia in 1928 – apparently to teach linguistics (Anonymous, n.d.) - and then, to carry out ethnographic research with tribes both in Papua New Guinea and Bali. The results from this research were published in his first book *Naven* (1958a) where he presented the notion of *schismogenesis*.

2.1.2 Naven: A relational taxonomy and the epistemological problem

> Naven was a study of the nature of explanation […] a weaving of three levels of abstraction. At the most concrete level there are ethnographic data. More abstract is the tentative arranging of data to give various pictures of the culture, and still more abstract is the self-conscious discussion of the procedures by which the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are put together. (Bateson, 1958a, p. 280-1)

It seems paradoxical to propose that in order to understand the work of Gregory Bateson – a work that, as stated before, is often seen as hard and abstruse – one ought to approach it in its complexity. Gregory was a very apt intellectual student and, by the time he commenced his studies at Cambridge, he was well versed in scientific methodology. As indicated earlier, he had been expected to further a refined tradition in biology, a tradition to which he was perceived to 'naturally' belong. Thus, it is not surprising perhaps that, in his move into anthropology, he still held connections with a biological method, thus being able to write an innovative and candidly intellectual first book early in his research career.

Naven is a "constitutional work for Bateson [in terms of his] views of epistemology in the human sciences" (Marcus, 1985, p. 68). As some have also argued (Krause, 2007, p. 916), *Naven* is of equal relevance to the field as his insights in cybernetics but, by contrast, it has been overlooked in the field. This oversight is indeed unfortunate for it is in *Naven* where he stated some of the themes that were to be replayed and expanded

throughout his research "on the global scale of the relationship between man and nature" (Marcus, 1985, p. 66). In *Naven*, Bateson's work as a budding anthropologist interacts with his knowledge of biological taxonomy so as to articulate a research not only of the data observed but also on the problems inherent to any process of categorization. The book presented an interesting and complex method where data collection is not only contextual but also intimately connected with the personal work of the anthropologist involved in making sense, what Bateson will come to call epistemology.

In this book, Bateson described the careful observation of the Naven, a ritual of the Iatmul tribe in New Guinea, from a number of angles.[14] The analysis of this data gave rise to the concept of *schismogenesis* which he defined as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals" (Bateson, 1958a, p. 175). In particular, his interest was in studying "*the reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals*" (emphasis in original, ibid). With this orientation, Bateson shifted the conceptualization of behaviours significantly: from a focus on behaviour understood in terms of the expression of innate traits to a focus on learning which, in turn, is understood and contextualized within (social) patterns of interactions. This core unit of analysis – behaviours as (re)actions within ongoing interactions in a context/culture – was to be revisited and refined by Bateson's Palo Alto group and their work on the notion of *double bind*.

As indicated earlier, in this book Bateson also referred the reader to a different level of abstraction: the actions of the scientist in the ordering of the data. In *Naven*, data is not seen as standing independently, ready to be gathered, but is seen instead as a productive

[14] Namely, from functional, structural, sociological and psychological perspectives.

activity of the theorist/scientist collecting it. This is a move away from a strict inductive process of knowledge production often associated with science and a sign of what was to come with second order cybernetics (which will be discussed in the next chapter).

It was during his time in Papua New Guinea that Bateson met Margaret Mead. They married in 1936 and moved to the USA in 1940. After some casual fellowships, he was employed in 1943 by the US Office of Strategic Services as a "psychological planner" (Lipset, 1980, p. 174) and was dispatched to Southeast Asia where, for twenty months, he worked "operating a radio station aimed at undermining Japanese propaganda" (ibid). This experience afforded him the opportunity to further advance his understanding of communication and its connection to the practical applications of symmetrical schismogenesis.

Prior to this, in 1942 and thanks to Mead's connections, Bateson participated in the preliminary meeting of what was to be known as the Macy conferences. His attendance at this meeting marked the commencement of his lifelong engagement with (what was to become known as) cybernetics, in particular, its potential within the social sciences.

2.2 The mechanization of the mind: The emergence of cybernetics

> Man differs much from the entities of physical theory. He metabolizes, he reproduces himself, and, above all, he learns. And yet a strong case can be made for saying that even such protean entities as man and his communities could be profitably studied by scientists trained to elucidate the workings of multiple interdependent variables.
> Atoms, astronomical bodies, electric circuits, servomechanisms, and computing machines are the only structured entities for which most of the formal epistemological problems have been worked out, and it is therefore reasonable to challenge the experts in these fields to try their skill upon the most complex entities known to exist in our universe. (Bateson, 1946, p. 717)

Cybernetics is the metaphysics of the atomic age. (Heidegger, 1976)

If Bateson's privileged family background supported his early intellectual pursuits, his move to the USA and his consequent role within the dynamic intellectual community gathered under the name of cybernetics allowed him to expand his early insights and articulate what later became known as an ecology of mind. As a movement, cybernetics took shape through a series of interdisciplinary meetings supported by the Macy Foundation (Josiah Macy, 2006), a medical – not an engineering – foundation. The meetings had 'a core group' comprising mathematicians (Wiener and von Neumann), neurophysiologists (Rosenblueth, McCulloch, Pitts and Lorente de Nó), and a selected number of social scientist: Frank, Mead and Bateson. Bateson was "one of [cybernetics'] muses, making it softer and more poetic and existential" (Keeney, 2005, p. 375). In conjunction with Frank and Mead, he was actively involved in deciding which other social scientists to invite as guests to these meetings. In many ways, this was the running of a different family, not one bound by biological ties but by the fellowship of an emerging interdisciplinary scientific community that was organizing itself around the central notion of information.

Cybernetics originated in the mid-1940s as a kind of scientific follow up to the Manhattan Project (Krieg, 2005, p. 551). The triumphalism of post-war American science and the subsequent tensions of the Cold War shaped this distinctively American project in being optimistic and consciously apolitical (Heims, 1991, chapter 1).[15] Dupuy has some reservations about explaining the emergence of cybernetics entirely in terms of external forces, instead giving emphasis to the "autonomy and power of these ideas"

[15] A sign of this was "[t]he bias for psychology and psychiatry over economics and political science" (Heims, 1991, p. 18). Perhaps ironically, this omission could explain Hailey's later interest in power. As Haley writes: "there was little or no research on power and control at that time, and in fact there seemed to be an avoidance of the subject" (1976, p. 78).

(2000, p. 23-4). He agrees with Heims however in asserting that "the aim of the cyberneticians was nothing less than to bring about the apotheosis of science by building a science of the mind" (ibid). The emerging insights of this new science promised a scientific understanding that aimed to gain total control not only over (trivial) machines but also over complex, non-linear processes ranging from biological to social systems (Krieg, 2005, p. 552). Cybernetics was an ambitious project in terms of the hopes of its founders: it made claims to advance sciences through expanding the mechanistic assumptions of science so as to include an understanding of human functioning.[16] Cybernetics' objective, as Dupuy quite acutely notes, was "not the anthropomorphization of the machine but the mechanization of the human" (2000, p. 5).[17]

The initial preoccupation in these meetings was the exploration of 'machines with a purpose,' a direct continuation of the development of directed missiles. It was the insights gained during the war on such type of missiles that led to the questioning of the then dominant notions of lineal causality and to a curiosity to explore notions of teleology and purpose as inherent to the observed phenomena. This interest was the force at the base of a number of significant conceptual shifts that saw circular causality – including feedback and servomechanisms – becoming central. In turn, these ideas easily resonated with earlier medical insights on the body as a homeostatic machine (e.g. Cannon, 1963), leading to an exploration of the functioning of the brain as a neural

[16] A clarification is needed at this point in terms of the concept 'mechanistic.' Maturana did this clarification in a 1985 lecture: a mechanistic view does not mean having a deterministic view but having a systemic view. This is, an understanding of entities as complex, with a number of parts in dynamic interaction. In many ways, a mechanistic view is the most sustainable alternative to an atomistic and reductionist analysis.

[17] This clarification is needed for, as von Foerster indicates, "[in] the anthropomorphization of these machines [...] one may be tempted to believe that when we say 'this machine *thinks*' we know how we think" (Franchi et al., 1995, para. 80)

network.[18] In some ways, cybernetics synthesized insights both in medicine and in engineering, and facilitated explanations based on communication and information – instead of energy – to become central concepts in the human sciences.

For Bateson, cybernetics marked "the beginnings of a general theory of process and change, adaptation and pathology [which required the need] to re-examine all that we thought we knew about organisms, societies, families, personal relationships, ecological systems, servo-mechanism, and the like." (1958a, p, vii) This theoretical frame was "intoxicating" (Lipset, 1980, p. 182) for Bateson, providing him with a fertile conceptual landscape in which to explore alternative conceptualizations and a way forward in relations to his concerns that the social sciences lacked an adequate theory (Heims, 1991, p. 58).

2.2.1 Studies in schizophrenia

> The anthropologist's job is to make sense of what people do whether it be in New Guinea, in rituals or in mental hospitals here in this country or in suburban homes… And perhaps the most frightening things about mental illness is that it does make sense… and what we are doing in Palo Alto is studying the settings in which people become mentally ill in order to think about the conditions; the sort of sense that particularly schizophrenia makes. (Bateson, 1959a)

In 1956, Bateson and his team published *Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia.* This article revolutionized the field of psychiatry with the introduction of their concept of double bind. In it, they claimed that schizophrenia could be best understood not as a type of mental/psychic deterioration but as a communicational disorder or, more precisely stated, a communicational adaptation to a pathological environment. A bold

[18] This conceptualization was "one of cybernetics' very greatest conceptual inventions" (Dupuy, 2000, p. 6) and a direct connection between early cybernetics and later cognitivism.

move for the times, this was a revolution that started, as Weakland states, somewhat fortuitously by the fact that Bateson was working as the Ethnologist at the Veterans Administration Hospital at the time he got the funding. As he stated: "I don't know if we would have ever gotten into studying schizophrenia (which led to family work) and certainly not as soon, had we not been there" (Weakland et al., 1995, p. 2).

Bateson had misgivings in terms of the timing of the publication of this article (Lipset, 1980, p. 207) for he thought it was perhaps premature to print it only as a response to external pressures to have 'something published' rather than to wait until the research was completed. Bateson felt this way despite the article being written after four years of intensively creative work by the Palo Alto group teasing out the implications of the new insights provided by cybernetics.

Bateson had moved to San Francisco late in 1948 where he began a two year appointment at the University of California Medical School. He worked there with the Swiss psychiatrist Jurgen Ruesch studying human communication in psychotherapy (Bateson and Ruesch, 1968). In 1949, he started working at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park (Lipset, 1980, p. 196) as an anthropologist employed to "deal with minorities" (Haley in Yapko, 2001, p. 185).[19] The hospital gave him "singular freedom to study whatever [he] thought interesting" (Bateson, 1973, p. 18), an idyllic setting for research.

In 1952, he secured a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation "to investigate the general nature of communication in terms of levels" (Haley, 1976, p.60) using the logical types sketched by Russell and Whitehead (1910) in light of the emerging cybernetic insights.

[19] Haley's quotation continues: "the primary minority there [at Menlo Park] was Irish. That's what got him into alcoholism, because many of them were alcoholics."

This funding supported the emergence of the Palo Alto group. The grant was fairly open in terms of its parameters of research and was equally generous in terms of outcome production, giving them the opportunity to explore different types of communications in an open manner.[20] This grant was however time limited to two years only. In 1954, Bateson negotiated a new grant, this time with the Macy Foundation, with a more defined scope: the schizophrenic communication. This helped to focus their work in an applied manner. It was at this point that the initial group invited Don D. Jackson as a consultant given his extensive knowledge on schizophrenia as indicated earlier.

This grant provided the Palo Alto group with an invaluable opportunity to consolidate their ideas and to provide a new perspective within a fairly hegemonic territory. The context in which the Palo Alto group worked was dominated by two well-established factions: psychoanalysis and behaviourism. It is not irrelevant then that most of the researchers in this group came from fields of knowledge that were outside the clinic for it afforded them a type of naivety vis-à-vis the object of study that, it could be argued, would have been impossible had they been doing this work within the parameters of the established canon.

Following Bateson's early training in ethnography, the group took a descriptive rather than a diagnostic attitude towards schizophrenia, ignoring intrapsychic explanations in favour of an analysis of behaviours (Lipset, 1980, p. 202). Yet, unlike behaviourism, their observation was focused on interactional patterns. They aimed to understand schizophrenia as a cultural practice rather than some sort of alien pathology. The double bind theory positioned human activity – including human pathology – as inevitably

[20] Their research included "otters playing, a study of training of guide dogs, analysis of movies for the blind, a filming of Mongoloid children in a group, analysis of humour and a ventriloquist and puppet, and the utterance of a schizophrenic patient" (Haley, 1976, p. 62).

learned and thus modifiable. Equally, it positioned human activity also as social – rather than intrapsychic – and organised around communicative and informational parameters. For them, schizophrenia was a learned condition that not only describes the pathology of the identified patient but a whole field of interaction in which such pathology 'made sense' and 'was normal.' Here, there is a direct reference to Bateson's earlier work. Consider the opening lines to his book *Naven*:

> If it were possible adequately to present the whole of a culture, stressing every aspect exactly as it is stressed in the culture itself, no single detail would appear bizarre or strange or arbitrary to the reader, but rather the details would all appear natural and reasonable as they do to the natives who have lived all their lives within the culture. (1958, p. 1)

This was a radical change to the prevalent approaches to the understanding of mental pathology and one that proved to have great heuristic power: not only was it a source of a significant number of research articles but also it ignited the imagination of many practitioners, leading to the emergence of a variety of new and experimental approaches to the clinic. It positioned schizophrenia – the ultimate clinical frontier – clearly within the domain of normality: the schizophrenic no longer seen as having some type of degenerative disease but as a victim of a paradoxical field. In some ways, this period constituted the peak of 'the Bateson event' witnessing the emergence of a distinct epistemological field that challenged, with great puissance, the dominant ideas of the time: a relational gaze was born into the world of the clinic.

2.3 The desire to govern: Game theory and strategic thinking[21]

> **Father**: There's still the other problem for Angels Fear, the problem of the misuse of ideas. The engineers get hold of them. Look at the whole god-awful business of family therapy, therapists making 'paradoxical interventions' in order to change people or families, or counting 'double binds.' You can't count double binds.
> **Daughter**: No, I know, because double binds have to do with the total contextual structure, so that a given instance of double binding that you might notice in a therapy session is one tip of an iceberg whose basic structure is the whole life of the family. But you can't stop people from trying to count double binds. This business of breaking up process into entities is pretty fundamental to human perception. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 204)

It seems somewhat unfair, perhaps even inconsistent, for Bateson to have become disillusioned with family therapy on the grounds of the clinicians' views – including Haley's and Weakland's – on issues of power and control and their sense of responsibility to intervene in the family dynamics in light of these emerging insights. This seems unfair because much of cybernetics is concerned with control and management. Whether fair or not however, the Palo Alto group did experience tension from its early days. By 1957, these tensions became evident. Riskin commented that the best way he could characterize meeting the group was as "a magnificent display of one-upmanship back and forth" (Weakland et al., 1995, p. 6).

One could argue however that the tension was not just between team members but, to some degree, was present in the positions that Bateson himself took as he explored a way forward in the application of cybernetic principles in the social sciences: a tension

[21] The title of this section attempts to name the next development in this genealogy in a way that positions Bateson vis-à-vis the further developments. To understand this position more fully, this title needs to be read vis-à-vis the title of the next chapter so as to appreciate the tensions and forces present in the field.

– or as Deleuze would say, a stuttering (1997, chapter 13, see also Smith, 1997, p. xlvi) – that shaped much of the dynamics in the field.

For pedagogical purposes, the tension will be investigated in a somewhat anachronistic manner, sketching each of the lines of divergence with as much integrity as possible. It is important to understand however that these readings co-existed – and still co-exist – vibrantly in the field.

2.3.1 von Neumann and game theory

> On the first day von Neumann and Wiener did not presume to tell the social scientist about social science. By the end of the second day, however, von Neumann gave them an introduction to the theory of games, which he had, with an economist, applied to economics. (Heims, 1991, p. 22)

The first of these streams is the one that is perhaps most popular in traditional accounts. It refers to the emergence of the MRI and the clinical practices associated with it: interactional, strategic and brief approaches. The genealogy of this line of thought within family therapy can be traced back to Bateson's uncomfortable relation to von Neumann's ideas within the cybernetic group.

Heims comments that both Wiener and von Neumann played a central yet distinct role in the configuration of the cybernetic movement, the latter being "more reductionist in outlook than Wiener" (Heims, 1991, p. 12). This statement seems to reflect the style of these two mathematicians within the group. Perhaps because they shared a holistic approach, Bateson had a continuing intellectual relationship with Wiener – to the point of identifying him as his intellectual mentor (Visser, 2003, p. 271) – whereas he struggled with von Neumann's ideas.

Von Neumann was a renowned mathematician. He was not only responsible for most of the mathematical calculations of the Manhattan Project but he was also the creator of the first computer.[22] Bateson had been aware of von Neumann's theory of games (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1953) since 1946 when he himself introduced these ideas to the Macy Conference. Although he believed it to be "the most complex and elegant – perhaps the most significant – theoretical advance that has yet been achieved in the whole field of behavioural science" (1958b, p. 93-4), Bateson felt uneasy about these ideas and "criticized [them] for the world view its assumptions seemed to affirm, that relations between individuals and nations must be competitive and paranoid" (Lipset, 1980, p.183). Yet, this disquiet did not seem to deter him from using these ideas, opting instead to read them critically using a biological perspective to address the relational aspect of the double bind. This use of von Neumann's ideas allowed the development of a theoretical framework that saw the family's organization as constitutive of the field in which the double bind emerged (Lipset, 1980, p. 223, and Haley, 1976, p. 83-5).

Rather than indecision, which left von Neumann's robots unable to carry out a single tactic or movement, the Palo Alto project proposed that the families of schizophrenics develop a very stable – if not rigid (Heims, 1991, p. 223) – pattern of continual invalidation of both self and others,[23] producing a similar paralysing effect in the players. To explain the pattern stability, they approached families through their ability to learn adaptive – to this unique medium – behaviours inasmuch as such behaviours

[22] An important distinction is worth mentioning here. As Dupuy comments (2000, p. 5), opposite to popular belief – that cybernetics arises as an effect of the arrival of computers into social life – von Neumann conceived the computer as a direct result of cybernetic ideas. It was this type of *scientific gaze* which provided von Neumann with the support and insights for the creation of computers. As Heims indicates (1991, p. 44), von Neumann "found the Pitts-McCulloch model of nervous nets suitable for describing the logical structure of general-purpose computers." See also note 18.

[23] This was an inversion of the rationality of von Neumann's games' theory: "[w]hereas the machines played in order to maximize 'themselves,' the people lived in order to negate themselves." (Lipset, 1980, p. 224).

helped them avoid the pain of continual undermining and relational disqualification. This learning was at a meta-level thus allowing for corrective practices – namely feedback and calibration – that sustained the homeostasis of the system through different circumstances (e.g. developmental stages and hospitalizations).

The double bind was an elegant theory and it received significant reception – even infamy[24] – not only within the field but also within the general public. This popularity had a significant impact on the orientation and activities of the group: the pressure was to further these ideas especially in light of psychotherapeutic applications. This led to increasing divergences between team members.

2.3.2 Haley's connection with Erickson: A fine tradition for MRI

> What I can say about Bateson is that he is an anthropologist – my wife is an anthropologist – and one of the things that characterize the members of this discipline is that they basically observe, without attempting modifications. (translation by present author, Haley in Linares and Ceberio, 1998)

> [A] temptation [is] to confuse the idea of manipulation with the idea of a cure. (Bateson, 1974a, p. 268)

The most visible theoretical discrepancy within the group was between Haley's and Bateson's approach, a discrepancy that can be conceived as both cause and effect of their diverging interests and activities. With time, these differences strengthened to the point of rupture. At the beginning however, differences were nurtured in the spirit of having a wide scope of research. Partly due to his involvement with the cybernetic meetings, Bateson had many connections within the wider scientific community as well

[24] This refers to the accusations of 'mother blaming.' It is worth noting that these accusations might be of relevance to later developments and interpretations – in particular, Haley's later work – rather than to Bateson's concept. The original article is clear in indicating that what is important is a relational field rather than particular people (Bateson et al., 1956, p. 178).

as intellectuals in general and, in the spirit of good scientific practice, he was open to connections and exchanges within the group.

There was one particular connection of the Palo Alto project that became of extreme significance in terms of what was to come: Milton Erickson. Bateson knew of Erickson since very early in his career when working on Balinese trance (Lipset, 1980, p. 201). It was this early connection that lead him to invite Erickson to the first Macy meeting in 1942 (Heims, 1991, p. 14).

As Haley described (Linares and Ceberio, 1998, p. 3), Bateson was quite supportive of what Weakland and he wanted to research. In 1953, Bateson arranged for Haley to attend a seminar on hypnosis run by Milton Erickson "although he was not an enthusiast about that subject" (Haley in Bateson et al., 1976, p. 109). Since then, regular visits to Phoenix were organised by Haley and Weakland to consult Erickson "about the nature of hypnosis and the process of hypnotic induction" (Haley, 1976p. 79).

By 1956 the differences between Haley and Bateson were clearly demarcated. That year Haley wrote an internal memo introducing the notion of control "in an attempt to explain the peculiar behaviour of the mothers of schizophrenics" (Haley, 1976, p. 78). This memo articulated their differences. Although the group agreed at a general level with the theory of homeostasis and of learning as core to the understanding of the organisation of schizophrenic families, "[Haley] wanted to stress the struggle over who was to 'set the range of behavior' in the family whereas [Bateson] preferred a view in which the behavior of the individual and the family was set by 'calibration of habit'" (Haley, 1976, referred in Lipset, 1980, p. 225).

Notions of power and control – and their application to the clinic – became increasingly central to Haley's descriptions. In 1958 he wrote *An Interactional Explanation of*

Hypnosis (1958, in Haley, 1976, p. 79) and the next year he co-wrote an article with Weakland and Erickson (Haley and Weakland, 1959) that specifically focused on issues of therapist's control on the sessions as a (strategic) therapeutic intervention to undo the effect of toxic earlier interactions. Yet, whereas Haley saw great therapeutic potential in the use of the therapist to counteract the toxic relations present in schizophrenic – and other dysfunctional – families, Bateson had serious misgivings with such approach. This will be expanded on in section 2.3.4. Prior to doing so, Haley's (and Weakland's) further work will be briefly discussed.

2.3.3 Haley and Minuchin: Nuanced articulations in Philadelphia

> It was notably the directive and strategic elements in Erickson's approach which became the pivots of structural family therapy as subsequently developed and practised by Salvador Minuchin. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that structural family therapy is first and foremost a manipulative therapy. (Stierlin, 2000, p. 207-8)

By 1958 the Palo Alto project ran out of funding, yet money was available to explore further applications of these ideas. Jackson used this opening of funding opportunities to create the Mental Research Institute (MRI). The Palo Alto group continued to work in parallel to the MRI for a few more years, eventually disbanding in 1961/2, with both Haley and Weakland moving to work in a full clinical capacity at the MRI. Both Weakland and Haley wanted to attend to the therapeutic possibilities of these new ideas. As Weakland stated, they were "wanting to help where [they] could" (1981, p. 54, and Weakland et al., 1995, p. 4).

In 1966, Weakland, Watzlawick and Fry created the Brief Therapy Centre at the MRI, which served as foundation for the later movements in the field that

emphasized a focus on reframing and the power of construction of future possibilities.

Haley moved in a different direction. Without Bateson as a restraint, he continued to expand his considerations on power and control as core to therapy, in particular the imperative that therapists should disrupt dysfunctional patterns within families. In 1967, Haley moved to work with Salvador Minuchin at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. Haley stayed with Minuchin for ten years, consolidating a style of therapy that came to be known as "strategic" (e.g. Haley, 1973, 1993, 1997, 1987, and Haley and Richeport-Haley, 2003).

Before concluding the genealogy of these (strategic) ideas in the clinic, the subtle yet powerful alliance between Haley's and Minuchin's approaches should be noted. Although differences of style between them led to the emergence and identification of two distinct approaches, their work nonetheless jointly consolidated two strong overarching assumptions about what constitutes good clinical practice. First, both Haley and Minuchin put great emphasis on the responsibility of the therapist to promote change[25] and, secondly, both of their approaches reified the family as the unit of analysis of systemic work.

Identifying the process of reification is fully intentional, for it indicates the process of taking the relational analysis that was core to Bateson's project and making it into a concrete and specific unit of analysis, the family. As Speed quite acutely remarks, "[i]n taking this position, family therapists continued to believe that an objective reality

[25] This emphasis supported a strong 'action oriented' approach to clinical work. This will become central to a later debate in the field: the one at the base of the emergence of social constructionism – and, in particular, of a 'not knowing' position for the therapist.

existed, but that they had discovered a different, more relevant reality, that of the family system" (1991, p. 397).

2.3.4 Leaving the field

> Bateson's entire biographical journey, from his entry into psychiatry as an ethnologist to his departure from Psychiatry, shows how his views were distorted and simplified, to the extent of making him leave the field. (translation by present author, Barbetta, n.d., para. 3)

Bateson left California in 1963, after securing support to work with John Lilly in the Virgin Islands carrying out research on dolphin communication. His departure from the field was not friendly. It emerged out of a "growing distaste for all the people concerned [… and] worn out by a long drawn dispute between him and his research team over the question of 'power' as an explanation of social interaction" (Harries-Jones, 1995, p. 28, and Stagoll, 2006, p. 129).

Bateson's concerns were multiple. First, and contrary to Haley's comment that Bateson was not interested in clinical work, Bateson did engage – although minimally – in therapeutic work (Lipset, 1980, p. 215, and, more importantly, Bateson, 1974b). Yet as a therapist his approach was different to Haley's. Perhaps due to his more respectful position vis-à-vis psychoanalysis, he "maintained reservation about the invasive enterprise of applied social science" (Lipset, 1980p. 215). As indicated before, he had a significant conceptual contempt for what he considered to be an over emphasis in Haley's focus on notions of control and power as the defining variable in social interactions. Haley describes this point candidly:

> [Bateson] didn't like power. He didn't even like the word… if I said that a therapist should take power, he didn't like that. If I said a therapist shouldn't take power, he

> didn't like that either (laughs)[26] […] (Do you think he'd have this conflict with anybody?) Anybody who said, "I'm going to change this person." If they said, "I will offer this person some ideas, and if they change, it's up to them," then Gregory would have no trouble with them. But if you take the responsibility for changing people, then you would have a problem… any influence outside the person's range is odious to him. (Haley in Lipset, 1980, p. 226)

Bateson also had concerns in relation to what he perceived to be a reductionist turn implied in the emerging applications of his ideas. As indicated, he had reservations regarding the premature writing on the double bind; reservations that grew stronger with subsequent developments. He was particularly upset with the publication of *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (Watzlawick et al., 1967) which he not only considered it to be a theft of some of his ideas (as Haley claims to have heard Bateson saying, Harries-Jones, 1995, p. 27) but, more worryingly for him, in its conception of communication as a sort of pragmatic tool. In its analysis, *Pragmatics* was a project that was "completely contrary" (Harries-Jones, 1995, p. 27-8) to – a distortion of – the ideas that Bateson was working on. The difference was insightfully noted by Krause who stated that:

> [s]ubsequent family therapists did not follow [Bateson's] insight and the discipline moved away from paying attention to emotions and feelings (Haley, 1978) and placed more emphasis on behavioural and cognitive aspects of interaction. [...] with emotions left out, out went culture too. (Krause, 2007, p. 922)

Finally, Bateson experienced an increasing "boredom with the repetitive nature of the transactional patterns all these persons exhibit including the psychiatrists, the patients, the psychologists, the families and the Veterans Administration hospital" (Harries-Jones, 1995, p. 28). Bateson felt deeply the limitations of the applied science of

[26] This is an interesting comment that is often overlooked in the reading of this phrase. Bateson is not taking sides on power issues, but is calling for a descriptive language that excludes the notion of power altogether.

psychiatry as a whole "whose basic scientific orientation is either uncritical or unsophisticated" (Bateson in Lipset, 1980, p. 232). This is still a relevant critique of the practice of clinical work that, in many ways will guide much of the exploration in Part II.

Bateson had hoped that the new approach would challenge prevailing definitions in the field, in particular the ones that rested upon notions of power: "if individuals were composed of their relations with others, then they possessed a limited command over any whole system in which they participate" (Lipset, 1980, p. 230). Yet, despite his warnings and advice that as "social scientists [we] would do well to hold back from our eagerness to control" (1959b, p. 239) this was not to be. These insights gave rise instead to a more self-consciously control oriented approach. According to Lipset, Bateson disowned the psychiatric community – including his colleagues at the MRI – even when this was not immediately apparent (Lipset, 1980, p. 242). Riskin remarked on this point (Weakland et al., 1995, p. 7), making the incisive comment that the MRI was not mentioned in Bateson's next book – *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1973).

2.4 A sacred holism: Articulations of an ecology of mind

> Bateson's years among psychiatrists and other mental-health workers were lined by revulsion against deliberate manipulation of men and against the crude manipulation of power by therapists. In a sense, his horror pushed him on to ethology, where, perhaps, the mode of investigation – a close attention to the free expression of nature – was more congenial. (Lipset, 1980, p. 256)

In a manner that perhaps mirrored the developments of Haley's ideas, Bateson also expanded his earlier insights once he was not restrained by the focus of the Palo Alto group. Since his move to the Virgin Islands, his writing became increasingly focused in a comprehension of the nuanced ecology present in – and constitutive of – any living

system. His move to work with dolphins marked a move away from the social sciences back into the natural sciences and to ethology. In many ways, this was not a radical shift, more a (re)turn to the desires that lead him to study anthropology and a step towards increased scope. It was neither a shift away from cybernetics where biology had always had a central place and where the human condition was understood within a larger frame. In other words, it was not a rupture in his research. As Bateson stated: "I am still investigating the same problems that I was investigating then, but the psychiatric data are no longer at the core of the questing" (1977a, p. 193). It was however a clear step against the therapeutic directions that were increasingly being developed in the field.

The move also witnessed an increased articulation of Bateson's own considerations around action. In 1968, he wrote: "I believe that action, if it be planned at all, must always be planned upon an aesthetic base" (Bateson in Lipset, 1980, p. 266) because, as he explained elsewhere, the problems in the world of communication are "problems of control [that] become more akin to art than to science" (1959b, p. 239). To read Bateson's gesture here (perhaps understandably) as an interest *only* in observation seems nonetheless a convenient misunderstanding, a 'watering down,' of what was to become a strong political position. Even when observation was central to his work as a scientist, he also saw the need for action and intervention. The question was however a more nuanced one; a question of what constitutes 'ethical' action. As Omundsent comments: "what he really wanted to do was to see if he could develop a theory of action ... which he could find palatable" (in Lipset, 1980, p. 267).

Steps to an Ecology of Mind was first published in 1973 and was well received, confirming him as one of the intellectuals of the counterculture movement. *Steps* was a

collection of articles Bateson had written since the mid-thirties and, as a collection, it attempted to capture the spirit of his research journey since his first ethnographic interrogations as well as to portray his struggles to articulate a formal theory for the social sciences; a theory of what he would name an 'ecology of mind.' The choice of name, an ecology of mind, was purposeful in order to make direct reference to the intimate connection between the human/social sciences and biology – the study of life. This was an experimental journey into unchartered waters. Bateson commented that it was in 1970, when preparing his lecture in honour to Korzybski (1970a, p. 188), that his earlier intuitions, investigations and writings 'fell into place.' This lecture put together for him the ideas that articulated an emerging "formal science which would study the interaction among explicit, implicit, and embodied ideas" (1976a, p. 186). In it, explanations of the world needed to acknowledge the existence of not just the laws inherent to a physical world but also the existence of a mental domain which, unlike the determinism underlying the dynamics proper to the physical world, is "not transcendent but immanent and is especially complex and evident in those sections of the universe which are alive" (1973, p. 441).

He used the Jungian concepts of *Pleroma* to refer to the physical world "in which events are caused by forces and impacts" (Bateson, 1970a, p. 430) and of *Creatura* to refer to this different realms of explanation. The guiding laws in this domain were determined by *difference* (ibid). Jung drew this distinction from the Gnostics and, as Bateson identified, it is "the same old dichotomy between mind and substance" (ibid). Yet, as a distinction, it did not fall into the traps of the Cartesian dualism for they are not separate but emerging phenomena of an undivided material reality. With Creatura, Bateson asserted the space for the world of the mind. Such a world is not only distinct – inasmuch as it is governed by different rules – from the physical realm but also it is

ecological, not individual. As he explained in his often cited article – *The Cybernetics of the Self: a Theory of Alcoholism* (1971a) – "[t]he 'self' is a false reification of an improperly delimited part of this much larger field of interlocking processes" (p. 302). The mind is not located in the individual and its skin but in the whole network in which the individual is constituted (1971c, p. 261).

Bateson also established a number of evaluative measures to identify pathologies within such an ecology, with a special emphasis on the general tendency of the Occident to engage in relations of competition and possession of both others and their environment. His warnings on this matter were consistently strong: "if the creature destroys its environment, it destroys itself" (1971a, p. 303). As Hoffman commented, by the time he wrote his next book – *Mind and Nature* – "Bateson had become something of a crusader for the integrity of the biosphere" (1985, p. 381).

Mind and Nature was written in 1978, "under the threat of imminent death from cancer [and constituted a] real synthesis of [his] work." (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 1). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Marcus commented that this threat provided "a certain solidity" to his work and the need for a "synthetic cap" (Marcus, 1985, p. 66). *Mind and Nature* was a clear exposition of the ideas implied and explored in *Steps*. It was directed to the non-specialist reader who was eager to understand better this new "way of thinking" (ibid, p. 2). It is in this book that Bateson's project is articulated fully as a positive project. Bateson was relentless in his critique of reductionist and/or causal thinking and of the dangers of one of its corollaries: the notion of control (not only of others but also of one's environment) that emerges as part of such reductionist thinking. But he also proposed, as indicated in the Chapter 1, a number of positive alternatives to 'what every schoolboy knows…'

Bateson and his family moved to Esalen in 1978 as part of his convalescence from the cancer scare. Esalen was "a community of alternative and supernatural psychotherapists in Big Sur, California" (Lipset, 1980, p. 301). This was a move consistent with his increasingly alternative and holistic ideas. Almost immediately after the move, his cancer was declared in remission. Bateson commenced work on his last project *Angels Fear* (Bateson and Bateson, 1987), which was completed by his daughter Mary Catherine Bateson after his death. Bateson was clear that his time on earth was limited. It could be argued that, if *Mind and Nature* was an attempt at synthesis, *Angels Fear* was an affirmation of his life's work in perhaps the most complex area: that of one's own death and one's relationship with the 'supernatural.' It is not surprising then that the subtitle states that the book is "an investigation into the nature and meaning of the sacred." He wrote: "My task is to explore whether there is a sane and valid place for religion [and] whether [...] there might be found in knowledge and in art the basis to support an affirmation of the sacred that would celebrate natural unity" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 64). The sacred for Bateson referred to what was "peculiarly related to the healthy" (Bateson, 1974a, p. 266) and thus – very much in line with Judaism's approach to God's name – should not be talked about or disturbed. The sacred was "an integrative dimension" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 2) both of that which is conscious – that is, literal and purposive – and that which escapes definitions – the mysteries in and of life – which can only be comprehended metaphorically, if at all.

This was a definition of the sacred that moved away from descriptions based on external and/or transcendental control. Instead, the sacred referred to immanent and recursive forms of self-organisation. Perhaps of more importance for clinical practice, and in order to contextualize the tensions explored through this chapter, this is a definition that puts us – as observers – clearly within the phenomena that we are exploring, fully

participating in its actualization yet – due to this exact reason – never able to fully comprehend it. It is in this sense that Bateson calls on us to "breed a new and badly needed humility" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 64) so as to correct one of our major dangers: "our arrogance, or 'hubris', vis-à-vis the natural environment" (Bateson, 1970c, p.466)[27]

A direct reference to a well-known English dictum "for fools rush in where angels fear to tread," his last book also reminds us of the dangers and the values that are – and should continue to be – sacred in life and, thus, to human action including clinical practice. For Bateson, pathology is positioned as transcending intrapsychic definitions of the mind of the mad, located rather as an effect of specific social arrangements. He also drew consistent attention to the ongoing dangers inherent in the general exercise of making distinctions. Pathology is not 'just out there' – either in pathological minds or the systems – but it is an ongoing danger inherent in the foundation of the activities within the clinic; a danger to which practitioners must be constantly vigilant. He writes: "[t]here is a whole lot which is not understood about this whole species of damage that goes with attack on the sacred. And still less is known about how to repair such damage [...] So if the therapist is trying to take a patient, give him exercises, play various propagandas on him, try to make him come over to our world for the wrong reasons, to manipulate him – then there arises a problem, a temptation to confuse the idea of manipulation with the idea of a cure" (Bateson, 1974a, p. 268).

As indicated earlier, Bateson's call for an aesthetic approach was not out of a lack of interest in human destinies, or a limited scientific scope, but out of his deep conviction

[27] *Hubris* not only is a core issue for Bateson but will become central to Part II of this thesis, in particular when discussing the connections between Bateson and Deleuze.

that an aesthetic appreciation was perhaps the most respectful manner of being in life. Such an aesthetic approach was not a detached practice of contemplation – a return to some sort of bucolic romanticism if not to a monastic life – but a committed and engaged ethical life that acknowledges life's sacredness and the inability of the conscious mind to fully understand it, let alone control it. It is a call for a productive activity where sacred connections are (re)established.[28]

Bateson died at Esalen on the 4th of July 1980, surrounded by family and "warm friendships" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 4). He died amongst people who were taking turns not only to be next to him but to accompany him in his breathing. In these last moments of his rich life, he asked to be read to, from the Book of Job (Bateson, 1980, p. 8). Perhaps this was merely a strategy that he used to deal with the pain and physical difficulties he was experiencing, but it seems perhaps more appropriate to consider this gesture as a poetic reference to the profound integrity in his life. His was a life that – although deeply critical of the religious traditions of the West and equally committed to the development of scientific understandings – had been in search of a theory that would articulate a sacred and intimate relationship with this (material) world.

In this sense, Bateson and his work can perhaps be seen as a prime example of what Deleuze means when he refers to life as a "gust of wind" (1995, p. 26), a unique event that perhaps is best represented by a personal reflection that Bateson used in what was to be his "last lecture" (1979a, p. 307):

> Returning to the place from which I started, and knowing the place for the first time.
>
> T.S. Eliot gives the recipe for a last lecture.

[28] This is something that will also be advocated by Heinz von Foerster (von Foerster and Poersken, 2002) as will be discussed in the next chapter.

I started in the biology taught in Cambridge in the 1920s, corrected somewhat by boyish collecting of various invertebrates: Lepidoptera, coleopteran, mollusca, odonate, etc.

Looking at all that with eyes changed by anthropology and dolphins and schizophrenia, I see that I never travelled far from where I started.

What is form, pattern, purpose, organization, and so on…?

Those were my questions when I started and are still my questions.

There have been advances: Cybernetics has helped, and Whitehead-Russell have helped, and 'Laws of Form' and Information Theory and Ross Ashby.

But mysteries remain.

The world looks more elegant that it did...

Chapter 3 – Governing whom? Second order (and the fall?) of the cybernetic metaphor

> Indeed one of the most important phenomena which is brought to light by examination of ethological contrast is this distaste which persons trained in one ethos, their emotional reactions standardised in one pattern, feel for other possible ethos. […] It is difficult too to describe a pair of contrasting ethoses without so weighting the descriptions that one or the other appears preferable or more 'natural.' The business of the scientist is to describe relationships between phenomena, and any ethos which he finds in a culture must be regarded not as 'natural' but as normal to the culture. Unfortunately, what is normal to one culture may well be abnormal to another, and the anthropologist has at his disposal only the adjectives and phrases of his own culture. (Bateson, 1958a, P.157-8)

If the previous chapter aimed to articulate the play of ideas that were explored by Bateson and that arguably have provided the theoretical frame that defines the field, this chapter aims to explore the further evolution of these ideas since Bateson's departure from psychiatry, in particular, the decade of the 1980s after his death. Although Bateson had left the field in the early 1960s, his name was often used – as it continues to be – as 'proof of substance' in theoretical writings and discussions. Such a nuanced (inter)play between the field and its hero did not cease with his death. It did however suffer a significant transformation: spectators and commentators could no longer ask nor scrutinize the behaviour of its elder in the search for an evaluation of new ideas. The field was open for reorganisation and the establishment of a new 'order of things.' As Flaskas has commented, "[t]he 1980s proved an interesting if not confusing decade, which significantly reshaped the landscape of family therapy practice theory" (2010, p. 240).

This was a decade that saw the emergence of a number of competing projects, each presenting both a challenge to the dominant practices in the field as well as a claim to be presenting "the correct" interpretation of Bateson's later elaborations, those that he articulated *after* departing the field.

The confusion present in this decade was partly due to the fact that these apparently different readings in fact shared significant theoretical ground (Falzer, 1986, p. 354); all of these models were pointing to the second strain in Bateson thought – as compared with the first one explored in the prior chapter – where aesthetics and recursiveness became the key concepts. These concepts referred again to the implications of his work in cybernetic epistemology, where the search of scientific knowledge shifted from a search for objectivity to an attention to the forms and patterns implied in making sense,

and where the issue of reflective practice – of the observer observing – becomes central to the enquiry.

The uniqueness of each of the emerging approaches was therefore often established by a nuanced difference of emphasis and a diverging exploration of the implications within clinical practice. For a reader of this almost baroque elaboration, the distinction would have been hard to establish in a reliable manner unless they had a sound theoretical understanding of these concepts that would allow for such nuanced observation. This was not the case and 'epistemological muddles' abounded.

This chapter will focus on these later readings of Bateson within the field, in particular three very distinctive movements: the 'aesthetic' corrections heralded by the ecosystemic model, the emergence of second-order cybernetics, and the quiet revolution of the (post) Milan team. This exploration will afford a later appreciation of the interplay between these approaches, an appreciation that sets the conditions for the emergence and consolidation of social constructionism as the preferred theoretical frame for the 1990s.

3.1 Pragmatics or Aesthetics? The Ecosystemic call

> The history of family therapy's individuation includes its characterizing and understanding individuals within the context of relationship ecologies. Despite the emergence of that broader view, controversies between reductionism and holism have remained. Specifically, there are family therapists who, like the early behaviorists, accentuate the importance of constraining one's focus to the level of observable and quantifiable sequences of behavior. Others claim that such punctuation is not adequate to account for the complexity of human experience and interaction, which in their opinion, requires more metaphorical forms of description. (Keeney and Sprenkle, 1982, p. 1)

The first attempt to reconnect with Bateson's ideas was through what was to become known as *the great epistemology debate*. This was a period of significant theoretical activity initiated by three consecutive articles published in *Family Process* (Keeney and Sprenkle, 1982, Dell, 1982a, Allman, 1982) supporting an aesthetic understanding of Bateson. Although these three articles addressed different issues – to the extent that one of these authors, Keeney, questioned grouping them altogether (1982a, p. 429) – some felt that they shared a gesture of critique to a then dominant 'strictly pragmatic and interventionist' approach to family therapy. In many ways, this was a rejoinder with Bateson's tension with Haley's emphasis on control and an attempt of stochastic correction (Bateson, 2002, p. 214). The most well-known of the figures in this debate was Bradford Keeney.

Keeney had been interested in cybernetics since before his time at MIT. It was however whilst at MIT that he learned of Bateson and decided to write his doctorate on him (1981). In 1981, he became director of research at the Ackerman Institute in New York and produced a number of influential publications (1979a, 1982b, 1983, 2005, Keeney and Sprenkle, 1982, and Keeney and Ross, 1985).

A "charming presenter" (Hoffman, 2002, p. 112), Keeney was interested in the formal and epistemological aspects of Bateson's ideas. The ecosystemic approach called for a return to a systemic and contextual appreciation of behaviour – of how any specific behaviour 'made sense' within the context in which it presented – rather than an observation geared to identify behavioural patterns of intervention. Following concerns expressed by Bateson that the identification of a sequence of problematic behaviours, in particular purposive interventions aimed at changing these sequences, inevitably reduced the observing whole and destroyed the system's integrity, the ecosystemic

model called for a tempering of the pragmatic approach by an aesthetic appreciation and exploration of the problem.

These new insights were received with great resistance and significant distortion. Despite Keeney's elegant response (1982a) using the well-known one-down position, "practitioners in the field pounced on the offenders […] and read them the riot act" (Hoffman, 1988b, p. 68). There were immediate responses (Coyne et al., 1982, Wilder, 1982, Watzlawick, 1982) as well as a number of increasingly uncritical trivializations that could not hide their disdain under apparent humour (a golden example can be found in Watson, 1991).

3.2 The emergence of second order cybernetics: Recursion within systems

> Pressing social problems of the globe 'created by the wholesale application of the sciences,' however compelling and chronic, found the social scientist ignorant and inadequate, in need of cross-fertilization. The Physicist was specially prepared to help, for epistemological reasons. Like the field anthropologist, he knew to include the observer 'within the sphere of relevance of the observation,' in systems of reciprocal causation. (Bateson, 1946, in Lipset, 1980, p.176)

This aggression had dubious success however as a strategy of homeostatic containment in the field. Articles continued to be published exploring these insights. By 1985, Held and Pols claimed that "such [epistemological] debates are now less frequent" (p.509), yet in that same year, Hoffman published her article *Beyond Power and Control: Toward a 'Second Order' Family Systems Therapy* introducing the notion of second order cybernetics (SOC). Hoffman touched on some of the issues raised in the prior years and expanded on the developments and ideas already sketched in a recently edited book by Watzlawick – *The Invented Reality* (1984). With the support of these two

stalwarts in the field, SOC made a triumphant entry into the field of family therapy and was defined as a "radical departure [that] resulted from a number of important reappraisals of systems theory" (Dallos and Urry, 1999, p. 165).

It is thus not surprising then that, in family therapy circles, it is often assumed that SOC is a later development within cybernetics. Yet, as von Foerster stated, such understanding "is an invention of Paul Watzlawick" (von Foerster in Segal, 2001, p. vii). A careful reading of Bateson's writing can attest that a preoccupation regarding the role of the observer in the process of observation was present since the beginning of his investigations.[29] What von Foerster did, was to articulate, in the early 1970s, this earlier preoccupations in a particular orientation to the involvement of the observer in the observation (Glanville, 1998, p. 86).

Krieg (2005) commented that the split between first and second order cybernetics, rather than being a developmental issue, was an ideological one between two marked factions within the movement: the technologists and the biologists[30]. The former represented the 'hard line' cybernetics that considered people a trivial feedback mechanism that could be easily manipulated. Technologists saw their version of cybernetics reach not just the Pentagon but Scientology, even perhaps the emergence of Mental Health as a healthcare movement (Heims, 1991, ch. 7). The biologists, on the other hand, were mostly identified by the work of Heinz von Foerster and the people he gathered in his Biological Computer Laboratory (BCL) founded in 1958 at the University of Illinois (Muller and Muller, 2007).

[29] A clear example of this is his article for *Science* (1946) quoted at the beginning of this section.
[30] This distinction was also made by Hoffman (1985, p. 382).

3.2.1 Heinz von Foerster and his (invisible?) role in cybernetics

> Even more important than Mr. von Foerster's population study was his research into how the brain works, Umpleby said, particularly how cognition affects scientific study. Mr. von Foerster was a pioneer in proving that the observations of two people will differ because of their individual interpretations - not a radical concept to lay people, but somewhat revolutionary at the time to objectively minded scientists.
> "He modified the philosophy of science in a way that modified all scientific disciplines," Umpleby said.
> Asked if Mr. von Foerster was ahead of his time, Umpleby laughed and said, "only by decades." (Fagan, 2002, para. 7-9)

Heinz von Foerster arrived in the USA in 1949 by the invitation of the cybernetic group (Poersken, 2003, p. 9), and was quickly integrated into its development (Krieg, 2005, p. 551) to the extent that he is often seen as one of its main figures and "the real architect of what can be called *second-order cybernetics*" (Varela, 1995, para. 3). He became the secretary of the Macy Conference the year he started to attend.[31]

Von Foerster had an educational background that, in many ways, was a continental reflection of that of Bateson: not only did he come from a "prominent Viennese extended family of artists and scientists" (Watzlawick and Krieg, 1994, p. 9)[32] but also, he had a long standing interest in philosophy, engaging with both Wittgenstein – said to be his *uncle* (Watzlawick and Krieg, 1994, p. 9, Segal, 2001, p. 136)[33] – and the Vienna Circle (Franchi et al., 1995, para. 5). Although in his childhood von Foerster had wished to become a "researcher in natural sciences" (Watzlawick and Krieg, 1994, p. 9) his

[31] This was a move orchestrated by Margaret Mead who thought that the task of editing the proceedings of the conference would be an effective way to help von Foerster improve his English (von Glasersfeld, 2005, p. 319).
[32] The Viennese cultural milieu at the beginning of the 20th century constituted, for some historian, the cradle of modernism in the Western world (Everdell, 1997).
[33] This is actually a mistake. As von Foerster himself explained, Wittgenstein was the uncle of a cousin of his (Franchi et al., 1995, para. 5).

studies attracted him to mathematics and physics. Parallel to this he developed a keen interest in magic, an interest that many saw as the underlying reason for his later interest in the power of the observer in the creation of realities (Watzlawick and Krieg, 1994, p. 10-11). As he himself stated, "magic, for me, was the original experience of constructivism" (Poersken, 2003, p. 12).

As Keeney commented, "Heinz was the hidden creative force behind many scholars who went on to influence their disciplines in a significant way" (2005, p. 376) and, along similar lines, Varela added (1995, para. 7) that "[h]is ethical and human qualities are impeccable, and they have been a source of much needed inspiration". Von Foerster was "generous" (Elkaim, 2005, p. 386) in his attitude and, consistent with his ethical imperative to "act always so as to increase the number of choices" (1973, p. 13), people experienced him as someone whose conversation would always prove enriching (e.g. Elkaim, 2005, p. 386, Anger-Diaz, 2005, p. 354, and Varela, 1984, p. xiii).

During the period that von Foerster was the director of the Biological Computer Laboratory (BCL) – and perhaps due to the nostalgia of his childhood experience of Vienna's salons where he was "immersed in a world that had no specifics, no disciplines" (Franchi et al., 1995, para. 3) – he gathered a community of artists and original minds (Glanville, 1998, p. 87) in order to research "epistemological questions from interdisciplinary perspectives deriving from both the sciences and the arts" (Poersken, 2003, p. 9). It was in this cauldron of trans-disciplinary conversations that the actual concept of second order cybernetics emerged. Somehow, it does not seem strange that such a context afforded the articulation of a critical approach within cybernetics, a space where the trivial machines identified, named and patterned by the early cyberneticians became problematized through acts of recursion.

Recursion, an area identified by Bateson in his later writings as of central importance (1991, p. 220), became central in the emergence of the cybernetics of cybernetics, the alternative name to SOC. Yet the language used to explore this recursion was no longer 'logical typing' but the insights of neurophysiology. Von Glasersfeld noted that what triggered these developments was von Foerster's "rediscovery of an observation Johannes Müller had made around 1850" (2005, p. 319) that the electro-chemical signals sent by the sense organs to the brain vary only quantitatively rather than qualitatively. This early insight in neurophysiology resonated in meaningful ways with the work of one of von Foerster's guest at the BCL – Humberto Maturana – leading to a scientific project to conceptualize the human mind not as open to external sensations but operationally closed, organizing information in ways very much akin to the early Batesonian insights.

Maturana will be further discussed in section 3.4 of this chapter. Suffice to say at this point that these neurophysiological insights provided the foundations for von Foerster to develop a conceptualization not only of the computations constitutive of observing systems but of the ethical and pragmatic consequences of such understanding (von Foerster, 1984, Watzlawick, 1984, see also von Foerster and Poerksen, 2002). His was, as indicated before, a problematized observation of cybernetic systems or, as he described it: "is about systems that observe, or about how to observe systems (including systems that observe, for instance, the observant reader)" (von Foerster, 1984, preface to second edition). This style of observation adds a level of complexity to the understanding of the mind by observing it in its recursion. In these new readings, the earlier metaphor – of the human mind as a trivial machine that functions homeostatically within a context – was no longer sufficient as an image. With von Foerster, the idea of the mind being a trivial machine – that is, a machine with

predictable performance – was shifted to one of a non-trivial one, that is, one that changes according to input. This change turned any attempt for determination and predictability in the observation into an exercise in naïve totalitarianism. It is in this context that Glanville comments that SOC "takes the role of the conscience of cybernetics" (2000, p. 151).

3.2.2 A productive alliance: Heinz von Foerster's connection with the MRI

> This book is about the way in which communication creates what we call reality. [...] our everyday, traditional ideas of reality are delusions which we spend substantial parts of our daily lives shoring up, even at the considerable risk of trying to force facts to fit our definition of reality instead of vice versa. And the most dangerous delusion of all is that there is only one reality. What there are, in fact, are many different versions of reality, some of which are contradictory, but all of which are the results of communication and not reflections of eternal, objective truths. (Watzlawick, 1977, p. xi)

The ideas expressed by Watzlawick in this quotation were a continuation of the ideas he developed in *Pragmatics* (Watzlawick et al., 1967). These ideas were further articulated in later publications (e.g., 1978, 1974) and the later developments in Brief Therapy. These were exhilarating ideas that afforded an open, optimistic and fluid way to understand human nature. They also fitted smoothly with von Foerster's ideas around the constructed nature of reality providing a less problematic re-connection between cybernetics and the MRI.

Ironically, it was Bateson who introduced Watzlawick to von Foerster (Franchi et al., 1995, para. 75) when von Foerster retired to Pescadero, California. It was, "as early as 1976", that von Foerster presented a lecture at MRI on "Contradictions, Paradoxes, Vicious Circles and other Creative Devices" (Groessing et al., 2005, p. 83). Since then on, and perhaps because of their shared Austrian background, Watzlawick and von

Foerster maintained a close relationship (Anger-Diaz, 2005, p. 354). It is not surprising then that Watzlawick was so clearly supportive in his introduction to the constructivism proposed by von Foerster. Watzlawick's edited book – *The Invented Reality: How Do We Know What We Believe We Know?* (1984) – introduced to the family therapy community a collection of thinkers who articulated a variation to the Batesonian and systemic ideas explored by the ecosystemic model. Theirs was however a cognitivism of sorts rather than aesthetics, a distinction that conveniently satisfied the need to position knowledge within scientific discourse.

It could be argued that the (radical) constructivism introduced by Watzlawick did not diverge in any significant manner from the ideas of Bateson, other than in the introduction of a group of thinkers who fitted less problematically in a collaboration with MRI. Although sharing a similar background to Bateson, this new group of thinkers did not have the history and the tensions that Bateson had with the field. This convenient (new) alliance afforded a quiet (and, it could be argued, insidious) erasure of its inherent complexity.

Such (fragile?) collaboration articulated a number of variations and new concepts in the field. The axis of the difference between the earlier innovations and these ones was in the notion of 'radical' which pointed to the closure of the neural system and to the work of psychologists like von Glasersfeld (1984, 1987, 2004). This difference seemingly let go not only the idea of 'reality' but also of any connection to the environment. Hoffman explained the difference by referring to von Foerster's comment at a conference: "Gregory Bateson says, 'the map is not the territory.' I disagree with Gregory Bateson. (Pause, for effect) 'I say the Map *is* the Territory'" (1985, p. 383). Although at one level, this seems to be a disqualification of Bateson's ideas, which is how many have

seen it, it is not. Quite the contrary, as Hoffman later comments, it provided a "prestigious backing to Bateson's definition of information as news of a difference" (ibid, p. 384).

As will become clearer as the argument in this genealogical analysis unfolds, the problem is not so much one of differences between these thinkers – Bateson and SOC – as such, but of readings of their ideas; a reading that lacked rigour. These readings allowed, as will be explored in the next chapter, the exploration of meaning systems with no consideration of the ecological niches in which such (meaning) systems acquire and maintain their meaning.

3.3 The (Post) Milan Group: A (quiet) revolution?

> Shortly before leaving us, Gianfranco proposed we do something for Bateson's birth centenary. He said: "we must celebrate it, we are the only therapy school that has been loyal to him." Gianfranco used often the word loyalty, him who was an insufferably disloyal. He liked paradoxes. (translation by present author, Barbetta, 2006, para. 1)

> We believe that the Milan method is different from a set of procedures, to be passed along like recipes. It has programmed into it the ability to evolve into new and different forms. It is a 'learning to learn' approach in Bateson's sense. (Boscolo et al., 1987, p. 28)

A final movement within this thread – one that completes this Batesonian trinity – was the emergence of what became known as the Milan Group. They were instrumental in the consolidation of the field in Europe (Jones, 1993) as well as in exploring the implementation of systemic ideas when working with individuals (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1996).

The Milan Group was a dynamic group of Italian psychoanalytically trained psychiatrists who could perhaps be best described as one of von Foerster's magic tricks: it is there only not to be there the next moment. As a group, it suffered significant transformations in time and the field witnessed the changes as it worked through their publications.

3.3.1 Setting the scene: The emergence and consolidation of a model

The evolution of the Milan Group has been described as having four distinct periods (Tomm, 1984, Boscolo et al., 1987) with the first two periods being before the 1980s.

The *first* period – a prehistory of sorts – was a period defined by psychoanalytic work with severely disturbed children and their families. At this time, the group was constituted as 10 members. Their strong familiarity with psychoanalytical work was a distinct feature when compared with its counterparts in America, in particular the MRI. As Boscolo commented: "[a]s time went by, they managed to make use of both theories, consciously or unconsciously, in certain circumstances. [...] They thus substantiated Gregory Bateson's aphorism that two eyes see better than one, in that they can perceive depth" (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1996, p. 5).

Their *second* period – from 1971 to 1975 (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1996, p. 3) – involved an active exploration of MRI ideas (mostly Haley, 1963, and Watzlawick et al., 1967) as a result of the frustration they experienced with having little results from the work they had been doing. Their active reading of the ideas of the MRI methods led to a debate within the early group and the decision to split. Thus was formed the *Centro per il Studio della Famiglia* by the group as it is known in family therapy circles: Mara Selvini Palazzoli, Luigi Boscolo, Gianfranco Cecchin and Giuliana Prata. Their main publication during this period – a publication that was also their launch into fame in the

field – was *Paradox and Counter-paradox: a new model in the therapy of the family in schizophrenic transaction* (Selvini Palazzoli et al., 1978). In it, they proposed a number of innovations including a highly scripted and strategic use of the team, the one-way mirror so as to destabilize the rigidly homeostatic family pathology, the technique of positive connotation and the use of rituals.

The *third period* started around 1975 when they commenced reading Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* and his "cybernetic epistemology" (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1996, p. 3). This was a period that implied a shift away from the MRI and their conceptualization of families as fundamentally homeostatic system. This was a move to a conception of families as systems in constant evolution. From this perspective, pathology related to the families' rigidity in their ways of defining themselves. Pathology emerged when families' epistemological maps were no longer helpful to navigate the territories in which they were travelling yet the families persevered in their use. Accordingly, there was a corresponding shift in their understanding of therapeutic work: from therapy being a highly sophisticated strategic game to its conception as a space where families were invited to make new connections/distinctions – in either thought or action – based on an appreciation of the complexity and the systemic wisdom in which the symptom made sense. As a shift, this was an expansion of the positive connotation already introduced in their earlier work. Their most distinct work during this time was their article *Hypothesizing-Circularity-Neutrality: Three Guidelines for the Conductor of a Session* (Selvini Palazzoli et al., 1980) where the technique of circular questioning was introduced. This was a technique that again was well received and saw further developments through the writings of a number of different authors, in particular Penn (1982, 1985) and Tomm (1987a, 1987b, 1988).

3.3.2 A further split and the emergence of Post-Milan

The *fourth* period was marked by the separation of the foursome into two groups due to their increasingly differing interests: whereas Selvini-Palazzoli and Prata continued research and later proposed the 'invariant prescription' (Selvini Palazzoli, 1986, Selvini-Palazzoli et al., 1989), Boscolo and Cecchin developed an increased focus on teaching, an interest that was supported by the good reception that the group's writing had in the English speaking world.

Boscolo and Cecchin became involved with international teaching tours from 1978 (Cade, 2010) and, perhaps predictably in the sense of practice informing theory, these lengthy periods of training had a significant impact on their ideas, for their students' questions lead them to a nuanced awareness and interest in the questions and attitude held by the therapist during the session. As Boscolo reflects, "students were not interested in the elaborate paradoxical prescriptions the trainers would devise but [...] they wanted to know about the *therapists'* behaviour" (Boscolo et al., 1987, p. 10). This preoccupation led them to explore ideas of SOC whose work, they agreed, was "foreshadowed in Bateson's later thinking" (Boscolo et al., 1987, p. 13). A central writing of their work during this period was *Hypothesizing, Circularity, and Neutrality Revisited: An Invitation to Curiosity* (Cecchin, 1987).

With this last movement, where the principles earlier explored by the Milan Group are repositioned within the process of making (and producing) sense and meaning, the Boscolo-Cecchin duo articulated a return to Bateson that addressed his reason for leaving the field. Power was no longer required as a metaphor of what clinicians did in their practice. This did not mean that the politics of what takes place in the clinic are neglected. To the contrary, Cecchin commenced his article stating that "[a]ll behaviour,

including language, is politically laden" (1987, p. 405). What this move attempted was a repositioning within therapeutic discourse to allow the creation of a different type of politics. Referring again to Cecchin, the shift involved the understanding that people do not enter into relationships necessarily to establish dynamics of power and subjugation but "in order to give their lives meaning" (Cecchin et al., 2005, p. 334). He and his colleagues commented further: "How is the image different? Perhaps, it is different because the meaning it gives to life is much more complex than power" (ibid). This is a shift that had a significant impact in the field as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The teaching career of the Post-Milan duo had a secondary effect: it afforded the emergence of a "network of teams, proliferating outward into many different contexts, and by their nature incapable of cloning [...] although in the process the method moves farther and farther away from family therapy as traditionally known" (Boscolo et al., 1987, p. 28). This movement is very relevant for it helps in understanding the (dis)continuity in the variations/slippages that allowed the major shift that was to come about in the 1990s.

Before moving to the next chapter in this genealogy of the field and its relation with Batesonian thought, there is value in articulating an underlying thread that has been invisible so far in this chapter. This thread relates to the connections between the work of Bateson and that of Maturana; connections that were instrumental to the developments of all three of the movements that have been explored in this chapter.

3.4 The story that struggles to be told: Science, Maturana and the sacredness of life

> To continue my sketch of the epistemology that grew out of my work, the next point is recursiveness. Here, there seem to be two species of recursiveness, of

> somewhat different nature, of which the first goes back to Norbert Wiener and is well known: the 'feedback' that is perhaps the best-known feature of the whole cybernetic syndrome. [...] The second type of recursiveness has been proposed by Varela and Maturana. (Bateson, 1991, p. 220)

> [M]y concern is with living systems as unities, and that it is because of this that I speak of their autonomy. Autonomy, though, means 'self-governing' not separation or isolation. So when I speak of the autonomy of living systems I do not refer to them as entities isolated from the medium, but to the manner in which they are kinds of entities that can only be understood in reference to themselves. I never speak of the nervous system as an autonomous system, but as a system that operates as a closed network of changing relations of activity between its components. (Maturana, 1991b, p. 375)

It is of interest to note that one of the three articles that constituted the beginning of the 'big epistemology debate' that characterized this decade was Dell's *Beyond homeostasis: toward a concept of coherence* (1982a) for he was the theoretician who introduced the Chilean neurophysiologist Humberto Maturana to the field.[34] Dell made this introduction by stating a direct connection between Maturana's and Bateson's ideas (see also 1985, 1986). In fact, all the major authors studied in this chapter and Bateson himself (as early as 1976b) had, as one of their commonalities, an interest in the work of Maturana and of his student Francisco Varela.

Maturana was no stranger to the scene for he was, as mentioned earlier, one of the people that gathered at von Foerster's Biological Computer Laboratory (BCL). Von Foerster had met Maturana in 1962 (Varela, 1995, para. 5) and invited him to the BCL during 1969 – 70. At the end of this stay Maturana produced a research report entitled *Biology of Cognition* (1970a) which is considered by some as the point of departure for the movement known as (radical) constructivism (Poersken, 2004, p. vii). As indicated

[34] At that time, Dell was working in Galveston, Texas with Harry Goolishian, a figure that will become central in the 1990s as discussed in the next chapter.

before, Maturana's work was of great influence in the work of von Foerster's second order cybernetics and its allies so it is not surprising that, as late as 1990, von Foerster was "citing the work of those two 'wonderful' Chilean neurobiologists, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela" (Anger-Diaz, 2005, p. 354) Similar to the confusion surrounding von Foerster's presence in the field however, Maturana became widely known only after Bateson's death and, so goes the myth, as a result of Bateson's last guidance (Keeney, 1979b, p. 23, Dell, 1985, p. 5).[35]

Dell introduced Maturana to the field in 1981, at a presentation during the 7th International Symposium organized by the *Institut fuer Euer und Familie* in Zurich, Switzerland (Ludewig and Maturana, 1992, p. 2-3). Dell's presentation caused significant disquiet as Ludewig described:

> [I]f one listened carefully, one could hear Mara Selvini in her first row seat expressing her discontent with the very Italian words: non e posibile! [Dell] emphatically shook all the foundations of family therapy: there is no such things as information, rules, finality, open systems, causal interventions, etc. (ibid, translation by the present author)

Dell had been studying Maturana as a result of his readings in connection with his (real) interest in the work of the Nobel Laureate chemist Prigogine (Dell, 1982b, p. 408). This interest related to the notion of "order through fluctuation," a step Dell thought was relevant in the move from homeostasis to coherence as a core metaphor for the field. Part of this project involved exploring how the logic called for by Whitehead and Russell – the theory of logical typing used earlier by Bateson – was expanded by Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Forms* (1979).

[35] Keeney changed 'Maturana' for 'Varela' in a later publication (2005, p. 376) which only confirms the mythical status of these authors in the field's 'mind.'

In essence, the theory of logical types gave paradoxes a central position in logical inquiries (Howe and von Foerster, 1975, p. 1) yet, at the same time – and in an ironically paradoxical manner – it was also an attempt to rid logic and mathematics of self-referential paradoxes by establishing a logical prohibition upon them. As a theory, it had long been questioned by philosophers and mathematicians. Spencer-Brown proposed a manner in which self-referential paradoxes were considered not a mistake but a source for generating forms and patterns of self-organisation (Spencer-Brown, 1979, p. xiv).[36] These were promising and heuristic ideas that were further expanded by Varela (1975, Varela et al., 1993) and were of importance not only to Dell but also to the authors already discussed in this chapter as well as other prominent theoreticians in the field such as de Shazer (1982) and Elkaim (1985, 1997). Spencer-Brown's ideas worked as a synchronic context in which Maturana's ideas on the constitution and functioning of living systems as autopoietic systems (Maturana and Varela, 1980, 1994) acquired not only significance but also depth.

Dell first encountered Maturana in 1979 when Maturana did a presentation on the act of observation in the understanding of phenomena. The impact of these ideas on Dell was immediate. As he wrote:

> "[R]egularities are not features of the system, but of our description" intoxicated me. Feedback! The homeostatic cycle! These regularities are not features of the system, but of our description. No wonder feedback was so elusive. If you look at it this way, it is negative; if you look at it that way, it is positive. The system functions as a whole; its 'regularities' are 'features' that we distinguish, that we

[36] This proposal was well received by Russell as Spencer-Brown described: "it was with trepidation that I approached him in 1967 with the proof that [the theory of logical types] was unnecessary. To my relief he was delighted. The theory, he said, was the most arbitrary thing he and Whitehead had ever had to do, not really a theory but a stopgap, and he was glad to have lived long enough to see the matter resolved" (1979, p. xiv).

> describe, that we punctuate. These 'features' exist in our description, but do not exist for the system. (Dell, 1982b, p. 409)

This explanation gestured to the intimate connection between Bateson and Maturana in relation to the possibilities opened in the field by the formal work of Spencer-Brown's work. Bateson had been consistently clear that what he was speaking of was not a direct description – a representation of sorts – of an external reality but a formal theory, an *explanation* (Bateson, 1970a, p. 430). Yet, as an explanation, it was unique in that it was a recursive explanation: an explanation of Creatura done from within, by one of its members. Notwithstanding its complexity and self-emerging characteristics, it still remained *only* an explanation. This is a nuanced distinction that has been overlooked; a distinction that was to become critical in what was to take place in the next decade.

At this point however, what is of importance is that, despite the claims of some commentators that Bateson's and Maturana's ideas were competing (Mingers, 1997, p. 138) instead of complementary, Maturana's work reinvigorated the ideas explored and articulated by Bateson in a spirit that was very much like Bateson's own. Not only did they share a commitment to formal distinctions as constitutive of scientific enquiry but also a mutual interest in understanding life from an immanent and recursive point of view. Maturana, like Bateson, was committed to the idea that, in order to study life, one had to do so respecting the coherences of such process. As Glanville stated, Maturana "talked of life not in the death of vitro, but as (the process of) living" (1998, p. 89).

Maturana proposed that human beings exist simultaneously in two domains that do not act independently of each other but are co-existing within the manifestations of the complexity inherent to our organization: the *domain of existence/experience* and the *domain of explanation* (Maturana, 1992, p. 37-9). From the perspective of the domain of

existence, life – more precisely, the life of an individual organism – is understood as the structurally dynamic interplay of that organism with its medium whilst maintaining its defining organisation. Using more precise language, life is to be understood as the ongoing *structural coupling* of a living organism with elements of its medium constituting an *ontological drift*, where the organization of the living organism is sustained through constant changes of structure until it ceases to live (Maturana and Varela, 1998, chapter 5). The notion of 'drift' is used to mark that the interaction with the medium is not instructive,[37] that is, the environment may *trigger* (structural) changes in the individual but the characteristic of this change – including the responses to such perturbation– is determined not by the medium but by the structure of the organism.

Human beings – as a specific manifestation of living organisms – also exist in the domain of explanation. This domain emerges out of the specific physical conditions of the human body including a brain with sufficient complexity. This complexity enables an open and playful engagement with the environment and also affords the emergence of recursive cognitive operations that constitute the condition of human beings as 'observer(s).' The unique physicality of the human body also includes the presence of vocal chords that allow for sound to be created. Such unique physicality interplays with human actions allowing for the development of unique expressions through language, expressions that enter in recursive interplay with cognitions affording the emergence of a sense of 'subjective/personal consciousness.' Language in turn is defined by Maturana not in linguistic terms but in behavioural ones – as the coordination of coordination of behaviours (Maturana and Varela, 1998, chapter 7). With this definition, a direct

[37] This is not to say that the organism is not affected by the environment, a distinction that has also been overlooked.

connection with the physical and the contextual conditions of human existence is maintained as a quality that emerges out of its recursive activities. Here lies an important distinction with hermeneutic and linguistic approaches to language. In contrast to these approaches, Maturana insists on a direct connection with the real/life thus challenging the idea that language serves the function of transmitting information. Rather than being instructive,[38] language is expressive.

For Maturana there is a fundamental responsibility, in any explanatory model of human life, to take into account human biology, in particular, an understanding of ontological drift and of the nervous system as a closed neuronal network (e.g. Maturana and Poerksen, 2004, p. 52-3). Such a responsibility, Maturana would argue, leads to an acceptance of the fact that humans live in what he calls a *multi-versa* instead of a *uni-verse* (Maturana, 1997, p. 27). In a multi-versa, objectivity is put in parenthesis and acceptance of differences becomes essential for the social condition. To complete his project, he states that the foundations of our human condition (Maturana and Verden-Zoeller, 1993) are *love* and *play*. With love he refers to "the emotion underlying the actions of accepting the other as a legitimate other in the coexistence" (Maturana, 1992, p. 61-2). Play, on the other hand, refers to the ability to openly, and without any particular purpose, experiment with our physicality in an environment.

The theoretical/formal responsibility that Maturana's project calls forth connects and expands on the early comments from Bateson on the nature of the sacred as something that intimately belongs to the health of the system. Unlike the (post)Darwinian image of a world governed by rules of competition, the world brought forth by Maturana is one

[38] Hoffman explains this idea well: "Thus, all communication is necessarily indirect.[…] A corollary of this position is that you can have no 'instructive interaction' in the sense of placing little packets of information into the heads of other people, or receiving such packets in turn" (1985, p. 385).

of collaboration and harmony, an image that some – including the prevalent (post)Darwinians – might consider naively romantic.[39]

The ethical implications of Maturana's proposal are nuanced: we live our lives in a subtle balance where the structural determinism of our physical condition is expanded through the reflective ability to consider and experiment with alternative ways to respond and engage with the world.

Maturana's ideas struggled in the field, often being misunderstood in both their meaning and consequences. This was partly due to Maturana maintaining a perhaps disaffected relation with practitioners in the field. He once commented (with laughter) during an interview at the height of his fame in the field that he saw himself "as a shooting star" (Ludewig and Maturana, 1992, p.137). Maturana's independent disposition made it difficult for theorists in the field to familiarize themselves with his work. This attitude, coupled with his highly scientific language and with the fact that English was a second language for him, made his ideas even more cryptic to access than those of Bateson. As Dell wrote:

> As a result, I read one of Maturana's papers, "Neurophysiology of Cognition" (Maturana, 1970b), which I found to be intriguing, exceedingly difficult, and, perhaps, revolutionary, but I was not really sure because I could not understand it. (Dell, 1982b, p. 408)

Though a detailed analysis of such a (mis)reading exceeds the scope of this thesis, it is valuable to briefly touch on some significant errors of translation and/or interpretation that arguably had a significant impact on the direction that the field took in the

[39] A good example of this point can be found in the opening lines Watzlawick (1982) used for his critique in the 1982 aesthetic debate. There, he used the dilemmas and choices of an old Eskimo woman to ridicule an aesthetic approach.

following decades. First, there has been a simplification and/or reductionism of Maturana's ideas into a kind of solipsism described by some as "the world of Disney" (e.g. Efran and Lukens, 1985, also Minuchin, 1991). The notion that the nervous system works as a closed neuronal network and the notion that there is no such thing as instructive interactions, seems to have been translated by some as being a type of naïve, if not simplistic, theory where the social was not taken into account. As with Bateson, the difficulty seems to relate to the difficulties in maintaining a systemic gaze and a double description. As biologists, both Maturana and Varela had an extensive training in understanding life in a contextual manner, where an organism is seen as intimately connected to its environment, including the social one. Given their biological training however, they did not reduce the environment only to the social. This is a nuanced distinction that will be further discussed in later chapters when discussing the ideas of Deleuze, in particular his notion of *assemblage*.

Another notion that seems to have been misunderstood is the one of *ontological drift* and of the importance of reflection in the evolution of life. In many ways, this dimension corresponds with von Foerster's distinction between trivial and non-trivial machines. Some of the difficulties encountered by readers of Maturana in the field of family therapy relate to the fact that he was being read – as Bateson was – with an underlying agenda: what do these ideas tell us in relation to strategies within the clinic? This is a question that necessarily implies, as Bateson had already argued, a sense of direction and purpose in the reading that is perhaps not the same as that of the author, thus limiting the ability of comprehension.

Third, there is also the critique that Maturana's focus on personal responsibilities does not address deep political inequalities including gender issues and, in particular,

domestic violence (Mingers, 1997, MacKinnon and Miller, 1987). This is a very delicate and serious critique that cannot be taken lightly. Although Maturana himself is clear in dissociating his project from any revolutionary and/or avant-garde position (Maturana and Poerksen, 2004p. 187), this is again a significant misreading of Maturana's project. It is a misreading that is deeply ironic given that his life was at risk due to his standing up to the violence of a dictatorial regime (Poersken, 2004, p. 66-71, and, p. 193-210). He is also the son of a social worker mother, accompanying her sometimes in her visits to families in the slums (Maturana, 1991a, p. 33). Maturana most surely had direct and very personal experience of the impact of social injustice. Maturana continually emphasises that his ideas – in particular his later articulations around the notion of a biology of love as the foundation of social life and an ongoing democratic project (e.g. Maturana, 1992, chapter 2) – are an active and responsible attempt to address deep and lasting issues of social inequity (e.g. Maturana, 1991a, part VI, Lopez et al., 2010).

It is equally puzzling that an aloofness and 'theoretical detachment' has been attributed to someone who engaged passionately and personally with the constructivist perspective. When von Glasersfeld commented that his radical constructivism was – after all – just a proposal, Maturana replied that he strongly disagreed because for him constructivism was an absolute truth: "*I am putting my head under the ghigliottine!*[sic]" (Barbetta and Toffanetti, 2006, p. 14).

This (lack of) irony shown by some of Maturana's readers can perhaps only be understood in the context of what is lost in (cultural) translation. As a witness of the mayhem caused by the dictatorship in Chile and as a local reader of his ideas, the present author can attest to the fact that Maturana's work was not only a source of

sophistication and intellectual rigour within a fine scientific tradition, a tradition that upheld democratic values during significantly difficult social times in the country, constituting a serious ethical call to a commitment toward a human(e)[40] body of knowledge. The concept of multi-versa captures this through a double gesture: it affords and supports the emergence of genuine different expressions within living systems at the same time as it calls for an infinite responsibility to respect and accept that others have the right for the expression of their own existence. It could be strongly argued that a full understanding of Maturana's ideas, instead of supporting, eradicates the validity of any form of violence towards those who think and/or act differently, and calls instead for an endless stance of curiosity and hospitality towards the other. It is unfortunate that this nuance has been 'lost in translation.'

This problem of interpretation is perhaps best summarized by the comments of one of those critical of Maturana who, years later, was herself dealing with (mis)readings of her own work. As she writes: "[i]ndeed, interpretations of the idea […] are mischaracterizations that fundamentally distort the concept in spirit, application, and intention. […] Even when the writer's 'exact' words are on a page, the reader's experience and his or her interpretation occur in the present – reconstructing, recreating, and being influenced by both the historical and current contexts and the intent of the recounting and retelling" (Anderson, 2005, p. 498).

[40] The use of human(e) instead of humane is purposeful and will become clearer when discussing Deleuze's project.

3.5 The "fall" of cybernetics and its troubled translation into family therapy

> *Q: Why didn't cybernetics become a mainstream endeavor? Why don't people all over the United States know what cybernetics is?*
> A: But look! It is. Cybernetics is in every second word. If you open the newspaper there is cyber space, cyber sex, cyber this and cyber that. Everything is cyberized.
> *Q: That's not cybernetics, [we're both laughing]*
> A: No, but 'cyber' is there. Look at terms like 'feedback.' Everybody knows what feedback is. Cybernetics did that. Things of that sort. I think cybernetics connects underneath. It's implicit. Underneath, it's completely alive. But not explicit.
> In some cases I find it more important that something is acting implicitly, than explicitly. Because the implicit has much more power.
> *Q: So you think that in a way it has infiltrated the intellectual mainstream?*
> A: Absolutely! Nobody can talk without at least the presence of cybernetics being operational. The presence of these notions is absolutely alive, only not explicitly referred to. I find it very powerful that it's underground. Because people are unaware of it – and therefore don't reject it.
> *[We laugh.]*
> *Q: It's gone underground and we in fact use it whether we know it or not.*
> A: *Ja*, exactly. (interview with von Foerster, Waters, 1999)

It seems now to be accepted knowledge that the cybernetic project, as a movement, has failed and that other brave new projects – mostly cognitivism – are competing to take its place. There are various explanations for such failure: a fear of "machines taking over the world" (Brown, 1998) that extends to apocalyptic proportions (Helmore, 2000); economic interpretations that relate the end of the project to a lack of finances as in the case of BCL (Muller, 2007); and a "loss of the subject's credibility through glamorisation and overkill" (Glanville, 2000, p. 154).

Perhaps following a modernist trend in search of new ways of conceptualizations, a fate that seems common to many ideas in the field of family therapy (e.g. Dallos and Urry,

1999), cybernetics' standing in the field was to suffer significantly as will be discussed in the next chapter. Yet, as von Foerster comments with his usual ironic style in the quotation above and as other commentators are also starting to name (e.g. Dupuy, 2000, Krieg, 2005, Pickering, 2010), the impact of cybernetics on how society currently works is so ubiquitous that – like the air that one breathes and the mechanism by which one does so – it has become invisible and taken for granted. Keeney commented on this state of affairs:

> We find ourselves living in a different context than the world that existed during the heydays of the many schools of psychotherapy. We have moved out of a world dominated by metaphors of energy and into a world(s) of information (and dis-information). Today people are beginning to complain less about running out of steam (or self esteem). They talk more about feeling overloaded with information and how they need to push their personal reset button. Cybernetics and systems thinking, with its concomitant computer technology and internets, have quietly taken over everyday life. We await seeing how the people-helping professions will be redefined and recreated. (Keeney, 2005, p. 377-8)

As will be discussed in the next chapter, post-modern ideas emerge precisely under these conditions.

Chapter 4 – The rupture with Bateson: The surprising appearance of social constructionism

> There has been a dramatic shift in systemic work towards narrative approaches founded upon social constructionist theory. At times, some talk as if in their work with families, systemic ideas are no longer relevant, or are of purely historical interest (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988; White, 1995). Many of us as practitioners and teachers may feel confused. (Dallos and Urry, 1999, p. 161)

> Cybernetics was unfortunately interpreted in too narrow a way, and I sometimes get the feeling that this was on purpose, to push it away (von Foerster, Franchi et al., 1995, para. 41)

In the last two chapters, the emphasis has been on an analysis of how Bateson was read through the emergence of the field until the end of the 1980s. This chapter attempts to describe the radical shift that occurred since 1990, a shift that is intimately related to the emergence and consolidation of social constructionism (SC) in the field. The decade of the 1990s witnessed a proliferation of critiques and engagements with Batesonian, cybernetic and systemic ideas that were of a different kind to those seen earlier. Although these critiques claimed a direct reference to Bateson's ideas, they in fact obscured the foundational concepts in the field, making it harder to recognize its distinctive theoretical framework.

This chapter attempts to capture this turn and to critically identify how SC, despite its claims, distanced practice from the foundational insights of Bateson and, through such a gesture, shaped the second irony in relation to reading Bateson, relegating him to an iconic yet mystified position within the field as discussed in Chapter 1.

4.1 Change is in the air: The fall of the wall and the "end of history"

> Without quite noticing it, we have moved into a new world, one created by the cumulative effect of pluralism, democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, mobility and increasing access to news and entertainment. This is the world described as 'postmodern' to denote its difference from the modern world most of us were born into. (O'Hara and Anderson, 1991, p. 20)

> The world around us is fast changing – shrinking, becoming enormously more complex and uncertain – and our cultures are touching each other in ways they have not before, and in some instances becoming intertwined. Many familiar explanatory concepts no longer help account for and deal with the complexities of these changes and the impact they have had on human beings and our everyday lives. (Anderson, 2006, para. 2)

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed significant changes as a result, it could be argued, of a number of forces external to the field. These changes had a direct impact on the practices and the subjectivities of its practitioners, transforming their sense of self as well as their understanding of their discipline.

The main force that traversed the field was the renewed impetus on globalization (Scheuerman, 2010). This was an impetus that was partly facilitated by the cybernetical advances that, as mentioned at the end of last chapter, many started to take for granted. Technological developments, in particular in the areas of communications and of transportation, witnessed the world becoming a smaller place and society had to deal with "an exhilarating but daunting profusion of worldviews to suit every taste" (O'Hara and Anderson, 1991, p. 20, see also Anderson, 1990).

This was the time right after the aftermath of the USSR's Perestroika and Glasnost, when the world witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and with it, the official end to the Cold War.[41] Perhaps predictably, the globalization that took place after this event was an affirmation of Western ideas, in particular, "neo-liberal public policy and neo-liberalism as a doctrine of the free market" (Lofgren and Sarangi, 2009, p.2) as well as "liberal democracy as a form of government" (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xi). Books like Fukuyama's *The End of History* became bestsellers announcing – using an argument derived from Hegel and Marx – that with liberal democracies "there would be no further progress in the underlying principles and institutions because all of the really big questions had been settled" (ibid, p. xii).

[41] This is an interesting point given the emergence of cybernetic as a post war science and its later connections with the Cold War (e.g. Gerovitch, 2001).

The Western world was witnessing the emergence of a new (and triumphant) sensibility and post-modernity was the name given to it to denote its difference to modernity. Post-modernity however was not a new concept. It had been in the imagination of intellectuals for close to a century prior to this decade: "[c]ontrary to conventional expectation [both of these concepts – modernism first used by Ruben Dario in 1890 and post-modernism by Federico de Onis in the 1930s] were born in a distant periphery […] they come not from Europe or the United States, but from Hispanic America" (Anderson, 1998, p. 3). Yet, as a new (literary) concept it did not last. Different versions emerged subsequently, in different contexts and with different degrees of success.

It was Lyotard's 1979 *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* which first used the concept of postmodern as a philosophical concept to articulate the defining aspects of contemporary life. Lyotard defined the postmodern in relation to the post-industrial society (Anderson, 1998, p. 24-5) to describe a "general change of human circumstance" (ibid, p. 26).

4.1.1 The change of status of knowledge

> It is reasonable to suppose that the proliferation of information-processing machines is having, and will continue to have, as much of an effect on the circulation of learning as did advancements in human circulation (transportation systems) and later, in the circulation of sounds and visual images (the media). The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation. (Lyotard, 1984, p. 4)

Resonating with von Foerster's claim that cybernetics nowadays was everywhere as an invisible web (Waters, 1999), for Lyotard "the hegemony of computers [came with] a certain logic, and therefore a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements

are accepted as 'knowledge' statements [according to what could be] translatable into computer knowledge" (ibid, p.4). The effect of this change of circumstances was the "exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the 'knower'" (ibid)[42] and the transformation of knowledge into an 'informational commodity' open for exchange: "a new field has been opened for industrial and commercial strategies" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 5). Knowledge had turned into a consumable that can be best grasped in pragmatic terms through an analysis of its performance in what Lyotard called "language games." [43] In such a milieu, science – and with it, the dreams and hopes of the Enlightenment – was transformed into "just" one of the many languages/narratives available in the brave new postmodern market. The distinctive trait of Lyotard's report was an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (p. xxiv).

As Anderson commented "the subsequent influence of the book [was that] it became the inspiration of a street-level relativism that often passes – in the eyes of friends and foes alike – for the hallmark of postmodernism" (1998, p. 26-7). Using an example given by Gergen:

> A friend from England (deeply British) recently recounted the fact that two of his siblings were now married to 'foreigners', his clothing was from Hong Kong, his car from Japan, his interests in music and film largely American in cast, his food tastes largely French and Italian, his intellectual companions were spread across the globe, and he tried to spend as much time as possible in Spain. (Gulerce, 1995, p. 150)

A comprehensive analysis of these ideas – only roughly sketched – exceeds the scope of this thesis. The intention in doing this rather coarse sketch of them is to position the

[42] This is an interesting connection with White's technique of externalizing (1988) developed some years later.
[43] Lyotard used the concept of language games in direct reference to Wittgenstein. His use of the concept suffered however a significant transformation as will be discussed in 4.3.

cultural background that would aggressively populate the field in this period. With this purpose in mind, it could be provocatively argued that in the same way that neo-liberalism and globalization were hegemonic in terms of political and economic theory, the field of family therapy experienced (and, to some degree, still experiences) an ideological hegemony that, ironically, celebrates the end of grand-narratives. Pushing this metaphor even further, it could also be argued that these events mirrored the 'death of the resistance' that second order cybernetics represented within the cybernetic movement, with the consequent consolidation of the 'hard-core' technologists and of cognitivism. As explained in the last chapter, with the dissolution of the BCL and the subsequent retirement of Heinz von Foerster, the sensibilities and insights of second order cybernetics were easily dismissed from different directions, a gesture that cannot but be seen as extremely ironic: whereas the cognitivist saw in them a soft edge that was perhaps too 'arty' for the rigours of hard core scientists, for theorists in family therapy, cybernetics became synonymous with inhuman – control driven – scientism.

4.2 An art of lenses… indeed

> [Maturana's theory of cognition and social constructionism,] both theories help by explaining how all human knowledge is generated in social interaction, including the knowledge we have about how knowledge is generated. In other words, knowledge about oneself, about others, about relationships, and about therapy, is first and foremost social. It is only secondarily internalized as psychological. There is nothing in either social constructionism or bringforthism that excludes or minimizes family interaction as part of this social interaction. (Tomm, 1998, p. 411)

It is not surprising then that early in the 1990s, *The Family Therapy Networker* twice featured post-modernism as a main topic.[44] In both of these issues, one of the key

[44] The first time in 1991 (Vol. 15, No. 5), the second in the following year (Vol. 16, No 6).

commentators was the psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen (1991a, 1992), a key thinker of the movement that was to be known as social constructionism (SC).

The official introduction of SC in the field can be dated back to 1990, although these ideas were present earlier in informal discussions. Very much in line with the dynamics in global politics, there were signs of the shift to come during the 1980s. Doherty comments that there were two significant developments that prepared the territory for such a shift: "the feminist challenge [that] brought to an end the modernist legacy of pure, hermetically sealed systems thinking [and] the trend toward eclecticism [manifested] in the breakdown of allegiances to a specific model of family therapy [...] 'purism' became quaint and old-fashioned" (1991, p. 41).

Lynn Hoffman is again the key commentator on such changes. In her well known paper *Constructing Realities: an Art of Lenses* (1990) she announced this paradigmatic shift away from cybernetics into SC. In this paper, she commented on the increased unease experienced in many quarters with the cybernetic metaphor, and focused the field's gaze onto the new heroes: SC and postmodernism as articulated by Kenneth Gergen (1973, 1978, 1985, 1991b, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2007, 2009, Gergen and Davis, 1985, Gergen and Shotter, 1989, Gulerce, 1995, McNamee and Gergen, 1992) in academia, and by Harry Goolishian and Harlene Anderson (Goolishian and Anderson, 1992, Anderson and Goolishian, 1990, 1988, 1992, Anderson et al., 1986) in clinical practice.

Hoffman had two main concerns with cybernetics. First, and in line with postmodern critique as articulated by Lyotard, she questioned the status of theory and research. Hoffman argued that, instead of accepting uncritically the knowledge produced by science – in this case, the 'human sciences' – both theory and research needed to be

considered as forms of "written texts [that could] be analysed for their often hidden political and social agendas" (1990, p. 1). Second, she stated a dislike with the associations and images brought forth by constructivism including "the idea that people were stuck in a biological isolation booth [where] therapists and clients were like people in bathyspheres trying to communicate underwater" (1990, p. 3, a similar depiction can be found in Leppington, 1991).

Hoffman stated that the constructivist and the social constructionist positions shared common ground – to the extent that, for a long time, she believed that they were synonymous – until her realisation that their emphases were different. Hoffman "cast her lot with social construction theory" (1990, p. 1) because it "posits an evolving set of meaning that emerge unendingly from the interactions between people" (ibid, p. 2).

As Hoffman indicated, SC is only part of a larger ideological shift. Perhaps because of this, Hoffman made it clear that she chose this concept out of other (mostly European) concepts as "the most *convenient* umbrella" (emphasis added, 1990, p. 3), thus leaving sufficient ambiguity so as to allow inclusiveness. What she failed however to mention, was that SC was a movement and a set of theories that, like any other, was full of tensions and problematizations, including a number contesting Gergen's approach, some strongly (e.g. Stam, 2002).[45]

Other prominent exponents in the English speaking world are Harre (1992, 1993, 2002, Harre and Gillett, 1994, Bhaskar, 1990), whose interests are centred on issues regarding philosophy of science and who draws on Wittgenstein to do so; Potter, whose approach focuses mainly on discursive analysis (1992, 1996, Potter and Edwards, 1999), with

[45] A good example of this point can be found in Harre's comment: "most of psychologists who would call themselves 'social constructionists' share a marked lack of enthusiasm for the Gergen extravaganza" (1992, p. 157).

discourse being defined as "talk and texts, studied as social practices" (Potter and Edwards, 2001, p. 104); Rose (1990a, 1990b), whose main referent is Foucault's insights; and Shotter (1992, 1993a, 1993b), who is influenced by Bakhtin, Harre, Vico, and Wittgenstein and who is now acquiring some prominence in the field through the recent developments in dialogical approaches as discussed later.

4.2.1 The rise (and rise?) of the collaborative approach in family therapy

> Is the loss of self not postmodernism's final catastrophe, a lurching free-fall of meaning into oblivion? Not necessarily. It is just here, in this moment of nihilistic despair, that a new, glimmering light begins to dawn […] When I speak, you don't question the meaning of every word, reducing it to nonsense; you *allow* me to mean something. If you are generous, you grant me significance. (Gergen, 1992, p. 56)

> Anderson and Goolishian's presentation seemed to come from a different universe. Before they showed their tape, they explained their postmodern outlook, proposing a language-based point of view instead of the systems one we had been using. (Hoffman, 2002, p. 139)

As indicated earlier, perhaps the most significant translation of SC ideas into clinical practice has been that heralded by Harry Goolishian and Harlene Anderson.

By the time of Hoffman's 1990 paper, Goolishian and Anderson had already a long and productive history within the field. Goolishian commented in an interview that "[b]y 1952 it just seemed right to see families even though our theories and ethics said one shouldn't" (Hargens, 1987, p. 110). Since 1956 Goolishian was involved in the development of the Multiple Impact Therapy (MIT) program at the Psychiatric Hospital in Galveston, Texas (MacGregor et al., 1964). As Anderson later wrote:

> [T]he threads of the fabric called a postmodern collaborative approach can be traced back to the original MIT: the client as the expert, the importance of multiple

> voices and realities, a nonpathologizing view of families, and therapists being public with their thoughts. [But we] did not have today's theoretical vocabularies to use to describe, explain, and understand [our] work. (2006, para. 6)

Anderson joined the MIT program in 1970 (ibid, para. 3). At that time, the group was interested in the ideas of the MRI and were actively inviting their leaders as well as others in the field (including Hoffman, Boscolo, Cecchin, Keeney, Penn, Laing, von Foerster and Tom Andersen from Norway) to visit their program (ibid, para. 20). Goolishian commented to the present author, in 1990-1,[46] on the strategic geographical position of Galveston within the USA: a small island to the south of the continent from which they could observe the developments in family therapy on both the West and the East coasts with neutrality and curiosity and without feeling the need to defend any position. This was indeed a privileged position.

In 1981, Goolishian together with Dell wrote on their mutual interest in Prigogine's work on non-linear and far-from-equilibrium systems (Nicolis and Prigogine, 1977, Prigogine and Stengers, 1984) as an alternative to homeostasis as the central concept in family therapy theory. By 1986, Goolishian was writing with Anderson and others at the Galveston Institute, assertively providing a clinical option in this direction. *Problem Determined Systems: Towards Transformation in Family Therapy* (Anderson et al., 1986) was a direct challenge to core concepts in the field. Their claim was clear: "what once helped to expand our theories and maximize our therapeutic efforts, now seems to limit our ideas and practices" (ibid, p. 1). At that time however, their critique was directed to the guiding principles of "hierarchical and homeostatic functioning social structures" (ibid, p. 2). They continued however using cybernetic language. They

[46] Goolishian did this comment during a conversation with the present author, whilst facilitating a workshop in Adelaide, South Australia.

appealed to the work of Niklas Luhmann – the German sociologist who had applied Maturana's notion of autopoiesis to social systems (1990) – to focus on the construction of social systems through social action. As they wrote: "essentially social systems are systems that exist only in meaningful linguistic exchange" (Anderson et al., 1986, p. 3). The fundamental transition they proposed, then, was from "the system creating the problem" to "the talking around a problem that creates a certain organization, a system." In other words, what created the problem was no longer the family structure but the practices of observation by the participating (social) actors.

A further example of this transition in their thinking can be found in their later paper – *Human Systems as Linguistic Systems: Preliminary and Evolving Ideas about the Implications for Clinical Theory* (1988). In this paper they challenged classical 'Parsonsian' assumptions of systems, which they saw as supporting notions of hierarchy and homeostasis. Instead, they proposed the notion of therapy as being fundamentally a conversational exercise with the therapist having a dual role: a participant observer and a participant manager of conversations that facilitated the dissolution of the problem(s) that brought families to therapy. In both of these articles, Goolishian and Anderson were "mixing the metaphors of second-order cybernetics, constructivism, hermeneutics, social constructionism, and narrative theories" (Anderson, 2006, para. 43).

By the time this last paper was published in 1988 however, the terrain was moving again. There seems to be an agreement in the literature that it was in that year – in a conference organized by Tom Andersen in Sulitjelma, Norway – where one can locate the 'official' point of departure from an approach that was inclusive of cybernetics to an approach relying exclusively on SC as the explanatory framework (Hoffman, 2002, p. 147). At that conference, Goolishian commented on a newly achieved insight:

cybernetics was fundamentally a science of control (ibid). This positioning was reinforced by Andersen commenting that "as long as we were trapped in a 'systems' view, we had to use every trick in the book not to seem adversarial." (Hoffman in Anderson and Hoffman, 2007, p. 573).

From then onwards they maintained a consistent position: "Harry [Goolishian] publicly articulated [their] leaving behind second-order cybernetics and constructivism and the new sense that language made to [them]: Our lives – e.g. events, experiences, relationships, and theories – are simply expressions of our socially constructed language and narratives" (Anderson, 2006, para. 20). For them, these new insights were of the kind "that the cybernetic paradigm cannot describe" (Anderson and Goolishian, 1990, p. 160). Their fully articulated ideas are stated in their last joint paper – *The Client is the Expert: A Not-Knowing Approach to Therapy* (1992).[47]

This change of conceptualization was welcomed and many saw it as "an antidote for those of us who became overly infatuated with the concepts of strategizing and intervening. Goolishian, Hoffman, and Andersen's position on instrumentality was very important politically within the field" (Cecchin et al., 1993, p. 124). Goolishian died in 1991 and Anderson continued to expand the insights of their work in a prolific way, with constant references to SC and postmodern ideas and an increasing emphasis on the collaborative nature of dialogue (1997, 2006, 2010a).

[47] This chapter was written as a contribution to the McNamee and Gergen book – *Therapy as Social Construction* (1992). This book was highly instrumental in introducing SC ideas to psychotherapy. Goolishian died in 1991 prior to its publication. The book was dedicated in his memory.

4.2.2 Furthering (un)critical dispersals: On the limits of the definition of social constructionism or when do 'faulty lenses' become 'dirty lenses'?

> Many terms could probably be applied to the intellectual current that is sweeping USA family therapy today. We agree with Hoffman (Hoffman, 1990) that the term 'social construction theory' is the best umbrella for this movement. (…) Other related terms that have been applied to this movement include 'post-structuralism,' 'deconstructionism,' and 'critical theory.' (Sprenkle and Bishof, 1994, p. 10)

It is of interest to note the similarity of the principles delineated in the last mentioned paper by Anderson and Goolishian (1992) and the one published earlier by the same authors (1988). This is of particular interest because of the references that are added and the ones that are erased during the transition between one and the other. Although the principles for practice are almost exactly the same,[48] the explanations and contextual references varied significantly. Science – not just the positivist-empiricist method – was taken out of the equation and 'method' was made almost equivalent in this new language with oppressive practices.

A similar gesture can be seen in the writings of Hoffman herself in her move from second order cybernetics (1985), constructivism (1988a) and SC (1990). Perhaps the most striking example of this gesture can be appreciated in her 1985 paper introducing SOC. In this paper, she argues in support of SOC because it "furnish[es] a substrate of scientific research that the social construction theories of American social psychology did not have" (p.391). In five years, the argument had diametrically changed.

[48]This point will be discussed further in section 4.3.2.

This freedom in the construction of meaning – in how interpretations are arranged – is indeed one of the characteristics of SC. Gergen (2001a, p. 419) reflected on this point quite candidly:

> Essentially I write as a mean to entering into relationships […] I am not trying to 'get it right' about the nature of science, reality, the mind, truth, objectivity, and so on. My chief aims are transformative.

With this pragmatic – perhaps even *strategic* – positioning, Gergen facilitated a loosening of the definitions that, he would argue, allowed for the postmodern play of signification(s) to take place. Such a strategy supported the claim that this movement attempted to generate a flattening of the hierarchies in the conversation and opened up the space to all sorts of (re)groupings and explorations. Although strong claims were made in relation to what should be done in the clinic, it was argued that these claims were flexible enough so as to allow for variation(s).

It is not surprising that there was felt to be a need to clarify that, so far as a theory of family therapy is concerned, SC is not a specific model but an umbrella inclusive of a range of theories, many of which would not be identified as SC by their authors. It is equally unsurprising to note the presence of all sorts of further developments and variations within the movement. In some ways, such variations were even necessary to hold the coherence with and commitment to a postmodern frame that assumes the presence of diversity.

Against the grain of commonly held definitions of the different theoretical movements in the field, the position of the present author is that there is room within this umbrella definition to include other approaches that are often considered distinct from SC, namely the brief solution focused therapy of de Shazer and Berg (de Shazer, 1991,

1994, de Shazer and Berg, 1995, de Shazer et al., 1986) and the narrative approach of Michael White and David Epston (Epston, 2008, Denborough, 2009, Freedman and Combs, 1996, Monk and Gehart, 2003, Walther and Carey, 2009, White, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1995a, White and Epston, 1989, 1990).[49] There are two other movements that are also of relevance in terms of variations in the field: the emerging Dialogical approach of Rober (and Shotter) in Belgium (Rober, 2005) and Seikkula in Norway (Seikkula et al., 2003, Seikkula and Olson, 2003) and, more recently, Hoffman's and Kinman's work around Deleuze's concept of the rhizome (Hoffman, 2008b, Kinman, 2012a, 2012b). Hoffman and Kinman are the only writers who make a clear connection in their ideas with Bateson as will be discussed in Chapter 10.

There is no scope in this thesis to carry out a detailed analysis of the complexities that inhabit each of these models and the points of convergence and of difference between them. Suffice to say at this point that they all share SC principles, including a particular approach to pragmatism that focuses on an open-ended negotiability in human life.[50]

4.2.3 The 'end of history' or the end of (critical) theory?

> I should preface this discussion of deconstruction with an admission – I am not an academic, but, for the want of a better word, a therapist. It is my view that not being situated in the academic world *allows me certain liberties, including the freedom to break some rules* – for example, to use the term deconstruction in a way that may not be in accord with the strict Derridean sense – and to refer to writers who may not generally be considered to be proposing a deconstructivist method. (emphasis added, White, 1991, p. 27)

[49] The narrative approach will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 10 given its claims to draw directly from Foucault's and, later, Deleuze's theory.
[50] The promises and complexities of pragmatism in its intimate relationship with empiricism will be discussed later through the work of Deleuze, whose use of these concepts is significantly different to the one of Gergen.

The previous section completed the exploration of the transformations of Batesonian concepts and (re)presentation in the field and of how a specific variation of SC – the one heralded by Gergen – came to be the predominant frame of reference in systemic circles.

Hoffman's recent writings (2008b) on the concept of rhizome as the metaphor that best describes the proliferation and consolidation of SC are thought-provoking. SC ideas indeed, as Hoffman points out, had an interest in flattening the hierarchies of professional work (Hoffman in Anderson and Hoffman, 2007, p. 574, see also Davis, 2009, p. 61-2) and, through the work and support of Boscolo and Cecchin from the Milan group, these ideas have expanded through networks of students and interested practitioners in different countries in open-ended and unpredictable ways.

Hoffman had already indirectly referred to the concept of rhizome in 1987 when describing the work of the Milan team as "crabgrass" (p.28), a plant that is rhizomic. In many ways, the description of "crabgrass" seems fitting not only for the ideas of the Milan Group but of the family therapy movement as a whole. In line with Bateson's own discontents, family therapy's radical approach was perceived to be a "response to the failure of prevalent treatment technologies [that allowed professionals] to work effectively with a number of difficult client populations, including schizophrenics, delinquents, and individuals from poor, multiproblem families" (Clarkin and Carpenter, 1995, p. 208, see also Epstein and Loos, 1989, p. 405, and Nichols and Schwartz, 2007, p. 7-8). As a movement, family therapy grew strongly since its emergence in the 1950s. An example of this rapid growth can be seen in the growth of membership of the AAMFT during the 1970s: from 973 to 7,565 members, that is an increase of 777%

(Gladding, 2007, p. 63). By 1980, family therapy was considered to be one of the four core mental health professions eligible for mental health traineeships in the USA (Gladding, 1998, p. 80).

This significant growth was indicative of the possibilities that these new conceptualizations brought forth to those working in the clinic. As described through the chapters in Part I, the growth of this new field came with significant theoretical openness and experimentation. Through the decades, the field has considered and reacted to a number of different propositions. These are ideas and principles that are recursively encompassed by SC in ways that make it relevant to ask – as with the reference to Fukuyama early in this chapter – whether the field should feel comfortable with its current theoretical frame.

In order to answer this question, it seems necessary to review SC claims as they present in the field in terms of their integrity vis-à-vis Bateson's project. In particular, it seems relevant to ask the question: how much flexibility can a concept afford before losing its integrity? and where are the limits of what we identify by a name?

4.3 (Re)Turning to Bateson… are we on the limits of knowledge or have we lost sight of Bateson's project?

> With th[e] idea of 'not –knowing' systemic psychotherapy reverted back towards the very style of knowledge seeking which Bateson criticized with the notion of "a fallacy of misplaced concreteness." (Krause, 2007, p. 920)

There is an ironic twist that emerges when the considerations articulated through this chapter are read in line with Lyotard's own reflections of his writings on postmodernism. He wrote: "I made up stories, I referred to a quantity of books I'd never read, apparently it impressed people, it's all a bit of parody… It's simply the worst of

my books, they are almost all bad, but that one's the worst" (Lyotard in Anderson, 1998, p. 26).

The spirit of Lyotard's parody on his own work has the effect of creating a healthy and humorous distance from the theoretical claims/stories made; a self-effacing irony that in fact completes and embodies Lyotard's ideas on postmodernism because it reminds the reader that such knowledge is constructed and that, as a construction, it is limited to the conditions that informed such construction and in which such a construction acquires meaning. For Lyotard, postmodernity is intimately connected with a cybernetical society and, as such, it is a type of knowledge that is geared to be used and consumed: knowledge becomes a commodity. It is in this awareness that a significant difference – *a difference that makes a difference*, as Bateson would say – is established between such a knowledge and the one that Bateson was engaging with.

Furthering the irony, Lyotard's self-deprecating reflection is perhaps closer to Bateson's project than Gergen's SC. This closeness is consistent with the subtle yet non-trivial clarification that have been made on the "unique take that Lyotard made of Wittgenstein's "language games" (Burbules, 2000, para. 7). Lyotard read Wittgenstein using Nietzsche. As Bohman commented, this "'Nietzscheanized' Wittgenstein [allowed Lyotard] to appropriate certain key themes from postempiricist philosophy of science (particularly Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism) in his characterization of the postmodern condition of *savoir*" (Baynes et al., 1987, p. 68). This (post)empirical connection between Lyotard's ideas on postmodernity and cybernetics distances Lyotard's project from Gergen's pragmatic approach to conversations at the same time that it allows for a closer connection with Bateson's ecology of mind. As will become evident in the next part of this thesis, the connection between Bateson and Lyotard's

postmodernism is also central to the investigation in the connections between Bateson, Foucault and Deleuze. It is in this context that it is not trivial that Deleuze made a comment of Lyotard, Foucault and himself belonged to a same generation; a generation that perhaps shared "the same conception of philosophy" (1995, p. 86).

With this clarification in mind, there is value in reconsidering the effects of having Bateson uncritically grouped within the umbrella of SC in the field.

4.3.1 A troubling interpretation: (a) humanizing (mis)reading of Bateson

> [Bateson's] studies of human communications and relationships will be our primary focus here; otherwise, he could seem like an odd addition to a book on social constructionism. (Lock and Strong, 2010, p. 170)

As Lock and Strong commented in this quotation, the type of SC that has permeated the field uncritically uses specific aspects of Bateson's ideas to confirm its own claims. This is an appropriation that is disquieting for it reduces Bateson's preoccupation with a wider ecology to issues pertaining to *human* communication and relationships *only*. Although Bateson was transformed by SC into a figure of mythical proportions – the guiding light, the hero who guided the shift away from cybernetics into the world of hermeneutics and human conversations – the main thrust of his project, which was the scientific conceptualization of the mind as an ecology of ideas, was lost through its confusion with a – one could dare to say, unscientific, perhaps even uncritical – phenomenological subject.[51] At the same time that Goolishian and Anderson (1992, p. 8) made the rupture with the cybernetical metaphor, they made a reading of Bateson's Creatura equating it to the world of language meaning-making.

[51] This claim is not asserting that phenomenology and its conceptualization of the subject is either unscientific or uncritical, but that the translation done by SC of such ideas lacks these qualities.

This was a serious misreading of Bateson; a misreading that promoted a move into hermeneutics. Such a move is problematic for, notwithstanding the heuristic value of hermeneutics, it constitutes a distinctively different set of ideas to the ones of Bateson. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of both sets of ideas is highly problematic for this claim afforded an insidious move from the systemic-ecological mind onto a (romantically understood) phenomenological self. Whereas in hermeneutics the preoccupations of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur are entirely centred on phenomenological conceptions of human understanding, Bateson's project is an enquiry into the functioning of the whole biosphere. Bateson's notion of "an immanent mind" is not referring to a human mind – let alone a phenomenological consciousness – but an ecological one. In such an ecological mind, the construction of the social is not only included but transcended by a more complex web of material interaction.

This is a point that Bateson was already aware of in his interrogations. Lipset comments regarding the dynamics during the 1968 Wenner-Gren Conference organised by Bateson attest to this. Lipset writes:

> At this point, Bert Kaplan, a personality psychologist, developed the notion that *history was a narrative of human events independent of nature*. [...] To the ecologist [Barry] Commoner, *this view was unspeakable.* To argue that social and ideological change need only focus on man, as Kaplan was, merely reiterated the false dichotomy which had given rise to their conference, namely, that man and nature were opposed and separable. *"We are concerned here"* Bateson piously announced, "*with an extension not to the creatures of nature, but to a total system of interrelationship involving the whole of nature."* (emphasis added, Lipset, 1980, p. 265)

Perhaps a more graphic way to describe the difference between these two types of minds is to quote Bateson:

> There is a story which I have used before and shall use again: a man wanted to know about mind, *not in nature*, but in his private large computer. He asked it (no doubt in his best Fortran), "Do you compute that you will ever think *like* a human being?" The machine then set to work to analyse its own computational habits. Finally, the machine printed its answer in a piece of paper, as such machines do. The man ran to get the answer and found, neatly typed, the words: THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY. (emphasis added, 2002, p. 12)

This example is not to claim that SC is equivalent to a computer language even when, referring back to Lyotard's claim, postmodernity and its knowledge are intimately bound to a language that is organised so as to be used within societies with high technical and computational knowledge.[52] My claim points instead to what systemic knowledge is attempting to do: what Bateson attempted through his life was to formalize a language that would articulate how nature operates – not how a man outside of such an ecology, let alone a logical linguistic system, operates. If the theoretical focus is too heavily biased toward language and its (interdependent) structures, there is a risk of losing contact with what Bateson's project was trying to articulate with the notion of a larger ecology. Furthermore and notwithstanding the insights and the values of a phenomenological theoretical frame, Bateson's ideas are in many ways closer to a psychoanalytical framework rather than to hermeneutics. Such a closeness relates to his awareness of the limits of perception – thus of the conscious mind and/or self – and of the value of intuition in our relationship with the world in which we live rather than in knowledge as socially and consciously negotiated. If Creatura is a meaning-making exercise, such process of cognition is a direct product of the functioning of life itself and ought not to be reduced to some kind of (conscious) social activity.

[52] This is, in itself, a source of exclusion to a vast number of countries in the globalized world.

Finally, Bateson's language was neither triumphalist nor optimistic. Quite the opposite, he was deeply concerned about the effects of what mankind's *hubris* has done – and continues to do – to the biosphere in the name of control and progress.

4.3.2 Constructivism or social constructionism? Is there a difference that makes the difference?

> It is clear from her 1985 paper that Hoffman understood very well that while some constructivisms (those of Kelly and von Glasersfeld) were intrapsychic, others (those of Maturana, Varela and von Foerster) had well-developed social (*inter*psychic) aspects. […] But by the time of her 1990 paper, Hoffman's constructivism had turned into a straw man: a social isolate that few would miss. (Pocock, 1999, 192-3)

In light of the clarification just given, in regards to the distortion that affects Bateson's project when uncritically bundled into a SC umbrella, it is valuable to (re)evaluate and to (re)contextualize SC within the larger ecology of ideas that constitute the field; to return to the point of emergence of SC in the field and review its claim in context of the field's rich conceptual tradition so as to attempt to understand and address the surprising *exclusion* that took place in the move to this apparently *inclusive* umbrella.

Hoffman's introduction of SC ideas had a significant impact in the field. Her introduction of SC was not only establishing a contrast between SC and SOC: she also claimed that it was 'better.' The consequences of this definitional exercise were felt strongly at the time and the field is still living the consequences. As Pocock writes, Hoffman had "[m]uch of the field follow[ing] her into the apparently much more … well, *sociable* notion of social constructionism" (1999, p. 192).

Yet how much substance is there actually in this distinction between SC, radical constructivism and SOC? If we are to be guided by Gergen's own words, there is not a

great difference. According to his well-cited paper (1985), constructivism (in the way it was articulated by Watzlawick) and constructionism is the same movement, with Gergen's decision to use constructionism – instead of constructivism – being more a way to separate these ideas from those of cognitive psychology theoreticians like Piaget (1985, p. 265, note 1, also in 2001a, p. 420-1 when talking about referentiality, and Burr, 1995, p. 2).

This blurring of the definitional limits of the movement and its interplay with other theories is mirrored in an ongoing confusion in the field as to the limits and distinctions between these two approaches (e.g. Golann, 1988, pg 332-3, Doherty, 1991, p. 41 , Yerby, 1995, p. 348 , and Doan, 1998).

If we accept that, *in practice*, "social constructionism shares a strong family resemblance with some of the constructivisms of second-order cybernetics" (Pocock, 1999, p. 193) and that SC, *as a theory*, is an open "umbrella" movement, then it is hard not to question the reasons for this nuanced exclusion and to seriously consider the (micro)politics involved in the neglect shown towards the cybernetical tradition within the field. Perhaps the dynamics since the 1990s articulate a more diffuse continuation of who is to occupy the theoretical throne left empty by Bateson: as Speed commented, "Maturana's star has waned to be replaced […] by growing interest in the ideas of Goolishian and Anderson mediated by Lynn Hoffman" (1994, p. 25) or, as Doan later wrote, "[t]he king is dead, long live the king" (1998).

4.3.3 (Re)Engaging with Bateson

> [F]ollowing the general trend of constructionism and narrative approaches in social sciences, systemic psychotherapist have also moved further away from examining

> the assumptions which underpin the systemic label. Patterns, continuity and reference to material, which is not conscious have become out of bounds, mainly as a result of the difficulty of reconciling these ideas with agency, choice and polyvocality. (Krause, 2007, p. 916)

The idea of maintaining an integrity in the reading of a certain author calls attention to different interpretations of the notion of reading. In Chapter 1, the constructive nature of the activity of writing was discussed to highlight that, rather than a passive activity of representation, writing holds the author accountable to the effects of her activity. Equally so, reading has multiple effects that need to be scrutinized. There is a significant difference between a deconstructive reading, a critical reading and a (mis)reading. A deconstructive reading would still hold the text that is being read, bringing it back to life through a new analysis in co-existence with the old ones (Derrida, n.d.). This is not the case with the current situation. Krause's quotation at the beginning of this section touches insightfully on this point and its effects on our field.

In light of the problematizations identified in this section, there is a need to return to read Bateson. Yet such a return calls for a critical commentary, for the return implied through this thesis is not a return to a mystical origin but a (re)turn: a reorientation of one's gaze so as to honour Bateson's insights. The present author does not propose that Bateson is to be read in a purist and anachronistic way, as if he lived in some sort of a bubble and in isolation of other ideas – a reference back to Hoffman's critique of constructivism – for this would betray Bateson's spirit. Bateson was a consummate conversationalist and felt quite comfortable with constructivist ideas. It is in this context that a reconnection with his project needs to take place. Furthermore, as the second part of this thesis will demonstrate, Bateson also needs to be (re)read in relation to the current dilemmas and current concepts dominating the times we live in.

Krause's quotation at the beginning of this section has further value for it also alerts us to the existing tensions between systemic ideas and what has become identified as postmodern/poststructural underpinnings of SC ideas. Prior to moving to a (re)reading of Bateson, there is value in briefly problematizing the ways in which these postmodern/poststructural ideas have been taken up in SC versions of family therapy theory.

4.4 Rejoinder at the limits of (post)modernism

> [The postmodern schools of therapy's emphasis on the productive capacities of language] represents too narrow an approach to psychotherapy and to postmodernism. Postmodernism takes as a central concern the limits of symbolization, so a postmodernist therapy would deal primarily with failures of language. Language-based therapeutic procedures such as those to be found in family therapy are consequently not postmodernist. (Frosh, 1995, p. 175)

A focus on an (un)scientific and (un)critical phenomenological subject as explained above is not only a different proposal from that of Bateson but also is a convenient compromise in the exploration of postmodern ideas. It is possible to argue that the (mis)reading of Bateson's ideas by SC runs parallel to an equally convenient (mis)reading of postmodern ideas as articulated by Lyotard and other French theorists, in particular, Foucault and Deleuze. Such a (mis)reading 'stops short' of exploring the full consequences of these ideas not only in theory but in practice.

Compromises are often necessary in negotiating the tensions involved in knowledge making. But, in this (mis)reading, core critical questions have been obscured not only in relation to the conditions for such a compromise but also in relation to the uses and limitations of such theory within the field. Although Lyotard's postmodern condition is constantly referred to in SC articulations, the reference seems to lack critical questions

on the implications of the consumerism implied in the trade of subjectivities, in particular, how such constructed subjectivities fit within a conceptualization of the clinic as part of a Batesonian ecology of mind.

This is a question that extends the enquiry and reconnects the field to larger scale issues, even ironically to issues that some have ridiculed as messianic (Johnson, 2001a, 2001b, Sluzki, 2001b, McGoldrick, 2001, Hardy, 2001). Such questions however help the field to orient itself to think about the purposes that it serves within contemporary society. In particular, these questions help to raise awareness of the political issues embedded in the clinic (a good example of this gesture can be seen in Sluzki, 2001a) and invite considerations regarding the micropolitics inherent to 'being human.'

Frosh (1995) introduces a relevant critique of the current readings of postmodernity by SC theorists in the field. Such a critique is helpful for establishing the connections between these ideas, those of Bateson, and systemic practice. Frosh's critique is clear and relevant: much of what the so-called postmodern therapeutic approaches claim to do is language-based. Due to this strong dependence in language such approaches are, in fact, more modern than postmodern. For Frosh, a *truer* postmodern approach needs to address instead the limits of the rationality hidden in narrations of the self.

Such a limit not only connects with the points made through this chapter – the limits around a phenomenological self, herme(neu)tics and 'things conscious' – but would also include two further issues:

First, it will need to address the disquieting themes of the rationality of madness and the irrationality of normality, that is, the limits of simple logic and its effects in processes of knowledge production. In doing so, space will be created for the introduction of

paradoxes and referentiality into our conceptualizations of the mind and the social field. This gesture establishes a direct reference to the double bind theory.

Second, postmodernism's explorations on the constructed nature of subjectivities and of the self could be most useful for the clinic when it focuses its investigations on the conditions of emergence of therapeutic practices, in particular, in relation to Lyotard's claims that the language games only function within a social contract of sorts. Therapy is not "just like any other conversation" but assumes a number of conditions that explain the position of one participant as the professional receiving a remuneration for his/her services.

In line with these critiques and questions, the current reading of both Bateson and postmodern/poststructural ideas in the field constitutes, if not a significant misrepresentation of these ideas, at least a paradoxical reading of them. It is a reading that, although understandable in its emergence, is highly problematic in its effects. At one level, SC attempts to re-join with Bateson's work in his discomfort with the direction that the Palo Alto group was taking; a discomfort, as explained in Chapter 2, with the other members' pre-occupation with control and strategic interventions. From this angle, SC constitutes a genuine expansion of the early aesthetic debate that attempted to bring Bateson's ideas back into the world of family therapy. At another level, by focusing on (phenomenological) selves in dialogue, SC seems to leave behind not only the sensitivities of postmodernity but also the ecological and science based gestures that are core to Bateson's work.

It is at this point that the second of the ironies introduced in Chapter 1 becomes apparent: that despite our claims that Bateson's ideas are central to current theories in

the field, in our professional education, we are deviating significantly from his core ideas and that the issues that Bateson thought were central to an understanding of life – and of therapy as one of its particular manifestations – are left unaccounted in the current theory.

Part II

Chapter 5 – (Re)Reading Bateson: In search of a poststructural ecology of ideas

> We should not neglect the fact that some biographies – written by people that have authority in the academia – finally inv(f)est[53] this authority in a book which – for centuries, sometimes, after the death of the author – represent the 'the truth'… 'the truth'. And someone interested in biography writes a life – "life and works of Heidegger" – well documented; apparently consistent; and is the only one; published by/under the authority of a good press, ok? And then Heidegger's image – Heidegger's life image – is fixed and stabilized for centuries. That is why I would say that sometimes the one who reads a text by a philosopher; for example a tiny paragraph and interprets it in a rigorous inventive and powerfully deciphering fashion is more of a real biographer than the one who knows the whole story. (Derrida, n.d.)

> The emphasis on epistemology has distracted proponents and detractors alike from the essential message of Bateson and Maturana: social systems and all human endeavour must be understood in light of our existence as biological entities that are coupled to a medium. (Dell, 1985, p. 1)

[53] This quotation is a transcript made by the present author of part of a lecture that Derrida presented in the USA. Given Derrida's accent, the word invest could be also be heard as infest. This 'deconstructive' play of words highlights the point that Derrida is attempting to make.

We are then – once again – left with the challenge of (re)reading Bateson; of attempting to engage with the spirit of his intellectual disquiet vis-à-vis the state of current knowledge and his ongoing efforts to develop theoretical tools to help understand the human condition and how, as humans, we can engage with ethical action. Furthermore, if we are to hold to Bateson – to read him within his own integrity – it seems central to do so by acknowledging his commitment to engage with theory as it presents itself and as it relates to the times in which we are living. As stated by Lipset, central to Bateson's project was his desire "to adapt theory and technology which developed during his lifetime to larger issues" (1980, p. 304). The larger issues Lipset identified were the position of mind in the physical world and the complex matters of form and process.

In line with the above quotation from Derrida, such a reading is not a canon of sorts but rather a dynamic reading that attempts to engage with authors in ways that are meaningful to not only their times but also ours. In this spirit, the articulation of this genealogy of the field has required corrections to the official story of Bateson so as to reconnect with his ideas and concerns. These adjustments relate to (re)presentations of Bateson's work both in the period when he was actively involved with the field, and in subsequent times. As such, this thesis is the search for a line of argumentation that 'holds true' to Bateson not only in his investigations on how the emerging insights of cybernetics could be applied to the human condition, but also in his struggles to articulate a new theory for the social sciences. These Batesonian struggles need to be reviewed and (re)engaged with in light of the significant developments produced by postmodern thought which has powerful and productive resonances with Bateson's work.[54]

[54] Some productive connections have already started to emerge in recent years along this line (e.g. Jensen and Rodje, 2012).

As indicated in the previous chapter however, such a reading will require a nuanced engagement with the later developments in the field, an engagement that calls for critique as well as appreciation. There is a need to recognize both the significant contribution that SC has exerted in the field as well as the limits of these ideas, in particular in their tensions with Bateson's project. It will be argued that such 'reframing' will help gain a more comprehensive understanding of Bateson's work. Furthermore, the contributions of SC to the field – which include a critical reading of psychology as well as an engagement with the emerging postmodern sensibilities – are more productive when read not in an antithetical relationship with cybernetics but as 'conversational partners.'[55]

For this reading of Bateson, there are three important elements of his project to consider. First, as already indicated in Chapter 2, Bateson's main motivation was his need to rethink social science, to find ways out of what he thought were theoretical dead ends. This scope of his project was powerful and ambitious.

Second, Bateson's project did not come from 'out of science' but, quite the contrary, from 'the heart of science' and from an active engagement with the philosophical underpinnings of science. His project was not an attempt to eradicate science from the vocabulary used by professionals, but to develop a scientific vocabulary that could best describe and explain the phenomena observed, including the participation of the observer in such observation.

[55] The use of conversation here is more related to Maturana's ideas than to SC. Maturana's use is in a direct etymological way as *con-versare*: versing/dancing together (1989, p. 9).

And third, in such a quest, he felt the need not only to endure the uncertainty inherent in good scientific work but also the need to correct and 'do something' about the dangers of (excuse the redundancy) 'dangerous' ideas.

5.1 The untimely task of science: (Scientific) knowledge as a veil

> All science is an attempt to cover with explanatory devices – and thereby to obscure – the vast darkness of the subject. It is a game in which the scientist uses his explanatory principles according to certain rules to see if these principles can be stretched to cover the vast darkness. But the rules of the stretching are rigorous, and the purpose of the whole operation is really to discover what parts of the darkness still remain, uncovered by explanation. (Bateson, 1958a, p. 280)

Perhaps a good example of Bateson's deep engagement with the philosophy of science can be found in the opening paragraphs of his renowned 1958 epilogue to *Naven,* part of which is quoted above. As a scientist, Bateson knew all too well that the attempts of science to make sense of world were endless and that science was, very much like Sisyphus' curse, a continuous and unending 'work in progress.' He was well aware that a scientific explanation could never but be a veil, the function of which was "to cover with explanatory devices – and thereby to obscure – the vast darkness of the subject" (1958a, p. 280). Against popular readings of science, for Bateson the purpose of this rigorous and often unrewarding exercise was not to ascertain some transcendental truth but to discover what still remained uncovered by the explanations used.

In this paradoxical use of language at the base of scientific knowledge, Bateson also saw "a deeper, more philosophical purpose: to learn something about the very nature of explanation, to make clear some part of that most obscure matter – the process of knowing" (ibid). As Marcus stated:

> [Bateson] did indeed sense the fictional element in this enterprise, but this was occluded in his commitment to scientific description, or at least the possibility of it. Method for Bateson was not what one did in the field as much as what one did with field materials at one's desk, so to speak. (1985, p. 68)

Krause adds to this clarification commenting that already in *Naven*, Bateson "goes to the heart of how the observer observes and how the systemic psychotherapist and the ethnographer can access meaning" (2007, p. 919). Since very early in his scientific career, Bateson showed significant insight into the complexity of available descriptions and interpretations; a complexity that made him face the need to look at the processes and the status of meaning making within the sciences.

Yet, what Bateson was interested in was not a storying and meaning making in a concrete and literal way. He was interested instead in the conditions – the living conditions – that are necessary for such an activity to take place. Similarly, Maturana – whose ideas Bateson was interested in as indicated earlier – is not interested in the specific characteristics of the verses that coexist in his concept of multiverse, but in the (biological) conditions that afford this type of epistemology. In this way, both Bateson and Maturana not only focused on epistemology but also made ontological and metaphysical claims.

An awareness of the different levels of observation called forth by this kind of thinking is of crucial importance in understanding their irony and elegance. Such an awareness is equally important to notice the (mis)reading of Bateson's and Maturana's ideas in family therapy. In Bateson's project, there is significant space in which to consider how story-telling interacts with the biology of our bodies so as to shape a multitude of complex fields – milieus, plateaus – in the articulation of life.

Perhaps of equal importance and relevance to our field, such a distinction affords the possibility of interrogating the (micro)political elements present in the processes of meaning making so as to evaluate their uses and effects not only in terms of the type of human condition that they support, but also their impact in a wider ecology (of mind).

5.2 A theory of action: The moral and aesthetic dimension

There is also significant need to correct a number of assumptions in the field in relation to Bateson's attitude towards action and towards purpose, and to challenge two commonly held beliefs in relation to Bateson's work. The first belief to challenge is that Bateson was not interested in a theory that involved action. This belief has positioned him in the field as a theorist with no interest in practical (e.g. clinical) applications. As indicated in Chapter 2, this positioning seems to be at the base of the commonly held reason for the split of the early Palo Alto group and the relegation of his work to some kind of historical archive. The second belief to challenge is the one claiming that his approach to knowledge was purely aesthetic and merely a 'way of observing.' This belief mostly emerged out of the attempt in the 1980s to reconnect with his work as explained in Chapter 3.

Both of these readings are convenient simplifications of his ideas that have led the field toward a notion of acontextual observation; an observation that is not only detached from a context but also detached from a purpose and from a body. In turn, as discussed in Chapter 4, this reading led to an understanding of Bateson's work as an 'appreciative observation' – a term used to mark a close connection with Anderson and Gergen's notion of 'appreciative organization' (Anderson et al., 2008). These ideas emphasize a lack of instrumental purpose. Following Bateson's significant – and consistent –

antipathy towards the early application of the emerging knowledge into specific technologies, they are positioned in direct opposition to strategic traditions in the field.

Notwithstanding how instrumental this positioning of Bateson's ideas has been in consolidating the dialectic rhetoric currently present in the field, with the *strategists* on one side and the *conversationalists* on the other, this gesture continues or may even exacerbate the initial distortion of Bateson's work. In particular, it leads us away from Bateson's core desire to correct dualism in thinking in order to achieve a more systemic and holistic gaze.

An alternative – more constructive – way to understand Bateson's relation to action can be found in his later thinking and writings. In a conference on *Conscious Purpose and Human Adaptation*, Bateson (1968) provided an understanding of his position. As his daughter – Mary Catherine Bateson – explains:

> "At the end [of the conference] he called for a theory of *action that would be moral in the sense of not disrupting the larger systems in which it occurs*, and he suspected that this would *have to do with aesthetic judgment that might transcend the need for a complete description of the state of a system and the implications of a particular action*. Some people, he argued, have a *"green thumb."* They know how to look after a plant, just as some doctors simply *have a sense* of how to care for a patient." (emphasis added, 2000b, p. 89)

Direct connections could be made between this statement and the claims of the conversational approaches that derived from Gergen's SC and the emerging dialogical approach that derives from Shotter's knowledge of a third kind. There is however, as explained in the previous chapter, a nuanced distinction that needs to be made. This distinction relates to the referring back of observation to individuals acting within a larger system, that is to say, within an ecology of mind as compared to 'free floating' conversations of (uncritically) 'concrete' selves.

Bateson's approach to action has an evaluative component inherent to action that has to do with the health of the larger system: his example of the green thumbs is in relation not to the intention of the gardener but to the effects that the gardener's actions have on the garden, in the same way that the 'sense' of the doctor is understood in terms of her or his effects on the patient. Bateson's approach here is also a reminder of the limits of the conscious mind when compared to the whole ecology within which specific actions are located.

This powerful and thought-provoking gesture in Bateson's theory is absent in current SC readings of his work: at the same time that he 'de-centres' the conscious subject, Bateson grants the subject a degree of agency and an inherent accountability with respect to the larger system. This accountability is neither phenomenological nor humanistic, but ecological and social. It is an accountability that is not just towards (an)other individual – as, for example, toward the client and/or the nuclear family in the clinic – but simultaneously accountable towards the social and the bio-ecology as a whole.

Perhaps more dangerous than action guided only by the self's (good) intentions, is the danger that Bateson often warned of: the danger identified by Whitehead as *misplaced concreteness*. In this case, misplaced concreteness refers to the danger of taking these ideas in a literal sense instead of formally, as a structure for observation. As Bateson wrote:

> These theoretical concepts have an order of objective reality. They are really descriptions of processes of knowing, adopted by scientists, but to suggest that 'ethos' or 'social structure' [or, to that effect, any other theoretical concept] has more reality than this is to commit Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness. (1958a, p. 281)

In other words, for Bateson – as well as for Whitehead – knowledge always requires an awareness of being a detached observation that could be best describe as ironic. To forget this ironic element in any observation and to give to explanations a material existence was indeed a serious danger for Bateson.

Does this mean that a material reading is dangerous per se and that the search for substance in theory is – as the more popular readings in postmodernism invite their readers to consider – an erroneous direction? Notwithstanding the seductiveness of this idea, as an idea, it again falls into (a different type of) misplaced concreteness. Such a mistake repeats the critiques of nihilism often (mis)applied to radical constructivism, potentially creating a type of idealism that leaves the material systemic reality unaccounted for.

As Lannamann argued with little effect in the field (1998a, 1998b), there is a genuine need to address the material conditions that are at the base of SC conversations as there is an equal need to navigate what Maturana called "the epistemological Odyssey" between the Scylla's monster of realism and the Charybdis' whirlpool of idealism (Maturana and Varela, 1984, p. 90, see also, Wolfe, 1998, p. 58).

5.3 A materially post-structural reading of Bateson: The body (and the world) in systemic theory and in therapy

> Systemic therapies were thus [through the use of bodily based metaphors] endowed with a rather intellectual quality, which led to a somewhat abstract conceptualization of the therapeutic endeavour. At the same time, though, bodies remained central (albeit often inadvertently) to therapeutic practice. Those same therapists, who tended to forget the existence of bodies when they theorized, were

> the keenest observers of bodies in their practical work. (Bertrando and Gilli, 2008, p. 365-6)

To clarify these core concerns, it will be argued that Bateson was calling for a recursive understanding of science. That is, Bateson was calling for a science that, in its articulation, takes account of its own production, including its limits and its ecological effects. Recursion is consistently present, not just as an explanatory element to the function of servomechanisms, but as a central element in the articulation of (scientific) explanations. As he stated: "[w]hat is lacking is a *Theory of Action* within large complex systems, where *the active agent is himself a part of and a product of the system*" (emphasis added, Bateson, 1968, p. 254).

Such a recursive requirement makes 'the agent' accountable, not invisible. There is no rhetorical exercise in which anything is possible so long as we imagine it. There are material limitations that are as extensive as deep ecological damage to the biosphere (Bateson, 1970c). Bateson's call is not for an exercise in hermeneutics – even when hermeneutics in itself needs to be accounted for – but for a theory that accounts for the material conditions of life and living, a theory that perhaps will help us to address the hubris of humanism.

At the same time, to speak of the material does not mean to talk about 'concrete' persons, a distinction that often blurs the differences between bodies and selves/subjectivities. The person – the self – is a deeply problematic concept for Bateson (1971a). To speak of the material refers us not to a concrete person but to the material conditions in which the 'person as a self' – *the self in itself* – emerges as a possibility.

Perhaps of even more importance, this materiality affords the identification of parameters of evaluation within larger ecologies, thus allowing for a grounding of both practice and life. The parameters provide a compass of sorts in the postmodern sea of relativity (e.g. Bellah, 1992); a compass that is seriously lacking in current theories in the field. It is not sufficient to talk about therapy as a 'simple' and 'open' conversation amongst 'equals.' There is instead a need to define the parameters of therapy in the context of health and, as became increasingly relevant to Bateson, the sacred.

Given these considerations on the material grounding of theory and practice, there is value in exploring the connections between Bateson and the more materialist approaches in French thought, in particular those of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. As will be argued through the remaining chapters, reading Foucault and Deleuze in this way is very different from the ways in which these thinkers have been appropriated thus far in debates within family therapy.

5.3.1 Towards an archaeology of Bateson's thought

> [Mead and Bateson's] attitudes toward action in the world, however, differed sharply, and I believe the difference came out of World War II. Margaret's war work used her professional training to increase understanding between allies, while Gregory's role was sowing confusion among the enemy. This year is the Mead centenary, using her quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world." She believed that you could use social science to improve society. Gregory did not, and even in psychiatric contexts, he resisted the transformation of his ideas into specific strategies of intervention and looked at Margaret's activism very much askance. Both would have seen the observer as part of the system, but emotionally Gregory was an outsider, alienated from the society in which he lived, while Margaret was always very much engaged and felt that her commentary was made as a participant. (Bateson, 2000b, p. 87)

A (material) reading of Bateson using contemporary French theorists will assist an appreciation of the distinction that Mary Catherine Bateson makes between the theoretical styles of her parents in the quotation above. In it, she alerts us to the conditions of emergence of different positions and the effects such positions have in the knowledge so produced.[56] One can begin to see here the potential connections between a Batesonian cybernetics and the work of Michel Foucault. In ways that will become clear when Foucault's work is discussed in the next chapter, Foucault's insights on knowledge and power are meaningfully embedded within the structure of the first section of this thesis. Unlike the stories/narrations that are currently more valued, the history of the field presented in Part I is not looking to a future with a sense of possibility and optimism. Instead, it is a reading that has attempted – through a detailed archival exploration – to reposition Bateson in the field and also to reposition us as readers of his ideas as an ongoing source of systemic inspiration.

By looking at Bateson's work through time and emphasizing the consequent mystification of his representation in the field, a connection between Bateson and Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* has been indirectly introduced.

Foucault's ideas on the order of discourse – on how knowledge is organized and, through such organisation, how it produces different types of power effects – will be discussed at length in Chapter 7. Chapters 8 and 9 explore further the connections between his project and Bateson's, with a particular emphasis on the consequent implications for systemic theory and practice.

[56] Perhaps her clarification provides the context in which Mead's involvement with the development of the Mental Health movement acquires meaning (Heims, 1991, chapter 7), a development that Gregory Bateson considered to be not only misguided but also dangerous.

5.3.2 A positive proposal: Plateaus and becomings.

> While reading Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* […], I was struck by a quote from a book by the art critic Jean Lescure, pointing out that the term 'non-knowing' is interestingly different from 'not-knowing.' Lescure says: "Knowing must be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance, but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. This is the price that must be paid for an oeuvre to be, at all times, a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise in freedom… in poetry, non-knowing is a primal condition." (Hoffman, 2002, p. 140)

A second powerful connection between Bateson and French thought is between Bateson and Gilles Deleuze. Even more than the connections with Foucault, it is the connections with Deleuze that potentially offer the most powerful way of reading Bateson today; of reading Bateson in his attempts to provide a way forward for the social sciences.

Whereas Foucault helped to reposition Bateson through the genealogical exercise offered in Part I, Deleuze calls for an engagement with the constructive and creative nature of knowledge and of life. Notwithstanding the value of a critical reading, as Foucault himself knew all too well, the question that critique brings to the fore still reverberates: what does this add up to in terms of our daily lives? More importantly – and despite the unease of asserting this question – what are its uses?

As already indicated, Bateson was not against action itself, but against what he would have perhaps called 'careless' – 'thoughtless,' even 'dangerous' – action; actions that do not emerge from the type of ecological knowledge he saw as central to our sustainability on earth. What Bateson was pointing to, was to the need for ethical action; for action that bases itself in an acute understanding of how life works in light of what is healthy and what is sacred.

It is in the metaphysics that emerges through the work of Deleuze that Bateson's concern for an ethical action finds a powerful ally. Deleuze's work, including his work in collaboration with the anti-psychiatrist Felix Guattari, not only offers a powerful critique to Western thought but also proposes a positive project of a world made of a multitude of plateaus; a notion that Deleuze and Guattari took directly from Bateson (1987b, p. 21-2). There are powerful connections between a Batesonian ecology and a Deleuzian conceptualization of life as a flow through desiring machines/assemblages.

As with the contribution of Foucault, the work of Deleuze – including his work with Guattari – will be discussed in Chapter 9 and the implications of these ideas for systemic practice in Chapters 10 and 11.

Chapter 6 – Foucault: Power/knowledge and the care of the self

> Above all, what we have done is to discover and survey that foreign land where a literary form, a scientific proposition, a common phrase, a schizophrenic piece of non-sense and so on are also statements, but lack a common denominator and cannot be reduced or made equivalent in any discursive way. This has never before been attained by logicians, formalists or interpreters. Science and poetry are equal forms of knowledge. (Deleuze, 2000a, p. 20)

> I am not merely an historian. I am not a novelist. What I do is a kind of historical fiction. In a sense I know very well that what I do is not true (…) I know very well that what I have done from a historical point of view is single-minded, exaggerated. Perhaps I have dropped out some contradictory factors. But the book had an effect on the perception of madness. So the book and my thesis have a truth in the nowadays reality. What I am trying to do is provoke an interference between our reality and the knowledge of our past history. If I succeed, this will have real effects in our present history. My hope is my books become true after they have been written – not before. (Foucault and Dillon, 1980, p.301)

It seems appropriate, almost a necessity, for a non-philosopher and non-historian like the present author to approach the work and ideas of Michel Foucault with some trepidation. Described by some as the most significant thinker of the twentieth century, Foucault is indeed a name that has become familiar to intellectuals in a variety of disciplines, especially those within the social sciences. His oeuvre covers a vast area: from the exploration of the formation of concepts, through a critique of positivist and progressive accounts of the history of thought, to the connection of knowledge with power into complex *dispositifs*, all of this having a constant awareness of the formation and the positioning of subjects vis-à-vis the social. He wrote with gaiety, self-assurance and passion, making him a perfect performer for an emerging mass media machine in France, a country with a long and rich tradition of having intellectuals in a recognized role as commentators on and participants in public life.

There are a number of difficulties when reading Foucault. First, there are 'technical' difficulties regarding access to his work: until 1994, with the publication of *Dits et Ecrits* (Defert and Ewald, 1994, English abbreviated versions are Rabinow, 2000, Faubion, 2000b, and Faubion, 2000c), access to his writings in French was limited and not systematic. Furthermore, even though there has been an upsurge of translation of his work in recent times (2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2006b, 2008a, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013) not all of his oeuvre has been translated. At the same time, some texts are available in a number of different translations, giving rise to further complexity.

There is also the more 'personal' complexity regarding his writing style. At least until the mid-seventies, his writings were ambitiously academic, despite Pasquino's claim that "he never addressed himself specifically to an academic public (…) and always strove to write in a style which would be comprehensible even to non-specialists"

(1986, p. 101). Protevi supports this point by stating that Foucault "adopts the style of writing common to French intellectuals in the 1960s: complex syntax, a love of paradox, elliptical phrasing, an assumption of familiarity with a vast and deep culture – all designed to produce an effect of effortless brilliance" (2006b, para. 1).

Despite these translation and interpretative difficulties, Foucault's project has captured the imagination of many in the social sciences and the humanities producing extensive references in the English speaking academic world. This situation creates a difficulty in the study of his work. For, as Foucault himself said,

> There should not be any privileged choice. One should be able to read everything, to know all the institutions and all the practices […] the choices that one could make are inadmissible, and shouldn't exist. One ought to read everything, study everything. (Foucault and Bellour, 1966, p. 14)

How could one then carry out archaeological research into 'the Foucaultian effect'? How to read Foucault? Perhaps one answer that would please Foucault is that the reading needs to be as true and, at the same time, as subverting as possible. The below introduction to his work has been based mostly on the reading of primary texts and presents a certain order, a certain understanding of his thought, that could not be said to 'represent' the ideas of Foucault. It attempts instead to (re)present his work so as to provide a positive project to the clinic, a project that will help to 'subvert' current understandings as well as to provide interesting connections when reading it vis-à-vis Bateson's work.

This (re)presentation commences with a preamble that contextualises the ironic position that Foucault holds throughout his writings, a position that is equated with a (Gogolian) laughter. It is then followed by a schematic presentation of the evolution of his ideas. His trajectory affords the identification of a threefold system of problematization; a

problematization of knowledge, of power and of the self. In turn, this analysis opens up the space for reading a critical element that connects his work with the wider political project of the Enlightenment. The chapter finishes with a commentary on the complexity of folds and recursions that is present in Foucault's project.

6.1 Did it all start with 'the laughter'?

> This book arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. (Foucault, 2004b, p. xvi)

Despite the fact that *The Order of Things* (2004b) was not Foucault's first book, it is the belief of the present author that the opening sentence of its Preface is the best way to start to comprehend the concrete aspects of Foucault's thoughts. Foucault used laughter in many of his lectures: he presented cases – real, documented ones – to which the audience responded with laughter. He would then use this 'expected' response to point to an uneasy quality of these cases: they made obvious an element of 'monstrosity' that verged on the 'grotesque' (2003a, p. 11); a comic disfigurement that becomes manifest when one sees a theory in the light of its practice. This laughter connects perhaps with Deleuze's comment at the start of his book on Foucault (2000a, p. 1): "in any case, it all begins like a story by Gogol (rather than by Kafka)." Like Gogol's satires, Foucault's use of laughter makes one confront the core issues he investigated stripped of their clothes of convention.

What is this monstrosity that Foucault's laughter stood for? Perhaps the best way to understand it is by exploring the specific laughter used by Foucault in *The Order of Things*. As Foucault explains, the laughter arose when reading a non-fiction text by Borges describing a categorization of animals quoted in 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia':

> In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*. (2004b, p. xvi)

At this point in the text, Foucault associates his response with 'wonder,' with the recognition of the limit of our thinking and the beginning of the magical. At this point, his gesture connects with the playfulness and the negotiability proposed by social constructionism (SC) as discussed in Chapter 4. There is however more to Foucault's laughter. Later on in his text, he adds:

> That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off. Perhaps because there arose in its wake the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the incongruous […] I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension without law or geometry […] The uneasiness that makes us laugh when we read Borges is certainly related to the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed. (2004b, p. xix-xx)

Foucault's laughter refers not only to the awareness of the limitations of our thoughts but also to a growing awareness that perhaps there is no transcendental order to which one's knowledge – and, ultimately, one's self – could relate and to which 'one's essences' could be anchored. In this respect, Foucault's laughter juxtaposes with the anxiety represented in Munch's painting *The Cry*.

There is a further dimension in his laughter however; a dimension that has to do with Foucault's life and experience. From 1955 until 1960, Foucault lived away from France (in Sweden, Poland and West Germany) occupying governmental cultural positions. Foucault reflects on these experiences as follows:

> [T]hose societies near my own – but a little different – were very important. They looked sometimes like an exaggeration or an exacerbation of my own society […]. And a lot of the trends in France which were not perceptible were visible to me – though the Swedes were blind to them themselves. I had a foot ten years back and a foot ten years ahead. (Foucault and Dillon, 1980, p. 300)

From this perspective, Foucault's laughter directs us to the experience – and thus the subjectivity – that results from having lived in foreign countries and having experienced, first hand, the diversity of lifestyles and the subtle yet clear impact of the multiplicity of nuances that constitute the concreteness and 'natural-ness' of everyday lives that often is taken for granted.

In this context, Foucault's laughter acquires a presence that goes beyond its more pedagogic use as a monstrosity and provides a 'beginning' as well as a constant and relentlessly affirmative frame to understand Foucault's interest in discourse as a categorization of categorizations that breaks away from totalizing and centralizing practices.

6.2 Three referential axes

> I tried to mark out three types of problems: that of the truth, that of power, and that of individual conduct. These three domains of experience can be understood only in relation to each other and only with each other. What hampered me in the preceding books [prior to history of sexuality volumes two and three] was *to have considered the first two experiences without taking into account the third.* (emphasis added, Foucault and Ewald, 1984, 466)

How does one describe the trajectory of an exploration of a conceptual territory that is not yet present? What is perhaps clear from Foucault's project is that he proposes an alternative reading of what is taken for granted by science and the 'natural order of things.' The image that comes to mind is that of Foucault as an early *conquistador* or as Captain Cook. That is, the image of a person to whom the tracing of the map – or the development of a certain cartography – takes place in parallel with the exploration of what he is mapping. Such explorers are ironically aware during their exploration of the newness and unfamiliarity of the place in which they find themselves, understanding that one of their tasks is to make such landscapes familiar; to come to know them. Along similar lines, Foucault's exploration of discourse, as a genuine alternative to positivism, was not straightforward. In his writings there are, at times, returns to places/positions that he had already established and, at other times, he gets caught in dead ends from which he had to return, at times painfully.

A productive way to approach Foucault's explorations is to understand his work in the context of and as an alternative to the prevalent traditions existent in France: Phenomenology, History of Science and Marxism (1983f, p. 407-8). As an alternative to these traditions, Foucault's conceptualizations were organized around three axes of reference: the subject, knowledge and power. These axes are present throughout his work and, although they will be described separately, they need to be seen in constant relation with each other and conceptualized as a trinity.

By means of these axes, Foucault's critical project holds an ongoing relationship with these conceptual traditions, *problematizing* them. Problematization was a central methodology for Foucault. As he explained: "Problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, not the creation through discourse of an object

that does not exist. It is the set of discursive or nondiscursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought" (Foucault and Ewald, 1984, p. 456-7).

6.2.1. The subject and subjectivity: Problematization of the phenomenological subject

Foucault started and finished his investigations with 'the subject' specifically, the subject's experience understood in their historicity (1984a). Yet, partly due to the influence of psychoanalytic thought, he problematized experience and the subject by referring to mechanisms that are out of the sphere of such a subject's awareness. Experience is the "rationalization of a process itself provisional, which results in a subject, or rather in subjects [and what he called] subjectivization [is] the process through which results the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity which is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organizing a consciousness of self" (Foucault et al., 1984a, p. 472).

The Foucaultian 'subject' undergoes significant transformations. It is not the phenomenological or existential subject – a product of late eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptual formations (2004b, part II) – whose subjectivity is sovereign and provides the foundation for any meaningful experience; nor does Foucault conceive the subject as of 'substance,' as having an essential/foundational role. For Foucault, the subject was a "form" (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 440) that took different shapes according to the discursive formations and the power dynamics present at any given time and space.

Foucault identified three different kinds of subjectifications, corresponding to the three axes noted above. Human beings can be subjects of knowledge (of which current

standards of normalization of human behaviour are a prime example), subjects of power (with penal and psychiatric institutional practices being the most common examples) and subjects to certain types of relations to themselves (Foucault, 1983b, Patton, 2003).

As explained further in the next section, the articulation of the latter type of relation is a late development in Foucault's thought. These practices of subjection – such that the subject is established out of its relationship with it-self – are practices in which the subject is constituted "in a more anonymous way" (Foucault and Fontana, 1984, p. 452), implying more autonomy from the state's normative knowledges (Foucault, 1982c, p.336). As Foucault explained: "maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are" (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 336).

6.2.2. Regimes of Truth: Problematizations of scientific truth

Despite the commonly accepted view in the field that Foucault, as 'postmodern' thinker, was critical of notions of truth, truth is central in his thought. Yet, as with the subject, truth suffered significant transformations under his scrutiny. In *The Order of Things* – but more directly in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* – truth lost its transcendental quality. Instead, Foucault's truth needs to be "understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements [… that] is linked in a circular relation with systems of power that produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it – a 'regime' of truth" (Foucault et al., 1976, p. 132).

Foucault undermined the claims made for science within a positivist regime as to a steady and progressive accumulation of knowledge that becomes, through time, closer to 'truth.' He did so through highlighting the historical displacements and discontinuities within knowledge. What was important about these displacements for

Foucault was that they are the result of "a battle 'for truth,' or at least 'around truth,' […] a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays" (Foucault et al., 1976, p. 132).

As developed in the next section, this shift of conceptualization framed the displacement in Foucault's interest from a type of knowledge that constitutes scientific domains – what he calls *connaissance* – to *savoir*; a type of knowledge that constitutes archaeological territories where different regimes of truth are established (1976b, p. 202). This displacement also explained how power came into consideration in his investigations. Foucault saw power as a tool that "makes it possible to analyze the problem of the relationship between subject and truth in what seems to me the most precise way" (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 439).

6.2.3. Power: Problematizations of notions of super-structures that determine behaviours

Power is the best known of Foucault's concepts. It is also the one most prone to misunderstanding through two types of common distortions. On the one hand, there is the danger of simplifying its relationship with knowledge, giving rise to a certain type of causality (Foucault and Ewald, 1984, p. 462, Foucault and Raulet, 1983, p. 455). On the other hand, there is the danger of making it equivalent to the concept of domination (1983e, p. 416). Foucault saw power-relations as a central yet not the exclusive definitional element of societies. For Foucault, power-relations stood in relation to production-relations, communications-relations and relations to one-self (Foucault, 1983e, p. 416).

Under Foucault's scrutiny, power also suffered transformations. He was not interested in an economic analysis of power, nor in exploring the juridical forms of centralized,

regulated and legitimate power. He investigated power instead as it presents in the actualities of men in everyday life (1976a, p. 28-34).[57] From this perspective, power was understood as a network of actual relations: as the capacity of one man to affect the behaviour of another. For Foucault however, power was only possible insofar as both people in the relationship have some degree of freedom thus his understanding of power required the possibility of resistance.

Power for Foucault could widely be conceived as *government*: the determination of someone's behaviour "by resorting to a number of tactics" (1983f, p. 410). Seen from this angle, power in itself was not necessarily evil but a game of strategies. Foucault clarified this point as follows:

> I see nothing wrong in the practice of a person who, knowing more than others in a specific game of truth, tell those others what to do, teaches them and transmits knowledge and techniques to them. The problem […] is knowing how to avoid the kind of domination effects where a kid is subjected to the arbitrary and unnecessary authority of a teacher. (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 447)

Foucault saw power neither as a mere constraint nor as an inhibiting force but as an affirmative and constructive force. As he explained, power "needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault et al., 1976, p. 120). As such,

[57] Gendered language is intentionally used in this chapter to acknowledge Foucault's own awareness of sex biases in societies. As he stated: "In [the history of sexuality and how sexuality was integrated inside the problem of truth] it is a fact that the main role has been run by males and only by males. Sex, the theory of sex, the rules for the techniques of the self, the rules for sexual behaviour and so on *has been imposed by males, by a male society and by a male civilization. So, I think, that this story […] has to be done from the point of view of males.* But of course you could also – and I think this has to be done – see the effects of that on the sexual experiences or the pleasure experiences of women but that would be something else you see" (transcribed by present author and emphasis added, Foucault, 1983a, 46:10 – 48:40).

power "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, form knowledge, produces discourse" (ibid).

Power for Foucault is "mobile, reversible and unstable" (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 441) and it is organized in an economy of circulation.[58] It is this fluidity that is articulated through the historical displacements of knowledge and that accounts for the presence of institutions, which – like individual 'subjects' – are understood as crystallizations of power in given periods (1982c, p. 343).

Having these axes in mind as a referential frame, the chapter will now proceed to explore Foucault's conceptual journey in a chronological manner, by referring to his written works according to their publishing date.

6.3 A (brief) history of Foucault's thought

> A theoretical shift had seemed necessary in order to analyze what was often designated as the advancement of learning; it led me to examine the forms of discursive practices that articulated the human sciences. A theoretical shift had also been required in order to analyze what is often described as the manifestations of 'power'; it led me to examine, rather, the manifold relations, the open strategies, and the rational techniques that articulate the exercise of powers. It appeared that I now had to undertake a third shift, in order to analyze what is termed 'the subject.' It seemed appropriate to look for the forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject. (Foucault, 1992, p. 6)

6.3.1. A pre-Foucaultian Foucault

History of Madness (2006a) – of which *Madness and Civilization* (2004a) was an earlier abbreviated translation[59] – is often referred as Foucault's first book. Although it is true

[58]A good example of this point can be found in his explanation of the "king's orders" (1977, p. 167-8).
[59] This earlier translation was done by Tavistock Press as part of a series edited by R. D. Laing and David Cooper. It seems that this translation is the point that marks the beginning of the relationship between

that this is his first significant book, chronologically he published two other works before. The first was *Dreams and Existence* (1993), an introduction to a text written by the existentialist psychiatrist Binswanger that Foucault helped to translate (Eribon, 1991, p. 44-9), and the second was his first actual sole-authored book *Maladie Mentale et Personalité* (1987).[60]

Each of these texts provides a clue into Foucault's investigations and serves as a point of departure for his discursive investigations. The first book acknowledged the value of his early explorations into existentialist analysis that helped him focus on the historical dimension of experience (1984a). This was a focus that stayed constant throughout his work (1981, and Foucault et al., 1984b). Foucault's book on psychopathology, on the other hand, is a fairly traditional introduction to the field of psychopathology where he positioned himself critically by stating his concern over the use of similar meaning systems to interpret both mental and organic medicine (and the use of notions like 'illness,' 'symptom' and 'aetiology'). For Foucault, the consequence of using the same meaning system across different disciplines was that, "they are presumed to possess the same type of structure" (1987, p. 2). Since this very early writing, Foucault articulated his discomfort with the way in which (organic) medicine was expanding into psychological domains.

It is not surprising then that *History of Madness* was written with these insights in mind: with an awareness of madness as an historical experience that acquires meaning within a social context (Foucault and Weber, 1961, p. 8). In this book, Foucault further

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these authors, as well as the association between Foucault and antipsychiatry. Despite Foucault having connections with Laing, inasmuch as both sharing an existentialist tradition (although Laing had a stronger Sartrean tradition whereas Foucault defined himself as Heideggerean), this association led to many misunderstandings of Foucault's work in the English speaking world.

[60] This book was significantly revised and republished as *Mental Illness and Psychology* in 1962, a year after *Madness and Civilization*.

articulated his disquiet with the distortions exerted by medical discourse. In particular, he focused on the way medicine silenced the experiential domain of madness by imposing a grid of understanding that is alien to it. As he explained,

> I have been seen as saying that madness does not exist, whereas the problem is absolutely the converse: it was a question of knowing how madness, under the various definitions that have been given, was at a particular time integrated into an institutional field that constituted it as mental illness occupying a specific place alongside other illnesses. (Foucault et al., 1984b, p. 446)

What is also noticeable in *History of Madness* is an incipient preoccupation with the effects of power on men's experiences. As Boyne insightfully comments, Foucault at that point still believed in "the possibility of a higher form of reason which would transcend the division between Western reason and its hidden other [madness]" (1990, p. 48). As Boyne further discusses, Derrida's (1978) critique of Foucault's reading to Descartes – a position that could not be fully grasped in the earlier abbreviated translation – seemed to have helped Foucault to question his earlier optimism and let go of the idea of an universal – utopian – order.

6.3.2. Knowledge formations

> It is possible and legitimate to define, by a regional analysis, the domain of objects to which a science addresses itself. And to analyse it either on the horizon of ideality which the science constitutes […] or in the world of things to which those objects refer. […] But it would be incorrect to believe (through an *illusion of experience*) that there are regions or domains of things which present themselves spontaneously to an activity of idealization and to the work of scientific language. (Foucault, 1968, p. 330)

In *History of Madness,* Foucault articulated the break between reason and madness – a "break that every society found itself obliged to make" (Foucault and Bellour, 1966, p. 13) – as part of the secularization and the confirmation of reason as supreme. In contrast, in *The Order of Things* (2004b) he "wanted to write a history of order, to state

how a society reflects upon resemblances among things and how differences between things can be mastered, organised into networks, sketched out according to rational schemes" (Foucault and Bellour, 1966, p. 13).

The Order of Things is a conceptual book. Foucault concentrated his historical analysis on exploring how the human sciences (of life, language and wealth) were organised within the larger context of epistemological fields, and how these field were transformed in the context of a different type of knowledge [*savoir*]. As he explained in the English Preface to the book,

> "What I would like to do, however, is to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish his scientific nature. […] unknown to themselves, the naturalists, economists, and grammarians employed the same rules to define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories." (2004b, p. xi-ii)

Rather than presenting science as a progressive accumulation of knowledge towards a utopian state of pure objectivity, *The Order of Things* introduced the notion that any knowledge grounds its positivity within a certain epistemological field. Knowledge "thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility" (ibid, p. xxiii-iv). Foucault however never claimed that any of the known theoretical knowledges [*connaissances*] were per se wrong. Nor did he claim that science as a method was inadequate. In fact, and especially in his early writings, he took great care to clarify that he was not attempting to question the validity of science, but to contextualise it vis-à-vis this different type of knowledge. Quite the opposite, he treated with contempt claims that his emphasis on discontinuity was a strategy aimed at the fragmentation of sciences.

In his next book *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1976b), Foucault reflected on what he had argued in *The Order of Things*, articulating the method he had used.[61] *The Archaeology of Knowledge* provided the tools to explore discursive formations. In such a method, the unit of analysis was not empirical unities – so called "facts" – but statements. Statements are not unities in the way that facts are. Statements are not propositions or sentences of language but *events* that neither language nor meaning can exhaust. Statements work as a function of existence "that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space" (ibid, p. 97-8). Statements are organized into 'archives' which determine the limits of what can be said, thought and perceived and what, due to structural limitations, cannot. They are at the base of one's awareness and, because of this, out of the reach of one's awareness (1976b, p. 145-7). A Foucaultian archaeology then is the study of these archives both in terms of their internal logic of regulation and of their transformations.

In this discursive world, the position of the subject is turned upside down: from being the phenomenologically stable source of meaning, it is instead conceived as emerging out of specific discursive formations. The subject and the notion of the self will be discussed further later in 6.3.4.

6.3.3. Discursive practices: Power and governmentality

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

[61] In a way, this is a reflective connection between *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that resembles the connection between Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* and *Mind and Nature*.

Since 1969-70, Foucault held a prestigious chair at the Collège de France; a chair that he self-titled "History of Systems of Thought" (Foucault, 2013, p. ix).[62] The outline of his courses at the Collège (Faubion, 2000a, part I) is a valuable source to comprehend his subsequent trajectory. Both his candidacy (1969, p. 73) and his inaugural presentation *The Discourse on Language* (1973a) discussed the shift to discourses and archaeologies.

In his 1970-1 course, his emphasis moved from discursive formations to discursive practices which "are not purely and simply modes of manufacture of discourse" (1971, p. 12). With this shift, Foucault returned to his earlier focus of analysis on practices and institutions that he had when writing *History of Madness*. Foucault introduced this shift by contrasting Aristotle's and Nietzsche's theories on what is at stake in philosophy regarding the process of knowledge formation. He confirmed his alliance with Nietzsche asserting that "[i]nterest is thus posited radically prior to the knowledge that it subordinates as a mere instrument; […] its original link to truth is undone, since in it truth is only an effect." (1971, p. 14).

In his 1971-2 course he articulated his renowned "knowledge/power relation":

> No knowledge is formed without a system of communication, registration, accumulation, and displacement that is in itself a form of power, linked to its existence and its functioning to other forms of power. No power, on the other hand, is exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution, or restraint of a knowledge. (1972, p. 17)

Patton summarizes what was to come: "[m]uch of Foucault's work during the 1970s dealt with what he called 'micro-political' techniques of bodily coercion, control, and

[62] The previous name of this chair was "History of Philosophical Thought" (Foucault, 2013, p. ix). This distinction will become of relevance in the next section.

training" (2003, p. 526) techniques that "were increasingly deployed […] in workshops and factories, schools, reformatories, and prisons" (ibid). Foucault's courses during this time dealt with both penal (1972, 1973b) and psychiatric (1974, 1975, 2003a, 2006b) power/knowledge *dispositifs* present in the Western world. He used Bentham's Panopticon as the model par excellence of Western rationalities from the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth's century (Deleuze, 1990c, p. 177). The Panopticon was an asymmetrical structure of visibilities that confirmed systems of domination and centralisation by one person (supervisor, teacher, psychiatrist, officials) having a privileged gaze on a number of others (prisoners, workers, students, patients, soldiers, etc). The latter "does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication [… h]ence the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures automatic functioning of power" (1991, p. 200-1). In such systems of asymmetrical observation, people's ways of knowing themselves – the way in which they observe themselves, an observation that is determined by its contingencies – turn them into subjects of domination. At this point of Foucault's analysis, one's subjectivity – including one's own sexuality (1990) – is nothing but a veiled system of external regulation that has been installed through different systems of discipline.

As if this was not sufficient, disciplinarian techniques were only one of the ways of exercising power. "The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also saw the development of a series of new techniques for the political government of territories and populations" (Patton, 2003, p. 527). Foucault's courses after 1975-6 until 1980 shifted the focus away from micro- into macro/molar-politics. His research during this time focused on the conceptualisation of society as needing to be defended (2003b); a movement that was concurrent with the sovereign state organising itself around military strategies and

institutions (1976c, 2009). As part of such defence, Foucault claimed, the state moves to a preoccupation with regulating not just its territory but its population (1978a, 1979a, 1980a, 2008a). This was a passage from 'territorial State' to the 'State of population' as Agamben (1998) indicated, a passage in which sovereign power becomes increasingly engaged in addressing issues of the nation's health and biological life. This is a passage that lead to the need of a "government of men" (Foucault in Defert and Ewald, 1994, p. 719, quoted in Agamben, 1998).[63] *Biopolitics* referred to this nascent science that aimed to rationalize "the problems presented to government practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population." (1979a, p. 73). The welfare state was born out of these contingencies and, as a type of state, it "must be recognized for what it is: one of the extremely numerous reappearances of the tricky adjustment between political power wielded over legal subjects and pastoral power wielded over live individuals" (1979b, p. 307).

By the end of the 1970s, Foucault was presenting an insidiously grim picture of the life of human beings. His initial attempts to move away from totalizing descriptions of truth and knowledge gave way to an increasingly totalizing description of men being nothing but subjects of endless layers of domination. A certain heaviness set in in Foucault's conceptual horizon that was perhaps difficult to understand for those who appreciated the potential and puissance of both the archaeological and genealogical strategies developed by him during this time.

[63] Foucault completion of this idea is equally relevant: "what follows is a kind of bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques. For the first time in history, the possibilities of social sciences are made known, and at once it becomes possible both to protect life and to authorize a holocaust."

6.3.4. Technologies of the self

> If Foucault needs a third dimension, it's because he feels he's getting locked into the play of forces, that he's reached the end of the line or can't manage to 'cross' it, there's no line of flight open to him. […] And it takes him a long time to find a solution because he actually has to create one. Can we say, then, that this new dimension's [sic] that of the subject? Foucault doesn't use the word *subject* as though he's talking about a person or a form of identity, but talks about 'subjectification' as a process, and 'Self' as a relation (a relation to oneself). (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 92)

In his 1980-1 course at the College de France, Foucault stated his desire to start a new project looking at the history of 'techniques of the self': "the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, transform it" (1981, p. 87). Such a study would be at the intersection of a different type of history of subjectivity, one that was based on the exploration of the 'relations with oneself.' In order to make this movement, Foucault searched much earlier in history, investigating Greek and Roman cultural practices.

This new angle of conceptualization opened up the space for a different notion of governmentality: "the government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations with others (such as one finds in pedagogy, behaviour counseling, spiritual direction, the prescription of models of living and so on)" (1981, p. 88). This type of analysis allowed for transformations that are of a different kind from mere resistance. For within any subjectivity, there is space for optional techniques of construction of the self that, although being created within relations to others, are not of the type that assumes relations of domination. Alternatives to subjugation arise mainly in the form of the

development of capacities; of practices of care of the self rather than through specific knowledge of who one is.[64]

Foucault's subsequent writings (1982a, 1982d, 1983b, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2011) focused on tracing both the articulations and the transformations of these practices through time. Perhaps fortune's touch of irony can be appreciated when acknowledging that his early death left this work unconcluded.

6.4 Positioning Foucault: Critique as transformation and practices of freedom

> What is the role of thought, then, in what one does if it is to be neither a mere savoir-faire nor pure theory? […] to supply the strength for breaking the rules with an act that brings them into play. (Foucault, 1982b, p. 244)

> But my problem is not to satisfy professional historians; my problem is to construct myself, and to invite others to share an experience of what we are, not only our past but also our present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out if it transformed. (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 242)

The structure of Foucault's thought is recursive and one needs to take this recursivity[65] into account if one is to appreciate the depth of his thinking. The presentation of his trajectory would be distorted if it did not look at the recursion that was taking place concurrently with the conceptual investigations in which he was engaged. Consistent with his investigations into the nature of subjectivity, such recursion refers to his studies on the positions from which he was writing and the desired effects of his research.

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[64] In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005), Foucault made this clarification noting that, in Classic Greece, the care of the self – of *epimeleia heautou*, which referred both to a certain disposition towards oneself and others as well as actions exercised on the self by the self (p.10-1) – framed the more known idea of knowing oneself – of *gnothi seauton.* Foucault stated that it was the 'Cartesian moment' that saw the change "by philosophically requalifying the *gnothi seauton* and by discrediting the *epimeleia heautou*" (p. 14).

[65] This idea will be further discussed at the end of this chapter.

Consistent with the name of his chair, Foucault defined his philosophical work as *critical history of thought* (Florence, 2000). He positioned his investigations not 'just' as theoretical investigations, but as critical enquiry; as a type of enquiry in which thought played a central role in the improvement of actual lives in present time. This dimension of Foucault's work became increasingly evident since the late 1970s and, it could be argued, was an effect of the separation of knowledge and self that he had previously established as well as of the awareness of the increasing commodification of knowledge taking place in the postmodern condition. Very much in line with the insights of Lyotard already mentioned, Foucault wrote:

> [w]e live in a society in which the formation, circulation, and consumption of knowledge are something fundamental. If the accumulation of capital was one of the fundamental traits of our society, the same is true of the accumulation of knowledge. (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p.291)

6.4.1 Thought as critical tool

> Since the sixteenth century, people have always considered the development of the forms and contents of knowledge to be one of the greatest guarantees of liberation for humanity. (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 291)

If knowledge is central for the West, it is partly because of the awareness of its potential. Yet for Foucault the issue was not 'just' knowledge per se: "what would the relentless pursuit of knowledge be worth if it had only to secure the acquisition of information, and not, in some way, and as far as possible, the displacement of he who knows" (Foucault in Pasquino, 1986, p. 108). Knowledge needs to be evaluated and disciplined. Following Nietzsche, Foucault's "problem was not the construction of a system, but the construction of a personal experience that is transformative" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 241).

Foucault defined this specific type of knowledge as 'thought.' Thought is different both to meaning and to what is behind any particular behaviour. As he wrote "it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its condition, and its goals" (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984, p. 117). For Foucault "[t]hought is freedom in relation to what one does" (ibid).

Again resonating with his interest in problematizing the subject, Foucault chose experience as a central form of thought for his studies. He was aware of thought's unique features: its recursive nature (thought acting upon itself; man thinking man) and its constant tension with truth for experience needs 'historically verifiable facts,' yet it constitutes a 'fiction' – the self – "that doesn't exist before and will exist afterwards" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 243). This clarification hints at the incipient signs of the transformative potential that Foucault saw in the use of thought.

6.4.2 A critical history of thought

> A critical history of thought would be an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject to object are formed or modified, insofar as those relations constitute a possible knowledge [*savoir*]. (Florence, 2000, p. 459).

Once more, the recursive nature of Foucault's investigations can be appreciated in the above quotation. The folding of thought is clear: thought investigating the historical presentation of thought. As indicated, this recursivity was critical for Foucault: "the object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so, enable it to think differently" (1992, p. 9). As with the laughter, such recursivity – a recursivity that afforded him a type of ironic position

vis-à-vis his work – was already present throughout his reference to Velasquez' painting of *Las Meninas* (2004b, chapter 1).

Yet, and consistent again with his notion that the self is a by-product of the knowledges that (in)form it, Foucault's critical position changed through time in accordance with the focus of his investigations. The following is a brief description of the critical positionings that Foucault articulated in each of the stages defined in the prior section.

6.4.2.1. Archaeological investigations of knowledge formations

While Foucault's focus was on knowledge formations as articulations of discourses, the critical emphasis was on the archaeological investigation of historical discontinuities within such formations. The aim of critical enquiry during this period was to create disruptions to the overemphasis on continuities present in a positivist (and progressive) approach to science and its correlated emphasis on human consciousness (Foucault, 1968, p. 301). Foucault's emphasis was to avoid getting caught in the use of unreflective synthesis. He achieved this by developing the archaeological method that opened up to inspection both subjects and objects. Thought was used to explore thought and its limits.

This study of discontinuities is strategic in nature. Foucault did not critique the value of science as an analytical tool as long as such knowledge was aware of its located nature: "[t]here is an illusion that consists of the supposition that science is grounded in the plenitude of a concrete and lived experience [… b]ut it is equally illusory to imagine that science is established by an act of rupture and decision […] of a reason that founds itself by its own assertions" (Foucault, 1968, p. 330-1).

The major targets of Foucault's critique at this stage were the triumphalism of a pervading "transcendental narcissism" (1976b, p. 224) and a positivism in science where "the anonymous discontinuity of knowledge was excluded from discourse and thrown out into the unthinkable" (1968, p. 333).

6.4.2.2. Genealogical orientations in the study of discursive practices

In the next phase of his work, through his investigations of power and of power's interaction with knowledge formation, Foucault became increasingly aware of the totalizing and silencing effect of prevalent knowledges over people's subjectivity. With his studies on the emergence of biopolitics and his later appreciation of the insights of the Frankfurt school[66], he also became aware of how "the formation of the great systems of knowledge has also had the effects and functions of enslavement and domination" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 291). This led him "to thoroughly re-examine the postulate according to which the development of knowledge constitutes a guarantee of liberation" (ibid).

Foucault's response to this nuanced realisation was the development of an equally nuanced critique: thought was used not only to explore thought but also to define tactics. Archaeology needs a strategic purpose. Foucault used a transformed Nietzschean term – genealogy – to refer to this dimension of critique. For Foucault, genealogy determined the purpose of the archaeological investigation (1983b). Genealogy is "the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge

[66] Later in his career, Foucault came to appreciate the different evolution that post-Kantian ideas had in France and in Germany: where in the former it took the form of a "philosophy of science", the latter saw the emergence of a tradition of critical thought, mostly known as the Frankfurt School. Despite Foucault's work has significant differences with the Frankfurt School, Foucault saw value in their work. He commented that, should he had known of them earlier, he would have avoided a lot of 'fatigue' in his investigations (Foucault and Raulet, 1983, p. 455).

tactically today" (1976a, p. 22). It aims to oppose the effects of centralizing powers and totalizing (i.e. normalizing) discourses. It is "work at the grass roots, with the people directly affected, restoring their right to speak" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p.288).

Genealogy moves counter to science[67] by trying to undo some of the effects of its centralizing processes. In many ways it works as a resistance. Foucault's emphasis was on "the local character of criticism" (1976a, p. 20-1). His critique pointed to an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production, "whose validity was not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of truth" (ibid). Needless to say, there is not one genealogy but a multiplicity of genealogies aiming to reactivate an equal multiplicity of local knowledges.

This tactical dimension of critique requires a change in the role of the intellectual: from a 'universal' intellectual whose role is the expression of 'the universality of a just law' to a 'specific' one who occupies a position in the battle of truths constantly present in any society. His position was to be oriented towards establishing alliances and working with groups of people whose knowledges have been subjugated and/or silenced (Foucault et al., 1976, p. 126-133).

6.4.2.3. The care of the self and practices of freedom

As mentioned in the prior section, Foucault found himself increasingly locked in the analysis of power relations where the subject was perceived only as the result of subjugating knowledges and practices. His escape from this impasse was through a general re-orientation of his work; a reorientation that contextualized techniques of

[67] It is only in this sense that genealogy is 'anti-science.'

domination vis-à-vis 'technologies of the self' (1980b, 1982d, 2005, 2010, 2011, Foucault et al., 1984b).

This reorientation led to the identification of a set of techniques for the government of the self by the self. Foucault used the notion of *care of the self* to refer to this practice. This care was "understood as an experience, and thus also as a technique elaborating and transforming that experience" (1981, p. 88). The subject no longer presented itself as a 'docile body' but was now a site of problematization, a site where the self transformed itself – 'cared for itself' – thus constructing for itself a certain subjectivity independently from societal dictum. This represented thought folding within itself (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 92) and asserting an ultimate creative role which was not unaware of what was social, yet established its own parameters.

This was not a process of liberation but of *practices of freedom* (Foucault et al., 1984b. p. 433, Foucault and Fontana, 1984, p. 452) that referred to the disciplined application of oneself in the development of certain capacities and knowledges that will constitute one's own subjectivity.[68]

As Deleuze commented, this was an issue of inventing ways of being according to "*optional rules* […] that can both resist power and elude knowledge" (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 92) and that "make existence a work of art, rules at once ethical and aesthetic that constitute ways of existing or styles of life (including even suicide)" (Deleuze and Eribon, 1986, p. 98). This detached and ironic engagement with one's self, represented for Foucault the ultimate expression of thought folding upon itself.

[68] Practices of freedom are different to liberation, which assumes a disruption of oppressive forces and a restoration of an essential state of internal harmony.

6.4.3 Kant's '*Was ist Aufklärung?*'

> *Aufklärung* [Enlightenment] was made into the moment when philosophy found the possibility of establishing itself as the determining figure of an epoch, and when that epoch became the form of that philosophy's fulfilment. […] Reading philosophy in the context of a general history and interpreting it as the principle of decipherment of any historical sequence became simultaneously possible. So the question of the 'present moment' becomes for philosophy an inquiry it can [sic] longer leave aside […] Two centuries after its appearance, *Aufklärung* makes a comeback – as a way for the West to become aware of its present possibilities and of the freedoms it may have access to, but also as a way to question oneself about its limits and the powers it has utilized. Reason as both despotism and enlightenment." (Foucault, 1985, p. 467-70)

Practices of freedom should not be understood as merely individualistic and acontextual practices. They are forms of constituting and being in communities. This point becomes clear when reading a parallel line of enquiry in Foucault's writing during this time. Foucault showed an increasing interest in what appeared to be a 'minor text' of Kant: *Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784)[69] This text "ultimately came to exemplify for Foucault a manner of doing philosophy which could well serve as a model for his own efforts" (Schmidt and Wartenberg, 1994, p. 303). In this paper, Kant defined *Aufklärung* as an exit of a state of immaturity of humankind and a move towards autonomy in one's thought. That is, a state where humankind no longer relied in an external source (the King or God) to decide what to do but had the courage to think for itself.[70]

Consistent with Foucault's changes in orientation, his reading of Kant's text also changed through time. Initially (1978b), he carried out a genealogical reading of the text where *Aufklärung* was considered "the movement through which the subject gives itself

[69] Foucault had a long interest in Kant that started with his secondary thesis, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology* (2008b).
[70] Kant used *Sapere Aude* which he then translated as "dare to know."

the right to question truth concerning its power effects and to question power about its discourse to truth. In this reading, critique will be the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility" (1978b, p. 386). In a second reading (1986) he focused on the governance of one's self through the becoming aware of one's own present; "a present-ness which it interrogates as an event, […] and in which it is to elicit at once its own *raison d'être* and the foundation of what it has to say" (1986, p. 89).[71] With this reading, Foucault transformed *Aufklärung* into an attitude towards life; an attitude that is defined by its self-fashioning in relation to what is present. His third reading (1984b) completed these ideas by asserting that *Aufklärung* needs to be considered both as a process in which men participate collectively (through their alignment into current regimes of truth) and as an act of courage to be accomplished personally. In this reading, *Aufklärung* was an attitude towards life that represents "a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom, an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it" (Schmidt and Wartenberg, 1994, p. 301).

6.5 Folds in thought

> The thing is, his thought consists of tracing out and exploring one dimension after another in a way that has its own creative necessity, but no one dimension is contained in any other (…) And what is he talking about? About a relation of force to itself (whereas power was a relation of a force to other forces), about a 'fold' of force. (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 92)

[71] Foucault signals this moment as the moment of emergence of the two main critical traditions in the West: an "analytic of truth" and an "ontology of the present and of ourselves" (Foucault, 1983a, Schmidt and Wartenberg, 1994).

One final comment should be made on Foucault's trajectory. When looking at Foucault's works, there is a tendency to focus on his theoretical shifts, failing to understand that the shifts were not discontinuities but emerging new plateaus – new dimensions – in his thought; dimensions that emerged from creating new spaces in his explorations. Such dimensions, although discontinuous from others, are not in opposition but complement each other. This juxtaposition of the continuous with the discontinuous through the reflective and, at the same time, recursive nature of his work is what makes Foucault's work both elegant and potent. At the same time, these folds are extremely instrumental in helping Foucault effectively articulate a new corpus for critical analysis. In a figurative way, they provide its solidity (a body) and, perhaps more importantly, a foundation.

There are numerous foldings in Foucault's work some of which have been marked through the chapter. There are two 'abstract' folds that are worth special mention. First, there is the fold that arises from Foucault's choice of object for analysis. Foucault focuses his archaeological investigations on a very specific set of knowledges: "only those in which the subject himself is posed as an object of possible knowledge" (Florence, 2000, p. 460). It is this folding that allows a fundamental problematization of the subject as a 'transcendental object' thus deeply questioning the truth claims of positivism in the human sciences. A second fold relates to the section just covered: the role and scope of critique. For Foucault, the transformative role of critique "could not take place except by means of a working of thought upon itself" (1984a, p. 201). Equally, the scope of critique needs to be conceived as "a whole social project, [that involves] a work within and upon the very body of society" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p. 288).

It would be an error to think that such 'foldings' are simply rational processes, yet another method in his already rich archive of conceptual tools (archaeologies, genealogies and problematizations). As Deleuze pointed out (Deleuze and Eribon, 1986), these foldings in Foucault's work were usually experienced as significant crises in Foucault's life. Perhaps like his laughter, they refer us back to a more fundamental 'vitalism,' to "a play of forces along a line of life and death that is always folding and unfolding, tracing out the very limit of thought" (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 91). The recursivities that we see in Foucault's writing are not an exercise of pure rationality, but a disciplined search – a search described by some as 'ascetic' – that extended beyond reason and that constitutes not a text but a self-fashioning of life. And here lies perhaps the aesthetics of his work, for he not only 'thought' human life, but lived theory humane-ly.

6.6 Some concluding remarks

> In a dialogue written at the end of the second century after death, Lucian presents a certain Hermotimus who walks mumbling in the street. One of his friends, Lycinus, sees him, crosses the street, and asks him: "what are you mumbling about?" And the answer comes: "I am trying to remember what I have to tell to my master". And through the conversation between those two, Hermotimus and Lycinus, we learn that Herotimus has been visiting his master for twenty years, that he is nearly ruined by the very high costs of those precious lessons and we learn that Hermotimus may need twenty years more to arrive at the end of his training. But we learn also what those lessons are about: Hermotimus is taught by his master how to take care of himself in the best possible way. [laughter]
>
> I am sure that none of you is a modern Hermotimus [laughter], but I hold the bet that most of you have met at least one of those guys who nowadays regularly visit a kind of master who takes their money from them [laughter] in order to teach them how to take care for themselves. [laughter & clapping]

> But fortunately enough, I have forgotten either in French, in English or in German, the name of those modern masters. In antiquity, they were called philosophers. [laughter] (Foucault, 1983b, at 2:53 to 5:03)

The next chapter develops connections between the work of Foucault and Bateson. However, before leaving this chapter and beginning the next task, I will offer some final reflective comments. The analysis of Foucault's thought in this chapter started with his laughter and it seems almost poetic to finish it pointing to the laughter of his audience and the laughter of the present writer. This is not a merely sentimental exercise but one that offers a fundamental affirmation of life.

Of equal significance, the chapter started talking about the inevitability of studying Foucault because of his investigations on madness and other social abnormalities and it finishes by pointing to Foucault's later investigations into practices of freedom. Although the former are the more widely known aspects of Foucault's work, the latter investigations are of more relevance to the ethical practice of psychotherapy.

Almost like the (Gogolian) child who shouts what everybody else in the kingdom could not dare to say, that the emperor had no clothes on, Foucault articulated – made visible – the web of power relations that constitute not only the subjectivities but also the games of truth that are constantly and insidiously incorporated as 'one's own' and, in doing so, continue a state of 'immaturity' as citizens where one's autonomy is relegated to a banal exercise of obeying invisible authorities.

Foucault's vocabulary and, perhaps more importantly, his own trajectory to free his own thought, provide an example and a language – that is, provide conceptual tools – to understand actuality so that, rather than getting caught in endless dreams of liberation, an engagement with practices of freedom could take place. Such practices have no clear

and delimitating contour; they are contingent on the archaeological territory in which people are born and live. They are recursions – as Deleuze explained – of mastery and they require a certain discipline to be exercised upon one's self. As practices, they require the truth-teller to be aware of the messages he constantly receives regarding what constitute his nature and which is the most healthy and/or virtuous manner to 'achieve one's true potential.' Such messages are endless and relentless, being communicated not only – as Foucault warned – from scientific knowledges [*connaissance*] in the already overpopulated human sciences, including the educational and judicial structures and technologies but, perhaps most importantly and insidiously in our current times, through the media and the extremely productive (as well as seductive) 'popular culture.'

But perhaps, what is most important about such practices of freedom is that they *make us laugh*… This is a different laughter to the laughter that opened this chapter and that defined a continuing thread in Foucault's critical position. Instead of the laughter which Foucault often called upon – a strategic laughter that unveils the monstrosities of everyday life – the laughter that the practices of freedom call upon is the laughter that reflects Spinoza's passion of joy; a laughter that constantly and relentlessly confirms and affirms our presence on this earth.

Chapter 7 – The birth of a new type of knowledge: Archaeological investigations of discourse and (human) life

> When [Foucault's vision was] first articulated, a certain optimism was in evidence, a slim commitment to the possibility of making reason whole again, of curing its deformities. But taking Derrida's critique as metonymic of a descending cultural gloom, the patina of optimism was scoured from the surface of Foucault's thought. Instead of seeking continually to reincorporate otherness of whatever form into the sameness of – let us admit it – a Utopian reason beyond our own, Foucault turned (after celebrating, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the death of his own barely articulated hopes) to a politics without absolute solutions and to a pragmatic creed of resistance and survival. (Boyne, 1990, p. 85-6)

As explained in the previous chapter, Foucault used laughter to navigate the anxiety ridden landscape of human existence and uncover the monstrosities that are part of the exercises of reason in the West. In this context, his use of laughter was only of value inasmuch it allowed his audience to hold out "a little longer" in the face of the anxiety before veiling it again under a misguided sense of civility. This function, of holding one's view vis-à-vis the monstrosities that people insidiously engage with in the name of a certain civility, is a critical and reflective function that Foucault continually supported through his writing; a function he believed has great significance in terms of the lives that are constructed by the social.

Foucault was an acute observer of 'the little lies' in which we all participate to keep the Western apparatus of (un)reason functioning. His writings have had significant heuristic value within the social sciences. In this context, the attempt to capture the work of Foucault in one chapter can be seen as an example of the monstrosities that Foucault used with his strategy of laughter.

Equally open to critique is the attempt to establish an unambiguously positive program out of his work. As Luepnitz insightfully comments, "Foucaultian explanation – and post-structural explanation in general – is negative" (1992, p. 282). This is a difficulty that Foucault was well aware of as explained in the last chapter. Yet, as also indicated, it was in his later investigations that he started to elucidate a positive project:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger. (Foucault, 1983c, p. 256)

It is within this light that the present author has sought an alternative reading of Foucault to that carried out by narrative therapy.[72] Such a reading can only become tolerable because it affords connections with the critical potential in Bateson's work and his legacy in the field, engaging in a more reflective way with the clinic.

With this purpose in mind, the next two chapters have been organized according to the following scheme. Having established the limitations in the reading of Bateson by Social Constructionism [SC] approaches (including narrative therapy) in Chapter 4, this chapter starts by laying out the appropriation of Foucault's ideas in the field and evaluating the extent in which such a reading holds true to Foucault's own project. This is a concrete way to engage with Foucault's ideas as well as an opportunity to engage in more detail with the concerns articulated in section 4.4. With these clarifications in place, the chapter then interrogates Bateson's project in light of the three main referential axes identified in Foucault's work. This exploration will provide the foundations for the next chapter (Chapter 8) which discusses the productive encounter of these two thinkers in, what the present author has termed using Deleuze's conceptualisations, the Bateson-Foucault *assemblage.*[73] This exploration will be carried out with a particular focus on the implications of Foucault's later work on the Enlightenment vis-à-vis science and the social, and the connections with his later interest on technologies of care of the self. Chapter 8 finishes with some critical reflections on the practice of clinical work, with particular reference to family therapy.

[72] Although this project is not fuelled by an opposition to current narrative readings of Foucault's project, as the chapter progresses it will become clear that this reading constructs a significantly different positioning of Foucault within systemic practice.
[73] This Deleuzian concept will be discussed in sections 9.3.2.2 and 10.2.2.12.

7.1 The uses of Foucault in family therapy

> Foucault's insights were not caught by family therapy (which, as a theoretical model, is affected by a strong Anglo centrism) until more than twenty years later, through the work of Michael White. (translation by present author, Bertrando and Toffanetti, 2000, p. 135)

As with other disciplines within the social sciences, Foucault's name has had a presence in the field of family therapy, mainly in the later narrative and postmodern variations.

Although the narrative approach has established the most direct connection with the work of Foucault, this chapter will start this exploration by commenting on the way in which postmodern approaches, in a generic way, have referred to his work. Given the theoretical commonalities between SC and narrative as mapped in Chapter 4, the (mis)representations of Foucault's work present at this 'generic' level are mirrored in the more specific work of narrative.

7.1.1 Social constructionist (mis)readings of Foucault

> Post-modernism replaces the notion of unique and progressive history [underlying modernism] with 'genealogy' (Foucault, 2004b), which refers to a fluid process that welcomes even that which is scattered, marginal, alternative. The modernist concept of truth vanishes: there is no longer a truth with absolute value, but there are truths that have value and validity within their own local paradigm or, rather, within the community in which they are stated. (translation by present author, Bertrando and Toffanetti, 2000, p. 361)

Ii is of particular interest to look at the transformations that took place in Gergen's argument and references through the years. In his 1985 manifesto of social constructionism, Gergen referred to Watzlawick's work, making it clear that the latter's constructivism was part of this emerging movement. Reading between the lines, this was a gesture that not only included Watzlawick in the movement but also those in

radical constructivism and SOC. In Gergen's paper, there was however no reference to French philosophers, such as Lyotard or Foucault. This state of affairs was consistent with Hoffman's comment that SC was predominantly "an American project" (1990, p. 2).

By 1991-2, when *The Family Therapy Networker* published two issues on postmodernity, Gergen was the scholar identified as the spokesperson for this movement as well, mirroring the intimate association that SC had in USA with postmodernity. In these and subsequent publications, Gergen's reference to Watzlawick and, in general, to matters 'cybernetical' had disappeared, reflecting the increasing divergence between these two traditions as stated by Hoffman in her 1990 paper. Yet the introduction of postmodernism opened SC ideas to French thought. References emerged in the writings of Gergen to Lyotard – *The Postmodern Condition* – and to Foucault – *The History of Sexuality vol. 1* and *Discipline and Punish*.

This is rather puzzling given that Lyotard himself made connections between postmodernism and cybernetics, as indicated earlier. As Lafontaine writes: "No great hermeneutic finesse is required to understand that Lyotard places [*The Postmodern Condition*] in direct line with the cybernetic revolution" (2007, p. 40).[74]

Focusing particularly on the use of Foucault's ideas, and consistent with the reading of Foucault's ideas by many American scholars, Gergen recounted on a fairly simplified understanding of Foucault's work. His ideas were understood by Gergen as "explorations of the relationship between knowledge (as a body of language and associated practices) and power and [as showing] his concern with the potential for

[74] Lyotard is better interpreted by von Foerster in the comments he did in the interview referred to in pages 98-9.

regimes of discourse to expand, engulf, and oppress." (1994a, p. 413, a similar reference in 2009, p.48). In line with this reading, and in a more direct relationship with clinical work, Anderson's use of Foucault was as someone who was "calling attention to and challenging the taken-for-granted and often invisible but pervasively influential social, political and cultural institutional structures and practices in which people live" (2010b, p. 10).

In terms of the three referential axes articulated in last chapter, this reading of Foucault makes three significant distortions. Firstly, it focuses only on two of the three referential axes, omitting entirely all references to Foucault's problematizations of notions of subjectivity and of the subject. Such an omission consolidates a (type of) phenomenological self as a default position for the subject. The self is not just left untouched by Gergen's reading, but it is also injected with a kind of optimism that conceives as possible a candid and naïve negotiability with the environment. In terms of clinical practice, this has translated into a replacement of the "tyranny of the expert voice" with some type of "appreciative conversation" (e.g., 2006, para. 58, and Anderson et al., 2008). This analysis shows no awareness that such a (phenomenological) subject is, according to Foucault's analysis, a specific product of late eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptual formations (2004b, part II). For Foucault, it is not the case that subjects construct discourses, but that discourse provides the specific condition of emergence for a subject. As Guilfoyle insightfully notes:

> While attention is given to therapy's socially situated nature (e.g. Anderson, 1997, 2001), there is nevertheless a failure to acknowledge the ways in which speakers are *positioned* in discourse, as opposed to 'choosing' a position. Power is made available to different people on the basis of their positioning within discourses that are *culturally and socially* – not individually – constructed, and which serve as a context for local practices. For example, medical discourses position doctors with

> more speaking entitlements, decision-making powers, and liaison links than their patients, regardless of the doctors' intentions…. If intentions do not exhaust the multiple ways in which power operates, then power is not something a therapist can simply choose to avoid. (2003, p. 336)

A second distortion Gergen makes relates to his reading of knowledge formation to emphasize his interest in a language-mediated reality. In such a reading, the powerful distinction that Foucault makes between *savoir* and *connaissance* disappears. Gergen's connection between knowledge and language allowed Gergen to move into a preoccupation with the use of language and narrative, but is at odds with Foucault's preoccupation with truth and truth-telling as will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, Gergen's reading also obscures Foucault's nuanced critical engagement with a more complex understanding of science.

Finally, a similar displacement takes place with Gergen's analysis of power. He writes:

> The view I wish to propose, and indeed which might be supported with alternative quotes from Foucault's capillary view of power, is that life within what we take to be the existing regimes is seldom unitary. Rather, regimes themselves are composed of variegated discursive practices, drawn from sundry contexts, ripped from previous ecologies of usage and stitched awkwardly together to form what - with continued usage and considerable suppression – is seen as a coherent view ("a discipline"). Ontologies and rationalities are thus only apparently and momentarily univocal; they harbor multiple tensions and contradictions even for those who dwell within. (Gergen, 2007, p. 6)

Gergen's position here is directly opposite to Foucault's project. Perhaps Gergen would have been able to appreciate this point if he had referred to other writings of Foucault, starting from *The Order of Things* (2004b, first published in English in 1966). Here Foucault is interested not in the fragmentations and inconsistencies of knowledge, but instead in what underlies such apparent inconsistencies of knowledge (e.g. between

disciplines): he is interested in the coherent and systematized order that allows for (different) interpretations to acquire meaning. Moreover, in terms of the differences between Gergen's and Foucault's notion of fragmentation, the ruptures that Foucault is referring to are from one specific order of categorizations to another; they are discontinuities in time and *between* discourses, not *within* a specific discourse.

There are also significant differences in terms of the effects in the clinic, in particular in its relation – its accountability – to the social. For Gergen – and for many who work clinically with ideas from social constructionism – much of the value that this orientation offers arises from its emphasis on an availability of a multitude of alternatives for meaning making; alternatives that, as Gergen indicated, are ever present in the complexity in which we live. These alternatives allow for the play in signification that is used constructively in therapy for the elaboration of alternative descriptions of the client's problems and life.[75]

There is a danger however with this position that returns us to Foucault's critique; a danger that Gergen himself is aware of. As he writes:

> But slowly […] it became clear that no 'serious discussion' was possible… that should all participants 'go postmodern' in this way, we would be reduced to an empty silence. The postmodern player exists, *after all*, in a *symbiotic* relationship with 'serious culture.' (emphasis added, Gergen, 1991b, p. 194, in, Bertrando, 2000, p. 92)

Gergen's insightful reflection here reflects on the subtleties and complexities inherent in these ideas. What is of substance in Gergen's comment is that it highlights the insidious dependency that these ideas have on prevalent societal and cultural practices; practices

[75] This is a position that resembles, in some respect, the insights of early cyberneticians in the field around the notion of *reframing*.

that SC, perhaps inconsistently, claims to transcend.[76] Particular reference is needed to Gergen's use of the notion of symbiosis which, ironically, is a biological notion. Symbiosis denotes a relationship between organisms that are not in competition but is mutually advantageous (Oxford dictionary, 2002, p. 3148). It is however unclear as to how is Gergen's take on postmodernity 'advantageous' to 'serious culture.' On the contrary, Gergen positions postmodernity almost as a recreational – perhaps even self-indulging – game of sorts that has little accountability to the survival and the quality of life of those who play it. In this respect, there is a need to consider the unpleasant prospect that perhaps, rather than symbiotic, the relationship that these ideas have with culture, and ultimately with the social, is better described as parasitic. The idea of a postmodern SC being a parasite denotes that, despite using some of the insights reached through the hard labour of the sciences – including the social[77] *but also* the biological and cognitive sciences – not only has SC not contributed to this project but it has also attempted to undermine it in a systematic manner.

Foucault's work does the opposite. By taking the (critical) formation of knowledge seriously, he pushes knowledge to its limits. Foucault does this however not by abdicating the value of searching for truth but by problematizing such activity so as to afford a critical play. Instead of an appreciation of (an apparent) multiplicity, what was important for Foucault was the affirmative (social) activity of "truth-telling"(2001). As a practice, truth-telling is not about optimism but assumes discomfort and risk. Foucault articulated an ethics that alerts us to the dangers of what appears innocent and positive, by focusing on practices that strategically balance popular and normative imperatives so

[76] Critique cannot be used here given Gergen's differentiating his position from this practice (1994b).
[77] In this context, it is interesting to note the reframing of Bateson's project as "meaning making" rather than as a particular type of science.

as to free society of fascist tendencies and to create space for engaging in life as a work of art. This point will be further discussed later in section 8.3.

There is a final comment on the uses of Foucault's ideas as read by Gergen, a comment that also relates to readings within the narrative approach readings. It has to do with the use of genealogy. Genealogy is a Nietzschean concept that Foucault explored further. Genealogy indeed refers us to a multiplicity of ways of reading a certain state of affairs. In Foucault's critical work, genealogy is a very precise concept that articulates a very precise practice: an archaeological investigation of the history of a certain order of things. Such practice is used strategically by Foucault to undermine a foundational attitude. It is not a 'general statement' of affairs but a laborious process of 'unearthing' – of un-sedimenting – actual (and dominant) practices by looking at their conditions of emergence and the transformations they have endured through time. Genealogy, for Foucault is a critical material practice, not a theoretical practice of alternative 'lenses' in a world open to endless opportunities. As such, it is intimately related to relevant contingencies that both give it meaning and out of which it acquires its critical force.

7.1.2 Foucault and narrative approaches

> Taking their cue from the ideas of Foucault [White and Epston] redefined therapy as helping people 're-author' their lives. (Hoffman, 2002, p. xvii)

> Discursive practices "are not purely and simply modes of manufacture of discourse." (Foucault, 1971, p. 12)

The name Foucault is intimately associated with White's ideas within the field. White asserts that narrative practice is directly related to "Foucault's thought on power and knowledge" (White and Epston, 1990, p. 1). In White and Epston's first published book – *Literate Means to Therapeutic Ends* (1989), which by 1991 was retitled to *Narrative*

instead of *Literate* – they proposed an interpretative clinical method that focused on the stories that people tell about themselves, in particular the effects that these stories have on their lives. As part of their framework, White and Epston developed a number of clinical techniques that focused on repositioning people through their understanding of themselves. These techniques included externalization, the search for unique outcomes and the use of letter writing. These were powerful and energizing new ideas that gained significant impetus amongst practitioners, especially those who already where concerned about traditional approaches to pathology, and especially within social work.

Narrative was clearly identified as part of the SC umbrella for many years, though not by White and Epston themselves. However, even though White and Epston did not refer directly to the work of Gergen, they shared a number of very important epistemological principles (e.g. Freedman and Combs, 1996, in particular chapter 2, Monk and Gehart, 2003, p. 21-2, and Beasley, 2001, p. 74). Very much like Goolishian and Anderson, they had been informed by the debates in the field and implicitly accepted the turn to a social construction of reality.[78] They also shared a common focus on addressing issues of power and control in therapy by critiquing the clinician taking an expert position in the therapeutic relationship, emphasizing instead respectful and experience oriented – as opposed to theory driven – descriptions.

In stark contrast with the conversational approach of Goolishian and Anderson however, and perhaps closer to the brief/solution focused approaches, White and Epston were significantly more active in structuring the session, though their emphasis was on challenging what they called internalized dominant stories of subjugations. They held a strong belief that therapy was neither a neutral nor a private activity. In line with

[78] It is interesting to note that White had written a piece on Bateson (1986) as well as other papers that are not cited in his later writings.

Foucault's and feminist ideas, they saw clinical practice as a political activity that needed to align with the politics of liberation through helping minorities and marginalized groups to have their own voice (Monk and Gehart, 2003).

Notwithstanding the clinical value of narrative ideas, from a theoretical point of view neither White nor Epston have articulated clear conceptual connections between their work and that Foucault. These articulations have been attempted by some of their students,[79] in particular Stephen Madigan (1992, 2011).

Madigan referred "specifically, [to] Foucault's analysis of the three modes of objectification of subjects and the inseparability of power and knowledge [and how] externalizing practice maps *naturally* onto Foucault's ideas" (emphasis added, 1992, p. 266). For Madigan, Foucault's ideas provided a frame to understand that "as a therapist, White acts to liberate persons from dominant knowledge and power practices" (ibid p. 277). Luepnitz' reply (1992) to Madigan's explanation was famous at the time and highlighted the tensions obscured in the connection between Foucault and White; tensions that start – within a Foucaultian framework – with the idea that such a connection could be seen as 'natural' and unproblematic.

Luepnitz' critique was joined by others (e.g. Fish, 1993) and it is unfortunate that, once again, neither White nor Epston were willing to engage in a constructive theoretical dialogue around these problematizations.[80] For the purposes of this thesis, the major limitation of a narrative view of Foucault is that its focus in the reading of Foucault's project was limited, if not reductionist in terms of reading him according to only some of his referential axes. Although to a lesser degree than Gergen, their reading also led to

[79] This is a practice that is, in itself, problematic in terms of the mystifying effects it has of the authors.
[80] Instead, White chose to be more cautious and declared that his was a 'free' interpretation of academic theory (White, 1991, p. 27).

a number of distortions in the translation of Foucault's ideas into clinical practice, distortions that turned Foucault into a representative of a humanism of sorts rather than the author of a new critical methodology of discourse and discursive practices.

There are two distortions that merit particular clarification. First, there are distortions in relation to the subject. Although the notion of re-authoring addresses the subject as open to problematization, the nuanced description carried out by Foucault of power-knowledge dynamics vis-à-vis the subject is simplified into a claim assuming that the effects of power are only negative inasmuch as they are oppressive and coercive to the subject. Again, as with Gergen, one needs to be aware that these were common (mis)readings of Foucault's claims; (mis)readings that Foucault himself felt the need to correct at different times. In relation to power being only negative, he clarified:

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (Foucault et al., 1976, p.120)

And regarding power being equated with coercion, he clarifies:

> We should not understand the exercise of power as pure violence or strict coercion. Power consists in complex relations [that] involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies. (1980b, p.182)

An extension to these (mis)readings is the idea that liberation is possible and should be at the center of therapeutic work. For Foucault, as indicated earlier, liberation is a nostalgic utopia that has little relation with the actual practices of care of the self. It is in this latter concept that the second distortion takes place. As Luepnitz well pointed out, there is a confusion in narrative ideas between the Foucaultian concept of subject and a

humanistic notion of person. Expanding on the clarifications already mentioned, the Foucaultian subject is not one that has a transcendental identity, with a sufficient degree of agency so as to enable him to make 'independent' decisions. Instead, the Foucaultian subject is in an ongoing struggle to create a space of (critical) distance from the unique knowledge-power conditions that not only saw its emergence but also maintain its ongoing identity. A Foucaultian subject could not 're-author' his/her life; instead such a subject has the infinite and impossible task of engaging in ethical practices of self-care, practices that paradoxically will take him to profoundly question the ready-made assumptions of individualization available in any culture.

The 're-authoring' that Foucault would be supporting – if such a term could be ever envisaged in his project – would not be experienced as 'empowering' but would be counterintuitive to such feeling in many ways. As he wrote:

> [T]he political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries. (1982c, p. 336)

7.2 Reading Bateson through Foucault

> Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. (ibid)

Perhaps the most unfortunate distortion that has taken place in the reading of Foucault's ideas in family therapy, has been the use of his ideas to articulate a rigid schism

between postmodern/poststructural ideas and the rich conceptual tradition of cybernetics.

There are however recent developments in the field of cultural studies that suggest different connections between Foucault, Bateson and cybernetics, connections that have significant heuristic value in terms of overcoming the present schism. This research (e.g. Lafontaine, 2007, Liu, 2010) looks at the ways in which the insights of cybernetics influenced the working of French thought to the extent that the two domains of conceptual work need to be considered as being intricately connected as well as being powerful allies within a larger critical project.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on a similar process of interrogating these connections, yet it will do so from a particular perspective: rather than general statements regarding French thought and cybernetics, the focus will be on how Foucault's insights could add to the understanding of Bateson and his (scientific) legacy.

This exploration has been organized through themes that were of relevance to Foucault. Thus the next section looks at the value of establishing a critical relationship with one's self – that is, of the modes of subjectivations that are available to us in current systems of governmentality – and the productive effects of such a gesture. This consideration will then be followed with an exploration of Foucault's main referential axes as they were described in the last chapter.

7.2.1 'Straying afield of oneself'

> Until the publication of *Steps* (Bateson, 1973), Gregory must have given the impression, even to his strongest admirers, of taking up and then abandoning a series of different disciplines; sometimes he must have felt he had failed in

> discipline after discipline. Lacking a clear professional identity, he lacked a comfortable professional base and a secure income. (Bateson, 2000a, p.viii)

Reference was made early in the previous chapter on the importance that living in another country had for Foucault. In line with this, May centered his reading of Foucault's work on the need to "stray afield of ourselves" (2006). In choosing this focus, May makes a direct reference to Foucault:

> [T]the object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently. (Foucault, 1992, p. 9)

As explained, Foucault's later research was about those (limit) experiences that enable individuals to stray of the dominant rules and regulations that define a sense of identity within their communities. In this context, such "straying afield of ourselves" is an act of resistance that is central to becoming a citizen in an enlightened society.[81]

In many ways, Bateson's life and his legacy are a good example of this point. Bateson's straying outside himself was not a theoretical/cognitive process only, nor was it one that was fully conscious or self-engendered. His trajectory was rather the effect of a constellation of contingencies and personal engagements that culminated in a powerful intellectual and critical project. For Bateson – and resonating with his admiration for William Blake – a tear is an intellectual thing (Bateson, 1970a, p. 438-9).

For Bateson, theory and thought are intimately connected with life and living: with a body making sense of life. Perhaps due to the family tragedies discussed in Chapter 2, Bateson had the opportunity to look at an alternative discipline of study. Bateson left behind the comforts – the knowledge and the familiarity – he had in biology to study

[81] The relevance for the clinic of Foucault's work on the Enlightenment will be discussed in the next chapter.

anthropology. Furthermore, and again mixing theory with life, meeting Margaret Mead meant he left the familiarity and security of Cambridge to establish himself as an academic in a different continent. In this new environment, Bateson did not secure a continuous academic position, a circumstance that led him to be continually negotiating access to funding. Although frustrating at many levels, this distance from a traditional academic position could be seen as having a strategic effect in allowing him to (re)engage with biological discourse in a more complex and productive way.[82] In turn, this (re)engagement with biology allowed him to articulate an alternative theoretical model for anthropology and, at it became evident, for other social sciences as well. As indicated earlier, since early in his studies Bateson was not satisfied with the state of knowledge in social sciences; a knowledge he felt was full of 'dead ends.' It was this problematization of the social sciences that was the background for his interest in what cybernetics had to offer.

Another example of this process of straying outside normal conventions is found in the way in which Bateson also strayed outside the limits of prevalent beliefs in psychiatry when developing his ideas in the clinical field. Bateson was clear that he had to work out different strategies in his search for an alternative understanding. He recruited into his team people who came from disciplinary fields that were different to psychiatry, limiting psychiatric presence to only one of its members.[83] It can be argued that this was a conscious strategy to maintain (a cautious?) distance from dominant ideas and practices in the field. It could even be argued that locating himself in California – away

[82] Maturana had a similar set of circumstances when he decided to stay in Chile after the Coup instead of returning to the USA to continue his career in neurophysiology.
[83] In his first team, he included a registrar – a training psychiatrist – rather than a psychiatrist with significant experience. When Jackson was later included, he was kept by Bateson at a 'respectable' distance. This might have helped in the schism between the Palo Alto research group and the MRI.

from the dominance of psychoanalysis on the east coast of the USA was also a perhaps unintended part of this 'strategic positioning.'

7.2.2 Three referential axes of enquiry

> Forms are totally necessary if we are to understand both the freedoms and the rigidities of living systems. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 166)

Through straying afield of himself Bateson had, like Foucault, the space to explore new theoretical conceptualizations. It is this positioning that led to the inclusion of both Bateson and Foucault within the porous definitions of postmodern social constructionism. Setting aside the inherent problems with such inclusion discussed earlier, it is nonetheless accurate that traditional conceptualizations were significantly problematized by Bateson and Foucault. Unlike Foucault however, Bateson's was not 'discourse' but 'science' oriented, a difference that allows the emergence of interesting connections.

I will now proceed to explore Bateson's project in light of the referential axes used by Foucault so to articulate points of encounter and differences between these authors.

7.2.2.1 Problematizations of the self and the subject[84]

> It would be incorrect to believe (through an *illusion of experience*) that there are regions of domains of things which present themselves spontaneously to an activity of idealization and to the work of scientific language. […] In fact, knowledge [*savoir*] determines the space in which science and experience can be separated and situated one in relation to the other. What the archaeology of knowledge places out of bounds is thus not the possibility of diverse descriptions to which scientific

[84] 'Self' and 'subject,' as concepts, have differences that partly refer to philosophical distinctions between American and European ways of conceptualization. For the pedagogical purposes of this section, the focus is on the similarity they have in terms of the positioning of the individual in a discursive matrix; a positioning that affords him/her to have a privilege type of knowledge.

> discourse can give rise; it is, rather, the general thematic of 'understanding'[which is] tantamount to the denegation of knowledge [*savoir*]. (Foucault, 1968, p. 330-2)

> I suggest that the delimitation of an individual mind must always depend upon the phenomena we wish to understand or explain. Obviously there are lots of message pathways outside the skin, and these and the message which they carry must be included as part of the mental system whenever they are relevant. (Bateson, 1970a, p. 433)

Perhaps counterintuitively to the common assumptions held in the field, the most distinctive and productive connection between Foucault and Bateson relates to their conceptualization of the subject. In stark contrast with traditional views, both Foucault and Bateson shared an understanding of the self as constructed, decentered and relational. They both viewed the self as a conceptual formation that emerges out of a larger field, thus questioning the notion of the individual as self-contained. Both of them also critiqued the notion that the self could have a spontaneous and full awareness of the dynamics in which (s)he participates. Through Foucault's insights into the archaeology of knowledge/power *dispositifs* and Bateson's fascination with Ames' perceptual trickery (1970a, p. 438), they both questioned the value and validity of what presents as spontaneous conscious experience. For them, consciousness (including its by-product, our experience of the world) was not the cause but the result of the operating of processes that are larger than such a self. Furthermore, for Bateson, this idea of the self being 'self-contained' was not just an epistemological error but the source of a significant amount of (actual) problems in the West, starting with the danger of arrogance of *hubris* (1970c).[85]

[85] *Hubris* will be discussed in more detail later in section 8.2.2.3 and also when Bateson's connections with Deleuze are discussed in Chapters 10 and 11.

Accordingly, for both Foucault and Bateson, the subject was empty of essence and had a form that would change according to its context. There are however important differences between their positions. Foucault's focus, as explained earlier, was in the constitution of the subject in relation to knowledge formations and the dynamics of power that constituted the social. More in line with an ecological approach however, the subject for Bateson was conceived as a part of a larger biological organization – what he called *mind* – rather than being a social/institutional production. Bateson's notion of self included humans – inasmuch as they participate in the workings of a mind – but extended more widely. With this distinction, Bateson stood closer to Deleuze's concept of assemblage as it will be discussed in later chapters.

7.2.2.2 Problematizations of truth and knowledge

> [T]o bring into existence the dimension of knowledge [*savoir*] as a specific dimension is not to reject the various analyses of science; it is to unfold as broadly as possible the space in which they can come to rest. (Foucault, 1968, p. 327)

> 'Structure' is a structuring word, and life is normative. To this extent, life resembles many religious. It is, however, no always so that the norms that life seeks are the same as those religion would offer. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 156)

Both Foucault and Bateson were aware of the need for formalization, that is, for the presence of an order that provides coherence and congruence to life. Both saw order as inevitable. This awareness however does not assume the existence of a specific – not even a stable – order. The ideas of Whitehead and Russell on logical types (1910) and the later discussions by Spencer-Brown and Varela (1975) are of relevance at this point. As a formal principle, the formalization of logical types applies to both the biological and the social order. For Bateson, order was a requirement inherent to life itself, starting

with the organization of cells and moving up into more complex organizations. As he stated: "Creatural description is always hierarchical" (1970a, p. 432).

Similarly, the emphasis that Foucault put on discontinuities and ruptures was not to disqualify the notion of order but to problematize it: order was both necessary and contingent. Foucault's changed the name of his chair at the College de France – from "History of Philosophical Thought" to "the History of Systems of Thought" – to highlight a more fundamental organization of knowledge according to discursive principles. The relationship between *savoir* and *connaissance* is hierarchical, as is the organization within specific *connaissances*.

As Foucault said in the preamble to *The Order of Things*, such organization not only accounts for an ease to understand one's social order – an ease that often is mistaken as 'natural and obvious' – but also limits the possibilities to think otherwise. The knowledge that is experienced as part of specific discourse formations has limits that are not externally created but emerge out of its own organization.[86] The rupture in time between such orders and the emergence of alternative ones are equally perceived as deeply disquieting as Foucault also states.

These are insights that, for both Bateson and Foucault, support the need to accept diversity as core to life and the process of living at the same time as respecting the integrity of what is experienced as real and actual. These insights ultimately support the need to (re)cognize the laws of form inherent to the systems observed. This however is not a call for dismissing science and the knowledges produced by scientific practices. Bateson's and Foucault's critique is not against order in itself, but against the

[86] Maturana articulates a similar argument in biology in relation to the concept of structural determinism (2000).

imposition of a transcendental order that is alien to the living process at stake. Following the influence of Nietzsche on Foucault and, in the case of Bateson the atheism of his family of origin, one could articulate this point by expanding Nietzsche's claim: God is dead yet, perhaps even more than before, living needs to be accounted for.

It is in this context that Bateson saw great value in the studies of recursiveness as a central element for the understanding of emerging characteristics of living systems. Similar principles lie at the base of Foucault's interest in exploring truth-telling as part of civic life. The courage to tell the truth relates to corrections performed within a community to the practices of government. Truth-telling can be seen as a type of democratic cybernetic correction that requires citizens to have engaged in practices of care of the self and to have had the courage to tell the truth. This point will be further discussed in the next chapter.

There are however unsurprising differences between these authors. One core difference relates to their relationship with science and its truth status. Bateson believed his work was not only scientific but also closer to the truth' in a manner that Foucault would describe as pertaining to the "analytics of truth" (Foucault, 2001, p. 170). Bateson's critique of science was focused on the direction that science had taken. He was particularly vocal on the lack of concern that scientists and their communities had on the consequences a pursuit of increased control had on the subtler biological system in which such pursuit took place. In his critique, Bateson placed value on how science needed to be attentive to and responsive to issues relating to ecological sustainability, yet he did not engage in considerations on the strategic positioning of such knowledge within discursive practices. It is in the latter that Foucault's interest lied.

Reading Foucault's insights in the light of systemic theory provides the opportunity for a nuanced yet powerful extension of Haley's insights, in particular, of the uses of power by the therapist and of the conditions for such practices to support ethical (clinical) practices. Such a reading also provides an interesting entry to a powerful alliance between the ideas of Bateson and Foucault. As will become clear in the next chapter, this alliance could be better described as a Deleuzian encounter that shapes a Foucault-Bateson assemblage.

7.2.2.3 Problematizations of power

> Perhaps there is no such thing as unilateral power. After all, the man 'in power' depends on receiving information all the time from the outside. He responds to that information just as much as he 'causes' things to happen [...] but the *myth* of power is, of course, a very powerful myth and probably most people in this world more or less believe in it. It is a myth which, if everybody believes in it, becomes to that extent self-validating. But it is still epistemological lunacy and leads inevitably to various sorts of disaster. (Bateson, 1969b, p. 462-3)

> Foucault is well and truly in line with the cybernetic rupture. [His work] bears the mark of the Zeitgeist. Depoliticized, decentralized and totalized, the concept of power as developed by Foucault is strangely similar to cybernetic control. (Lafontaine, 2007, p. 36)

> It might seem as if there were a real Governor, but we find no trace of his being. (Chuang T'zu in Dell, 1982a)

Within the three Foucaultian referential axes, power is perhaps the one in which the ideas of Foucault and Bateson appear most at odds. Yet, this is an apparent distortion that is more a result of the historical (mis)readings as highlighted in Part I.

As indicated in the previous chapter, Foucault's analysis of power rejected traditional descriptions and focused instead on a relational model. Within such a model, power is

not something possessed and exerted by one individual. For Foucault, as already explained, power circulates across knowledge formations creating selves – identities – that recursively establish a variety of different relationships with each other and with themselves. In his understanding, power is intimately related to governability of both others and one's self. In this conceptualization of power only a subset of relationships are lineal relationships of coercion and control.

Such an analysis is synergic to Bateson's preoccupation with circularity in human behaviour and with his strong dislike of the emerging ideas around power within the field. Foucault's example of the *lettres de cachet* (Deleuze, 2000a, p. 28) stands in close proximity with Bateson's warning against lineal and hierarchical conceptualizations of control. This statement demands further clarification in light of the significant debates that took place in the field during the 1980s. In these debates, Bateson's concept of circularity was often (mis)read as Bateson condoning not only violence but also fundamental inequities in power distribution within society, in particular in relation to gender lines. Although the present author could not find any direct reference to Bateson on gender violence, there is extensive reference in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* to the pathologies in the Western mindset and the dangers of human *hubris*. These writings give an insight into a different way of reading his approach. *Hubris* refers to an arrogance that fools people in the assumption that power and control is something that could be possessed and exerted not only in relation to others, but also upon the self and the environment. For Bateson, this assumption of power is an extremely dangerous misconception that lies at the base of much damage in Western society.

For Foucault as well as for Bateson, the issue however is more fundamental and conceptual than the direct and concrete exertion of power over others. It relates to the

types of systems in which the subjectivities we inhabit become meaningful and the effects that such organisations have in life. As indicated, for Foucault, power was not necessarily 'evil' in itself. Power can be present both constructively and negatively; the former inasmuch as power is formative of discursive formations and the latter when it shapes in relationships of domination and subjugation. Similarly, Bateson was aware of the inevitability of order, and thus for hierarchies, in life but perceived as pathological the tendency in the West to engage in systems of organization that privileged relations of competition and domination of others and the environment.

The analysis of power offered by both Bateson and Foucault calls for a different way in which to evaluate its presence both in life and the clinic. It is not that power is per se an 'obstruction to dialogue' that needs to be 'excluded' from interactions (Guilfoyle, 2003, p. 334) but that there are certain modalities of engaging with power that are undesirable.[87] As such, power calls for an ethical stance in all human practices, including those within the clinic, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

7.3 Productive encounters

In line with Chapter 4, which traced the distortions that took place in relation to Bateson's project in the shift to SC, this chapter commenced with an investigation of distortions within SC in relation to Foucault's project. The clarifications offered here lead to an understanding that the readings of SC not only compromised the integrity of Bateson's work but also the insights of French theorists, in this case Foucault.

[87] This distinction is quite provocative since it might be seen as transcendental in nature. The present author owns this statement as being her own reading of these ideas in light of her deep conviction that certain practices of traditional understanding of power are, in effect, undesirable, e.g. dictatorships, the use of torture and fear in the population, with the contemporary examples of the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia and a naïve rhetorical use of 'defence from terrorism' to support different types of transgression of the civic limits by the powers of the state.

This chapter then proceeded to engage in an interrogation of the connections between Bateson and Foucault. This exercise has identified a number of significant connections between these authors within the three referential axes in Foucault's work. Out of these connections, and very much in line with Foucault's own trajectory, there is a further dimension where important insights can be established between Foucault and Bateson. These insights relate to the critical aspect of the work of scientist, and intellectuals in general, within society and the increasingly contested idea of the Enlightenment. It is in this dimension that a powerfully productive alliance can be sketched in terms of their projects, which is a topic for exploration in the next chapter.

Chapter 8 – The Foucault-Bateson assemblage: Cybernetics as an engagement in critical thought and (human) life as a sacred aesthetics requiring care

> It is the attempt to *separate* intellect from emotions that is monstrous, and I suggest that it is equally monstrous – and dangerous – to attempt to separate the external mind from the internal. Or to separate mind from body. Blake noted that 'A tear is an intellectual thing', and Pascal asserted that 'The heart has its *reasons* of which the reason knows nothing'. […] These computations are concerned with matters which are vital to mammals, namely, matters of *relationship,* by which I mean love, hate, respect, dependency, spectatorship, performance, dominance and so on. (Bateson, 1970a, p. 438-9)

Although belonging to different intellectual traditions, Bateson and Foucault were addressing similar issues. Bateson's study of cybernetics and his investigations on how to apply these insights into the social sciences was not just critical of traditional conceptualizations of science but also *became* critical of the effects that such traditions had on the wellbeing of life on earth and of humans within life's complex web. Resonating with Foucault's laughter, Bateson's work also referred back to the monstrosities humans have engaged with, in particular those associated with a Cartesian approach to science and the distortions that came from taking knowledge outside of context.

In their sensitivities towards the monstrosities of everyday life, they both were engaged in a reflexive attitude towards a knowledge of a different kind: in the case of Foucault it was *savoir* and, in Bateson, an ecology of mind. In line with Lyotard's assertion on the postmodern condition, their position required knowledge to be considered as information (Foucault and Trombadori, 1978, p.291); as information that is not stable but open to transformation and that is contingent on the conditions that saw its emergence. Consistent with Foucault's insights, this reflective use of information had effects not only in knowledge [*connaissance*] itself but also on the subjectivities and the politics called forth by such knowledge.

8.1 Truth-telling: Science, cybernetics and the Enlightenment

> For [thinkers following the general trend of scientific philosophy], the motive for scientific inquiry was the desire to build a comprehensive view of the universe which should show what Man is and how he is related to the rest of the universe. The picture which these men were trying to build was ethical and aesthetic. (Bateson, 1959b, p. 236)

> I wonder if one of the great roles of philosophical thought since the Kantian '*Was ist Aufklärung?'* might not be characterized by saying that the task of philosophy is to describe the nature of today and of 'ourselves today.' With the proviso that we do not allow ourselves the facile, rather theatrical declaration that this moment in which we exist is one of total perdition, in the abyss of darkness, or a triumphant daybreak, and so on. It is a time like any other, or rather, a time that is never quite like any other. (Foucault and Raulet, 1983, p. 449)

With the benefit of hindsight, and reflecting on Foucault's ideas today, what is most interesting about Foucault's project is his daring to (re)turn to the notion of Truth at a time when the world was exploring the meaning of a fully relative postmodernity. This is particularly relevant given his equal engagement with a substantial critique of the foundations of knowledge and of positivism within the fabric of Western thought. His daring connects with Kant's reading of the Enlightenment project with its motto *sapere aude* – dare to know.

Foucault's truth stands in significant contrast to current notions of truth however, in particular those held by and through standard views of science and popular culture, specifically the uncritical assumption that truth is something that holds through time and is external to the individual. Against this assumption, Foucault's sense of truth critically interrogates the authoritative ideas informing Western thought since what he calls "the Cartesian moment […] when it is assumed that what gives access to the truth, the condition for the subject's access to the truth, is knowledge (*connaissance*) and knowledge alone" (2005, p.17). What mattered for Descartes was one's ability to 'know' the things we experience. For Descartes, knowledge was a distinct type of activity that was separate from other human practices, an activity that had a privileged relationship with truth. Descartes referred to his new method as the 'analytic' style (Smith, 2010, para. 14); a method that is commonly considered to be the rational

foundation of the Enlightenment (Bristow, 2011). Foucault cut across this tradition however, problematizing Descartes' understanding of the Enlightenment by identifying the limits of truth as knowledge [*connaissance*] formations.

Foucault's later interest was instead of a different nature. Rather than truth as knowledge, he was interested in the "problem of the truth-teller, or of truth telling as an activity […] or as a role." (2001, p. 169) As he wrote:

> Th[e] problematization of truth has two sides, two major aspects. One side is concerned with ensuring that the process of reasoning is correct in determining whether a statement is true [and leads to] the 'analytics of truth.' And the other side is concerned with the question of the importance of telling the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth, we have the roots of what we could call the 'critical' tradition in the West. (Foucault, 2001, p. 170)

This critical tradition sees at its core "the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth." (ibid, p. 170). As a practice, truth-telling was already a social practice in classic Greece and provided the context for truth as knowledge. This complementary practice, Foucault argues, have been mostly left behind in Western traditions of science since the Cartesian moment. With Descartes, access to knowledge was decontextualized and made transcendental. This was a movement that had significant impact on social life. So when Foucault attends to the question of the Enlightenment, he does so attempting to return this reflective practice – of telling one's own truth – to a position of relevance in terms of civic life.

As discussed earlier, Foucault conceptualized both knowledge and experience as emerging out of the same act of observation. Similarly, he conceptualized the analytics of truth and the critical tradition of truth-telling as intimately and contingently

connected. For Foucault, these activities – truth and truth-telling – took place vis-à-vis each other, the latter being a reflective position on the former. In this context, his daring to (re)turn to truth is unique because of the unique recursivity that is implied in his subject of study: at one level, by his interest in knowing the conditions of knowing itself and, at another equally recursive level, by his interest in understanding what constitutes understanding *including* the subject that makes such interrogation.

It is in this recursive gesture – and its implications for the social – that a more intimate and productive alliance can be established between Foucault and Bateson. This alliance considers the ways in which Bateson's unique engagement with cybernetics – and his need to provide a useful education – relates powerfully not only with Foucault's general insights but also with Kant's comments on the Enlightenment. An interrogation of such an alliance will now proceed.

8.2 The Foucault-Bateson assemblage: (Second order) cybernetics as a reflective and relational science

> It cannot be said that Cybernetics or information theory is the philosophy or the psychology of learning, just as it cannot be said that what Lacan is doing, or what Levi-Strauss is doing, is the philosophy of psychoanalysis or of anthropology. It is instead a certain *reflexive* relationship of science with itself (Foucault and Badiou, 1965, p. 258)

The Foucault-Bateson alliance uses the insights established in relation to the commonalities and differences in their approaches to create a conceptual field – *an epistemic plateau* – that stands in contrast with Cartesian knowledge. Anticipating the future discussion on Deleuze, this alliance will be referred to as the Foucault-Bateson (FB) assemblage.

As an alliance, the FB assemblage provides a positive alternative to the sciences of man. This is a needed alternative as acknowledged by both Bateson and Foucault, with the former concerned with the dead-end nature of the social sciences and the latter powerfully arguing (1976b) that a 'human science' was an empty and entirely constructed category.

Taking Foucault's insights and concerns in line with Bateson's interest in developing a science of Creatura, it is possible to provide an alternative science in which the human condition could be understood not in isolation but as part of its ecology. Such an understanding does not rely on assumptions of a human essence but on a critical engagement with life; a particular type of engagement that affords the emergence of a human(e)[88] life.

In order to articulate these ideas further, a return to the three referential axes will be used so as to briefly discuss the critical and reflective connections between Bateson and Foucault that afford the emergence of the FB assemblage.

8.2.1 Knowledge as self-referential and a way to engage with an ecology of mind

> Self-reference is awkward: one may find the axioms in the explanation, the brain writing its own theory, a cell computing its own computer, the observer in the observed, the snake eating its own tail in a ceaseless generative process, Stubbornly, these occurrences appear as outstanding in our experience. Particularly obvious is the case of living systems. (Varela, 1975, p. 5)

As Varela says, "Self-reference is awkward" because it pushes to the limit, and then transgresses, the order that underlines the established knowledge formation in which it

[88] As indicated earlier, the distinction between human and human(e) will be discussed further when working with Deleuze's ideas, in particular in Chapter 11.

takes place. As he indicates, self-reference is the domain of paradoxes and runs counter intuitively to the order that defines the prevalent – and often hegemonic – state of affairs. As knowledge, it necessarily explores and articulates the reductions that were required for the establishment of such an order.

Cybernetics – especially the lineage of second order cybernetics – was productively aware of these loops and so was Foucault. Through the use of self-reference, both Foucault and Bateson transgressed the bounds of then current scholarship, setting forth an alternative set of expectations and demands. Foucault, on the one hand, introduced the world of discourse and the imperative to tell the truth so as to avoid fascism in thinking. Bateson, on the other, urged the questioning of the privileged status of humans– human *hubris* – in the ecology of mind so that society could deal responsibly with its environment in light of the effects of a triumphant yet unreflective technology.

Furthermore, and perhaps in a gesture that ironically humanizes the systemic paradigm, this proposed alternative – the FB assemblage – provides a certain substance to the human condition by embodying it not as a transcendental essence but as an effect of the workings of a larger field. What their alliance constitutes in terms of knowledge, is a specific (Batesonian) methodological double description that attempts to articulate, not a human essence, but the conditions of emergence for a human(e) condition – a gesture of human(e) life.

As a double description, it comprises on the one hand the work of Bateson on articulating the study of Creatura and of life as distinct from Pleroma and, on the other, Foucault's study of discourse and discursive practices. This analysis will include the ways in which Foucaultian discourse connects with Maturana's and Varela's notion of phenomenological domains within their theory of structural determinism (1984). As

such, the understanding of Maturana and Varela is perhaps the closest fit to Foucault's ideas within the field.

From this perspective, knowledge per se is not what is core to human(e) studies but a unique engagement that such knowledge facilitates with life; an engagement that is valued according to its ability to organize a sense of self/world that is harmonious with a larger ecology of mind.

8.2.2 The subject: The search of a (sustainable) self-referential mastery

> I am investigating that strange and quite problematic configuration of human sciences to which my own discourse is tied. I am analyzing the space in which I speak. (Foucault, 1968, p.311) …an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. In sum, it is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves. (Foucault, 1997, p. 179)

> Some Beauties yet, no Precepts can declare,
> For there's a Happiness as well as Care.
> Musick resembles Poetry, in each
> Nameless Graces which no Methods teach,
> And which a Master-Hand alone can reach.
> (Pope, 1711, lines 141 - 5)

As indicated on a number of occasions, for Bateson there was a need to control human arrogance. Foucault on the other hand, stressed the importance of transforming the self so as to escape the normativity imposed on the subject by established knowledge formations. In line with Deleuze's ideas as will be discussed in the next chapters,

Foucault advocated for the engagement in an aesthetic pursuit; a pursuit where humans have the responsibility for turning their lives into objects of art.

Although Foucault's gesture could be seen as antithetical to Bateson, his intent was in fact aligned to Bateson's inasmuch as they were both focusing on practices that call for a specific type of regulation: self-regulation. Notwithstanding the differences in their approaches, they both saw the task ahead for humans to be one of care and discipline: of humans acting on their own selves so as to engage with life in a different way. For Foucault, this difference had to do with avoiding the capture of one's subjectivity in practices of docility towards the state. For Bateson, the difference related to the need to stop unreflective technological damage.

A focus on the FB assemblage adds further depth to each of these descriptions by engaging with the effects of putting Foucault's and Bateson's individual emphases vis-à-vis each other. Such an apparatus then has a nuanced purpose for research and critical activity: Foucault's invitation to direct transformative efforts to balance the insidious tendencies towards social normalization resonating with Bateson's focus on engaging in ecologically sound practices.

Variations upon variations, these are recursions of mastery that aim to re-sacralise the earth on which humans live. This use of the sacred is not transcendental but immanent, establishing a covenant not with an external God but, in a self-referential gesture, with this earth in its multiplicity and complex balance. It is a covenant that supports the continual emergence of genuinely unique – thus unreproducible – forms of life; forms that are aware of their own as well as of their environment's fragility.

Bateson's choice of *Angels Fear* as the title for his last book acquires relevance here in a number of ways. His choice of title was a direct reference to a well-known English

dictum "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Bateson used it as a reminder of the dangers lying ahead of the human condition and the values that are – and should continue to be – sacred in life and human action. This dictum comes from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711). Pope's poem also included the quotation used at the beginning of this section alerting to the unique craft involved in developing a life-mastery. The 'Master-Hand' that Pope refers to is not one of a pre-defined class-driven master but is more akin to the mastery of skills developed by an artist. Pope's master-hand connects with the technologies of the self that Foucault was studying in his later years. Yet the specific type of mastery called for by a FB assemblage is of a different kind to the ones used in classic Greece. Given its recursiveness, a FB mastery turns into a type of paradoxical mastery that decenters the self that acquires such mastery: the subject works on the self so as to nurture a wider ecology of (Batesonian) mind.

One final remark worth considering in relation to self-mastery refers to its connection with the exercise of truth-telling, in particular, Foucault's work around the concept of *parrhesia*. He wrote:

> Parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses [candidly] his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life [or social standing] because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). (2001, p. 19)

The truth that the parrhesiastes – the teller of parrhesia – expresses is not a transcendental, God-given, truth but one that is his personal relationship to truth; a truth that is acquired through the exercise of practices of self-care. Further to being a truth that is personal, it is a truth that also serves a purpose within the community. Parrhesia emerges in Athens in a powerful context that anticipates the Enlightenment: "truth is no longer disclosed by the gods *to* human beings (as at Delphi), but is disclosed to human

beings *by* human beings" (Foucault, 2001, p. 38). This point takes us to the last axis for consideration.

8.2.3 Power and the political gesture of the Enlightenment

> *Aufklärung* is an attitude towards life [that represents] a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom, an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it. (Schmidt and Wartenberg, 1994, p. 301)

> I was offering my class the core notions of 2,500 years of thought about religion and science. I felt that if they were going to be doctors (medical doctors) of the human soul, they should at least have a foot on each side of the ancient arguments. They should be familiar with the central ideas of both religion and science. (Bateson, 2002, p. 6)

Bateson's training of the future (medical) doctors of the human soul resonates with Foucault's interest in the complexities associated with the question posed by Kant in terms of a critical engagement with the present, that is, with an attempt to engage meaningfully with the times one lives as one is living them. It (re)turns to the engagement with conceptual investigations and cultural practices of humans attempting to make sense of themselves, and of studies that attempt to look at life engendering life.

These confluences support the value of the FB assemblage as a discipline that studies a different type of governance: not transcendental but immanent forms of self-regulation. It is at this level that their most powerful critique of Descartes resides. Both Foucault and Bateson were aware that, notwithstanding the value of Descartes' ideas in the political gesture of the Enlightenment, there were also dangerous effects for Western knowledge. Reference has been made to the concerns that Foucault expressed about 'the Cartesian moment' as well to the deep concern that Bateson expressed about the effects

of Descartes' mind-body dualism. Intriguingly however, there is one area of Descartes' work that neither Foucault nor Bateson critically discussed, even though it is central to the work of the three of them. It refers to the fact that even when "Descartes' rationalist system of philosophy is foundational for the Enlightenment" (Bristow, 2011s, section 1.1), his "grounding of all scientific knowledge [relies on a] metaphysical knowledge of God" (ibid).[89]

Extending the insights of Descartes, the FB assemblage has the potential to support the revolutionary impetus implied in the Kantian Enlightenment by articulating further a type of knowledge that would support an understanding of life in its immanent and sacred dimension. Such a project would have its evaluative focus on the need for practices that establish the conditions of emergence for such sacred ecology.

The disappearance of a transcendental God does not erase but, on the contrary, makes central to any exercise of reason the profound and complex fragility of life and one's ultimate responsibility towards one's social and ecological community. Truth is no longer a mystery that is explicated by Gods – or by other types of herme(neu)tics – but is a material and social labour that is, as Maturana would claim, a labour of love: of engaging with others as genuine others in the conversation so as to create human(e) and sustainable spaces of existence.

Such spaces are not created through triumphal dreams of liberation but, as Foucault well identified, through practices of freedom that engage in the critical analysis of current dangers. The focus of this critical analysis, as May indicated, was the desire to change

[89] There is in this point an interesting connection between Descartes' theoretical composite – of objective knowledge and the existence of a transcendental God – and the conditions of emergence of American Pragmatism, where the Puritans settlers had to make sense of "the incommensurability of nature, its unavailability to the categories of description embedded in the language of the settlers." (Richardson, 2007, p. 1-2). It is in this connection where there is a difference between Foucault's project and the one of Gergen's SC.

what is intolerable so that it becomes tolerable (2006, p. 124). This is an infinite task of (re)construction. Practices of freedom do not "resolve" situations but make them liveable: they transform what has become desolate into human(e) and ecologically sustainable situations.

This orientation opens up a strong connection to the work of Deleuze and his constructivist interest to create concepts for "the people and the earths to come."[90] Before commencing the investigation into Deleuze's work however, it is important to consider the implications of the ideas discussed so far for therapeutic practice.

8.3 Therapy as ethical critical practice

> Each person has his or her own way of changing or, what amounts to the same thing, of perceiving that everything is changing. In this regard *nothing is more arrogant than wanting to impose one's law on others*. (emphasis added, Foucault, 1997, p. 136-7)

> What will it take to react to interfaces in more complex ways? At the very least, it requires ways of seeing that affirm our own complexity and the systemic complexity of the other and that propose the possibility that they might together constitute an inclusive system, with a common network of both self and other in the affirmation of the sacred. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 176)

Foucault's formulations on madness and abnormality point to the particular exercises of reason that create a type of schism between people, in particular, an exercise where those who experience these 'conditions' are treated by those who claim they don't. What Foucault was trying to highlight through these investigations was that, rather than such practices being therapeutic, they relate to practices of governability not of one's

[90] "The people and the earths to come" is a specific reference to Deleuze (and Guattari's) political (Parr, 2008, p. 48 and Watson, 2010, p. 175) and philosophical project (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 109) and constitute a central theme in this thesis. Deleuze's ideas will be discussed later in Chapters 9, 10 and 11.

self – of one's own presentation within the social – but of those who are 'different' from one's self and of moreover to practices of governability of one's own fears.

Bateson, on the other hand, entered the clinical field with optimism, partly because it was a new field of research for him. As indicated earlier however, he left the clinical field disappointed and even nauseated by the repetitive and institutional behaviours of all parties involved. Bateson's disgust at the monotony and predictability of the psychiatric/clinical system was similar to his concerns – when considering bio-ecological systems – with large scale crop cultivation. His concerns regarding these practices were ultimately related to the effects that such practices have in terms of reducing ecological diversity.

Bateson's concerns connect with Foucault's in ways that are familiar to our field through Cecchin's distinctions between therapy as therapeutic and therapy as social control (1987). Cecchin's later interest in irreverence (Cecchin et al., 1993, Nichterlein, 2005) offered a way forward to this dilemma. Yet his ideas stopped short of the articulation offered by Bateson (and Foucault). It is true that irreverence is a call for therapy to engage with and nurture the multiplicity proper to life but, at the same time, as a concept, it does not acknowledge the sacred nature of such multiplicity. As Cecchin and many in the world of systemic practice know, words are not innocent but bring forth worlds and positions within discourse that have significant effects in people's lives. Irreverence brings forth the need for (a critical) distance with established theoretical traditions so as to afford alternative, hopefully more human(e), descriptions. This is indeed necessary within the proposals of the FB assemblage for it refers to the

critical problematization of *connaissance* and the awareness that what works in a certain ecology might be destructive in another.[91]

Yet irreverence also calls for a troubled, if not impossible, relationship with the sacred. This is a difficulty that has been experienced by the field and is not yet resolved. On the contrary, as set out in Chapter 4 in the discussion of the reading within family therapy of SC ideas, it has led to a pursuit of technique with a disregard of knowledge and theory in all of its manifestations, including knowledge that is desirable, i.e. *savoir*, the sacred, the use of specific *connaissances* in specific circumstances and the importance of critical engagement.

In light of these tensions, there is value in returning to a fundamental question: what is therapy? In (re)stating this question in light of the FB assemblage, current assumptions of therapy are deeply problematized. The idea of therapy as a practice that aims to help those experiencing psychological distress is troubled due to the fact that these practices often ignore their own contexts, focusing instead on a simplified understanding of healing and of helping. In order to be able to speak of therapy – and of systemic therapy in particular – there is a need to position therapy according to a number of dimensions. For pedagogical purposes, these dimensions will be discussed in relation to the Foucaultian referential axes.

8.3.1 Therapy as a method to problematize the subject

Systemic therapy is perhaps one of the most effective therapeutic modalities to problematize the individual (de)limitations of mind imposed by Western mentality. As a direct result of the influence of Bateson, in systemic family therapy the self/subject is

[91] This critical difference is not limited between ecologies but also refers to the expected emergence of difference within be the same ecology in different moments of its existence.

conceptualized as ‘naturally’ relational and constructed within an ‘epistemic’ field. Notwithstanding this achievement, there is still the need to explore further and consolidate the radicalness of the concept. There is a current tendency to compromise the systemic commitment to a relational self by equating it to a narrow and static consideration of the individual within their (nuclear) family of origin. This is a gesture that reifies the relational constitution of the subject and separates it from the larger social structure in which the subject and its ‘nuclear family of origin’ acquire meaning. Their status, as a specific knowledge formation that is subject to variation and critique, is lost in this interpretation. Rather than therapeutic practices supporting this reification by continuing to interrogate the subjectivity of people through attachments directly connected with ‘blood lineage,’ there is a need to problematize such an interrogation by opening it up to other types of parameters. This can be done by expanding the exploration to include, as equally if not more valuable, an interrogation about other relationally meaningful connections. This idea has already been partially explored within the field around notions of ‘families of choice’ and the interest that the narrative approach has in the notion of witnessing (White, 1995b).

There is also a need to reconnect with and further conceptualize the constructed and constructive nature of both client(s) and therapist(s) within therapy and how these definitions operate in the positioning of self and others in the therapeutic encounter. This gesture can be achieved through at least two different strategies: on the one hand, by the exploration of notions of ‘care of the self’ and, on the other, by further problematizing the limits of such definitions as they currently present in the clinic.

The first of these points – the exploration of the notion of care of the self – has been central to the (generic) definition of therapy. It is then not surprising that Foucault made a direct reference to this point in his writing:

> Psychoanalysis stands as close as possible, in fact, to that critical function which, as we have seen, exists in all human sciences. (2004b, p. 408)

Foucault's comment is in his early book, *The Order of Things*. A later reference would acknowledge his later insights into technologies of the self and would rephrase this statement so as to focus on the reflective and critical function that therapy provides vis-à-vis the client's – and therapist's – social habitat. A later reading would also trouble Foucault's earlier focus on the acquisition of insight rather than skills.

Furthermore, and connecting with the problematization of knowledge and power, in psychoanalysis as well as most therapeutic approaches, the nature of what constitutes the definition and the practices of care are mostly determined by the therapist. The therapist is the one who possesses the knowledge and governs its circulation – its economy – in the therapeutic process. One of SC's powerful contributions to the field has been problematizing this practice so as to align it with secular democratic traditions. There are however difficulties with the problematization that SC carries out in relation to these practices, difficulties that are in line with the earlier concerns regarding the notion of irreverence. Further work is needed to refine this gesture so as to align these problematizations with a foundational ecological pursuit. SC problematization could benefit, for example, from a constructive engagement with the rich cybernetic tradition around the notion of strategy. It would benefit particularly from a careful and ethical consideration of how strategy can be used in therapy so as to support the client(s) – as well as the therapist(s) – in their pursuit for increased self-governability.

In terms of the second of these points – that is, the continual problematization of the roles and subjectivities brought forth in the therapeutic space – it is important to return to Foucault's warning about optimistic descriptions. According to Foucault's practices of freedom, therapeutic work is infinite, ongoing and, of particular importance, contingent. In line with the psychological awareness of the need to constantly recalibrate psychometric tests so as to address the population's increased performance – what is known as the Flynn effect (Deary, 2001, chapter 6) – the field of systemic family therapy would benefit from conceptualizing therapy as a Batesonian stochastic process (Bateson, 2002, chapter VI and VII) that is constantly receiving feedback and calibrating itself in terms of its effectiveness. Tools like Duncan and Miller's *Session Rating Scales* (Duncan et al., 2004) are good examples of this gesture.

A final point of consideration is the need for a continual exploration and transgression of the limits of the existing knowledge regarding subjectivity, in particular, of the client's and of the therapist's subjectivity in the therapeutic space. The limit inherent to the knowledge formation operating in this space – the space in which these subjectivities emerge – needs to be both interrogated and transgressed so as to encourage the critical position articulated earlier. It would then be possible to ask questions like the following: Can the therapist experience psychological distress as part of the process without jeopardizing his/her role and if so, can this distress be expressed in the clinical setting and still have a therapeutic effect for the client?

8.3.2 Therapy as a method to problematize clinical knowledge

Family therapy made a powerful entry into the psychiatric field precisely because of its theoretical richness and its distinctly relation and contextual positioning. It is widely accepted that this knowledge constituted, at the time of its emergence, a rupture that was

experienced as a 'paradigmatic shift' in relation to the then prevalent ideas. Bateson was central to the development of this initial impetus.

Bateson's later distancing from the field and the later debates have caused a *hiatus* in relation to further conceptual development; a hiatus that runs the risk of turning its initial revolutionary impetus into nonsensical fragmentation. There is a clear need for the field to re-engage with theoretical/conceptual work.

There are a number of areas in which this re-engagement could take place. These include developing the systematic study of Bateson's ideas and the articulation of the connections – rather than the differences – between the rich cybernetical tradition, SC and the emerging conversational and dialogical conceptualizations. Foucault's articulations of the distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance* could help in this task by providing a systematic understanding of the systemic frame, including the different levels at which theory has developed in the field. Foucault's distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance* connects also with Bateson's appreciation of formalization and the importance of logical types.

There is also a need to return to the recursive engagement with the position of the observer in the process of observation so as to engage critically with the effects of these observations. In particular, there is a need to further problematize the conceptualizations of the self of the therapist as an observer of both the client(s) and of his/her self in the therapeutic space as well as the effect of such observations. Luepnitz' insight has particular heuristic value here:

> A Foucauldian 'impact' on family therapy would not have to do with practising different techniques, nor would it mean necessarily the end of practice. The point would be to understand ourselves differently as practitioners. (1992, p. 284)

Recent publications that focus on the self of the therapist (e.g. Blow et al., 2007) supply good examples of what could be done in this domain, in particular, in comments on the style of the therapist having an impact on the therapeutic outcome. Issues of style, of both client(s) and therapist(s), will become central when discussing Deleuze's work in the following chapters. Suffice to state at this stage that these ideas point to the desirability of engaging in practices of care of both the client and the therapist that are not normalizing, but that have the effect of enhancing the lives of all those participating in the process as unique articulations of life. In a FB assemblage, it is the articulation of a sustainable difference that is the desired outcome.

The notion of style is further decentred from normalizing tendencies because it is conceptualized as a continual process of mastery. The unique and continual articulation of life that emerges out of these technologies of the self is not just centred on an ecological mind but also, as Deleuze would say "of the people and the earth to come."

A final area of (re)engagement with problematizations of knowledge has to do with the development of theoretical conceptualizations that include the critical relationship that these ideas have vis-à-vis prevalent knowledge and the conceptualization of such relationship as a stochastic process. As indicated above, when Bateson's ideas were articulated in the 1950s, they stood in clear contrast with then prevalent notions in psychiatry. In line with ideas discussed around the notion of the Enlightenment, this is where the power and the critical nature of systemic ideas come from: in their positioning vis-à-vis the prevalent conceptual frame. Much has changed in the field since the time that Bateson worked in Palo Alto. Many of these changes confirm Foucault's insights into bio-power. The encounter of the ideas of Bateson and Foucault

calls for a review of systemic ideas in light of these developments so as to honour the radical nature of the early insights.

8.3.3 Therapy's accountability to macro- and micro-politics

Finally, when focusing on problematizations of power and a critical engagement with the present, there are a number of productive contributions that a FB assemblage provides to the field of systemic family therapy. At one level, there are considerations that relate to the positioning of the field within macro-social and political parameters. This point has partially been addressed in the last paragraph when discussing the need to maintain a critical position within the contemporary – highly medicalized – psychiatric field.

Another important consideration at this level is to extend the distinctions highlighted by Cecchin between therapy as social control and therapy as therapeutic (1987, p. 409). Cecchin's distinction resonates significantly with Foucault's articulation of the welfare state as part of the policing of subjects in state apparatus and his studies on bio-power. These resonances inform the ethical need for therapists to be aware of the dangers involved in the insidious use of therapy as a technique serving the state's demand for 'docile bodies' and provide a powerful frame to engage therapy with a larger critical project.

At the micro-political level, that is, at the level that addresses the micro-manifestations of power as articulated by Foucault, there is a need to open therapy to the continual investigation of how power articulates itself in the clinic. As both Bateson and Foucault have highlighted, such investigation inevitably leads to the recursive investigations on the definitions and positions of the selves of those engaging in this particular type of relationship. The hope of the present author in commenting on the (mis)readings within

the field has been aligned to such investigations so as to actively support the ongoing debates required for the continual construction of human(e) spaces in therapy. Rather than avoiding issues of control and power, there is a need to accept the continual presence of such power in the clinic so as to be able to engage in the positive problematization of the (ab)uses of power by both clients and therapists. In other words, there is an ongoing need to make these practices accountable, to bring them to light so as to resist their reification as static positions within a static social contract of sorts.

Ultimately, a problematization of power at this level does not call for ready-made/clearly bounded positions but for an ethical stance that often produces more questions than answers. Such an ethical stance would give consideration to the way in which client(s) and therapist(s) continually engage in mastering as much as it is possible the power/knowledge *dispositifs* that traverses through their identities. In fact, it is this ongoing process of engaging with mastering of forces that provides the therapeutic frame for practices of care. This engagement needs to be conceptualised as therapeutic, not just in terms of the health of the individuals present in the specific conversations that take place in the concrete therapeutic space, but needs also to include an ethical consideration of the health of the larger ecology of mind to which both client(s) and therapist(s) belong. This problematization provides a powerful way forward to understand the subtle balance client(s) and therapist(s) need to hold – amongst other things – between nurturance and discipline and between empowerment and restraint.[92] These are all genuine and relevant questions that pertain to the ambit of therapy and of practices of care for "the people and the earth to come."

[92] This is not a reference to physical restraint but to a gesture more akin to the tempering and moderation of passions that is part of practices of care of the self.

The thesis will proceed to explore Deleuze's work and the productive connections that his encounter with Bateson can produce in the field. This exploration will be done following a similar format to that employed in the exploration of Foucault, with a first chapter (Chapter 9) looking at the body of work of Deleuze, and the following two chapters engaging with the connections that can be established between Deleuze and Bateson.

Chapter 9 – Deleuze: The articulation of a philosophy of difference

> Michel Foucault remarked that 'A bolt of lightning has struck, that will bear Deleuze's name. A new kind of thinking is possible… Here it is, in Deleuze's texts, leaping, dancing before us, among us… one day, perhaps, the century will be seen as Deleuzian' (Foucault, 1977b, p.165). When asked to comment, Deleuze observed that Foucault was a terrible joker (Deleuze, 1995, p.88). (Morss, 2000, p. 185)

> There is only one term, Life, that encompasses thought, but conversely this term is encompassed by thought. Not that life is *in* thinking, but only the thinker has a potent life, free of guilt and hatred; and only life explains the thinker. (Deleuze, 1988b, p. 14)

It is both simple and problematic to comprehend the reasons that underlie the unification of authors as different as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Deleuze – amongst others – under the umbrella of concepts like 'French thought' or 'poststructuralism.' It is simple inasmuch as it reflects the fact that they were all French thinkers who shared the unique cultural milieu surrounding May '68 and that these were labels created by outsiders – mainly in the USA – to refer to the thinkers of this generation. On the other hand, such a gesture is problematic for it seems to ignore the significant differences between these projects, paradoxically, undermining the exact motif of this grouping: the quest for genuine validation of difference.

There is however one exemption that merits attention: the well-known long standing friendship between Foucault and Deleuze (Dosse, 2010, ch. 17).[93] Some clarification is needed however in relation with the concept of friendship if it is to be read in this different frame. As philosophy is transformed through the operations of these thinkers, so are the concepts emerging out of it. Such is the case with friendship, a concept that is inherent to philosophy. Friendship in this new milieu suffers transformations: it is no longer 'just' a relation between two entities but, as a concept, it also takes into consideration its effects. Thus, its transformation demands from such friendship the ability to *unhinge* the friend from the status quo of established knowledge, freeing him/her to engage in new thought and in life (Stivale, 2005, p. 1). This understanding of friendship is particularly relevant for this thesis because it articulates the unique value that emerges in a joint consideration of both Foucault and Deleuze's work, complimenting and amplifying each other and also, the potential of their (virtual) friendship with Bateson.

[93] Their friendship started in 1962 (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 83).

Foucault saw in Deleuze's project a philosophical grounding for his work and, what is of more importance, the philosophical foundation for a "non-fascist life" (1983d, p. xiii). It is in this context that his comment – "one day, perhaps, the century will be seen as Deleuzian" – acquires profound importance. Perhaps as part of a Foucaultian effect, Deleuze is becoming increasingly a focus of philosophical and critical studies.

Yet unlike Foucault, Deleuze's transgressions were not of his profession; of the practice of philosophy. He considered himself a 'classic philosopher' who was not inspired by notions of "the death of philosophy [or] going beyond philosophy" (Deleuze, 1990a, p. 361). Furthermore, as Derrida comments, "Deleuze was the one among all of this 'generation' who 'was doing' philosophy the most gaily, the most innocently" (2001, p. 193).

Derrida's words to describe Deleuze can be interpreted in a number of ways but there are two which are of significance here. On the one hand, as will become clear as the chapter progresses, Deleuze's project holds to a fundamental affirmation of life that, in many ways, is not mediated by the nuances of civilized life. Deleuze does not approach philosophy through mediating structures (e.g. language) that provide for an interpretation of some kind, but attempts to look at ways in which life is affirmed through philosophy. In this sense, his approach can be compared with the innocence of the child that looks naively and without guilt (Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 89) at his/her daily experience, engaging gaily with an open-ended and uncertain future. On the other hand, and perhaps because Deleuze's project breaks away from representation, practices of interpretation are replaced with a primacy of engagement with life "produc[ing] a kind of *art brut*" (ibid).

There is a final point that makes Deleuze's work unique. Most of his generation articulated negative critiques. They conceived the presence of ontologies in their theories to be a threat to human(e) practices (May, 2005, p. 13-5). Although Deleuze shared the same spirit of this generation, including its concerns over totalitarian and oppressive regimes, he provided an affirmative response by articulating 'an ontology with a twist.' This ontology asserted, as will be discussed later in the chapter, an eternal return of difference and life as *becomings*. It is this positive and productive affirmation that makes his project so important to the interests of this thesis.

Deleuze's work is however very difficult to read. His ideas are perceived by many scholars to be complex, if not abstruse (May, 2005, p. 3). This is partly due to the highly technical language that at times he used and the breadth of his writing. Also, in developing his project, he kept outside the systems of mentoring proper to academic and political circles in France (Lechte, 1994, p. 101) thus, perhaps like Bateson, freeing his work from the established academic coda.[94]

9.1 Thought and Philosophy

> The history of philosophy has always been the agent of power in philosophy, and even in thought. It has played the repressors role: how can you think without having read Plato, Descartes, Kant and Heidegger, and so-and-so's book about them? A formidable school of intimidation which manufactures specialists in thought – but which also makes those who stay outside conform all the more to the specialism which they despise. An image of thought called philosophy has been formed historically and it effectively stops people from thinking. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 10)

[94] Deleuze's academic work at Vincennes – the experimental University that emerged out of the May '68 revolts in Paris – did also support his position.

To read Deleuze is to be prepared, like Alice in her discoveries through the looking glass (Carroll, nd), to re-evaluate and reorganise one's world view. Here is where the admiration that Foucault had of Deleuze – of his insistence that the 'true' philosopher was not him but Deleuze – acquires its full meaning. For if, as claimed in the last chapters, Foucault created a new type of knowledge, Deleuze brings forth an entirely new conceptualization of thought. Deleuze calls for a new relationship with knowledge and with life. As it will become clear trough this chapter, Deleuze's thought is not an exercise of interpretation – it is not herme(neu)tics – but an engagement and an experimentation with life. It is a thought that opens up to the outside to the extent of becoming a line: *a line of flight* as Deleuze would say. It is a thought that resists reification into static representations, especially within the canons of *good sense* and *common sense*.

More than the technical nature of his writings, it is this resistance to reification that makes reading Deleuze both difficult and, in an untimely way, seductive, in particular for systemic thinkers who, as will be argued, will find in his project a powerful and productive alliance.

9.1.1 The emergence of a new thought

> [W]hat we're interested in, you see, are modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event. And maybe, it's a mistake to believe in the existence of things, persons, or subjects. (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 26)

The presentation of Deleuze's project in this thesis takes a different strategy to the one used with Foucault's. Reading Foucault's project proceeded in a line: a clear and well defined trajectory can be seen in his writings which, although marked by recursions, remained a trajectory nevertheless. Reading Deleuze however requires the acceptance

that all of his concepts carry with them a field of resonances and indeterminacy. If anything is fixed in Deleuze's conceptual work, it is the centrality of difference and variation. As Patton has indicated, "it is not only that Deleuze is sometimes an elusive thinker but, more importantly, that he is an experimental thinker committed to a conception of movement in thought" (2010, p.10).

Honouring Deleuze's style, and perhaps counter-intuitively to some of his writings, his work can be best described as a (vibrating) field or a plateau: a conceptual extension that organises itself in the interplay of different coordinates. So, parallel to movement, there is a field, an extension in space, a territory. Rather than articulating his thought in the way done with Foucault's, through a chronological analysis of his writings, the presentation of Deleuze's philosophical thought is organized through the identification the coordinates used by him to define his project. These coordinates were empiricism as a foundational methodology and a particular genealogy of philosophy through the work of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson. After the introduction of these coordinates, the chapter will present a summary of his metaphysical claims in terms of their political and pragmatic implications.

9.1.2 Empiricism: The opening of concepts to life

> Gilles Deleuze was an empiricist, a logician. That was the source of his lightness, his humor, his naïveté, his practice of philosophy as 'a sort of *art brut*' […]. It is a shame to present him as a metaphysician and nature mystic. (Rajchman, 2001, p. 7)

Deleuze's first book was *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991a). As he stated, empiricism constituted a continuous and central orientation throughout his oeuvre (1995, p. 89) providing the "innocence" described by Derrida in relation to his approach. Empiricism for Deleuze was a way of doing philosophy that "sets out to present concepts directly"

(Deleuze and Maggiori, 1986, p. 88-9) engaging with "raw concepts [rather than] approach[ing] things through structures, or linguistics or psychoanalysis, through science or even through history, because […] philosophy has its own raw material that allows it to enter into more fundamental external relations with these other disciplines" (ibid).

From early in his project, Deleuze was critical of totalizing- and essence-oriented theoretical frames common to the rationalist thought prevalent in France where "the abstract is given the task of explaining" (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. vi). Deleuze saw value instead in Whitehead's definition of empiricism: "the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (*creativeness*)" (ibid).

Empiricism is not against concepts per se. Nor is it a critique of thought or of theory in itself, but of an image of thought that is static and distant from the ever-changing conditions constituting life. Empirical thought, for Deleuze, is open to the outside: to the flow and variations present in everyday life. In other words, empiricism repositions concepts to be directly accountable to the real. As he wrote:

> The concept exists just as much in empiricism as in rationalism, but it has a completely different nature: it is a being-multiple, instead of being-one [… it] is fundamentally linked to a logic – a logic of multiplicities. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. vii)

Such repositioning provides concepts with a function that Whitehead's statement refers to. Instead of concepts serving a representational function, concepts are to be considered as powerful instruments in our engagement with the world. For Deleuze, concepts are not inert representations but productive forces: "[a]bstract ideas are not dead things,

they are entities that inspire powerful spatial dynamism" (1997, p. 119). In this regard, Empiricism affords and supports a philosophy of movement and of possibilities, allowing an engagement with concepts not as cut out – abstracted – from life but as recursively involved in the movements of life that they attempt to account for. As Deleuze wrote:

> I have only one thing to tell you: stick to the concrete, and always return to it. (…) The more gifted a philosopher is, I believe, the more he or she tends to leave the concrete behind, at least in the beginning. Resist this tendency, at least from time to time, just long enough to come back to perceptions, to affects, which will redouble your concepts." (1990a, p. 363)

Furthermore, empiricism has significant implications for our understanding of subjectivity. *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991a) focused on this point. For him, Hume developed empiricism through three different claims: by a shift in focus from "knowledge" to "belief" (thus a shift from transcendental realities to perceptions and experiences);[95] by stating that the character of things perceived was not necessarily fixed but was a cultural/conventional practice; and by the development of the first logic of relations instead of inherent facts. The result, as Deleuze stated, is that Hume developed "an extremely diverse world of experience according to the principle of exteriority or relationship: atomic parts but with transitions, passages, 'tendencies' that go from one to another" (1991a, p. x).

For Deleuze, the most promising potential of empiricism lays in its reading of subjectivity. Consistent with the notion of a logic of relations rather than of facts, Hume was interested in "[h]ow is the subject constituted inside the given" (Deleuze, 1991a, p.

[95]Through this gesture, Deleuze argued, Hume "secularized belief by making knowledge a legitimate belief" (1991b, p. 364).

109). In resonance with Foucault's investigations, Deleuze used Hume's insights to respond to the question of the self with a simple movement:

> Isn't this the answer to the question 'what are we?' We are habits, nothing but habits – the habit of saying 'I.' Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the self. (Deleuze, 1991a, p. x)

Empiricism not only breaks the subject open to its relation to natural processes; it further problematizes it by contextualising the subject as a limitation within the complexity of nature. This is another consequence of the shift towards multiplicities that Deleuze sees is implied in an empirical orientation. This problematic position of the subject will be discussed below.

9.1.3 The philosophy's historian: The construction of an ontology of difference

> I myself 'did' history of philosophy for a long time, read books on this or that author. But I compensated in various ways: by concentrating, in the first place, on authors who challenged the rationalist tradition in this history (and I see a secret link between Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, constituted by their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces and relations, the denunciation of power… and so on). (Deleuze, 1995, p. 5-6)

If empiricism refers to a methodology which points to a relational logic with what is out there – with 'nature' as Hume would say – it still remains the question of 'what is nature?' This is the domain of what in philosophy has been called "ontology" (Craig, 1998b) and "metaphysics" (Craig, 1998a). As indicated earlier, Deleuze is perceived as the thinker who provided this generation with a positive project because he made claims in this domain. Yet Deleuze's ontology constitutes a rupture with traditional conceptualizations for it is based on difference instead of identity. The core presentation

of this proposal, from a strictly philosophical point of view, is articulated in his thesis – *Difference and Repetition* – which will be discussed in the next section.

There is however a sequence in Deleuze's work that led to his project; a certain logic in the series constituted by his prior writings that afforded the emergence of this new type of thinking. May (2005) argues that although Deleuze writes about other thinkers, there are three who stand above the rest in providing the coordinates of Deleuze's work: "Immanence, duration, affirmation: Spinoza, Bergson, Nietzsche. These are the parameters of an ontology of difference" (p. 26, see also Dosse, 2010, Ch. 7).

These thinkers will be discussed in this section according to their value for Deleuze. It needs to be stated that Deleuze's reading of these thinkers constituted a variation to traditional readings. In other words, Deleuze's reading constitutes his own appropriation of these authors. In line with systemic ideas, his reading was an act of observation that transformed what was observed/read so as to produce something new, contingent and of relevance to *this* moment. Deleuze referred to this with his concept of portraiture (Deleuze et al., 1988, p. 135-6).

9.1.3.1 Spinoza: immanence as the philosophical 'cross'

> Immanence can be said to be the burning issue of all philosophy because it takes on all the dangers that philosophy must confront, all the condemnations, persecutions, and repudiations that it undergoes. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 45)

Although Deleuze had written on Nietzsche and on Bergson prior to writing on Spinoza, it seems relevant to start with Spinoza, for Deleuze was unambiguous about his importance in philosophy: "Spinoza is the Christ of philosophers, and the greatest philosophers are hardly more than apostles who distance themselves from or draw near to this mystery" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 60). Deleuze's strong words seem

especially puzzling when considered that, traditionally, Spinoza is described as the rationalist par excellence (i.e. Steinberg, 2009). Deleuze explains that this apparent paradox is resolved when Spinoza is connected with empiricism. He writes: "Spinoza rediscovered the concrete force of empiricism in applying it in support of a new rationalism, one of the most rigorous versions ever conceived" (1992, p. 149).

The (new) rationalism that Spinoza presented was the articulation of an ontology based on the concept of immanence and, as May says, immanence "is the first requirement of an ontology of difference" (2005, p. 27). Deleuze saw, in Spinoza's work on immanence, a foundational element to the new metaphysics; to the philosophical alternative to transcendence and to dualisms. Spinoza asserted in *Ethics* (Spinoza, n.d.), that there is only one substance – God or Nature – and that everything that exists is merely a modulation – 'attributes' – of this substance; different expressions of it (Allison, 1998). This distinction by Spinoza is a springboard for Deleuze to engage with events as material expressions that differ from each other yet are all ultimately connected. Connections in turn afford for events to be felt. Events then have the capacity to affect each other, a capacity that makes encounters central.

Equally important for Spinoza was the notion that any of these expressions, which are infinite in their manifestations, are to be measured in terms of their effects in actual life:

> Spinoza didn't entitle his book Ontology, he's too shrewd for that, he entitles it Ethics. Which is a way of saying that, whatever the importance of my speculative proposition may be, you can only judge them at the level of the ethics that they envelope or imply. (Deleuze, 1980, para. 24)

This shift of attention to the effects of ideas/bodies in life introduces another significant element in Spinoza's theory: emotions. Emotions, which Spinoza defined as affects, are directly related to the body and its ability to act. Spinoza talked about joyful and sad

emotions depending on their ability to support either a fuller or a reduced ability to complete – 'perfect' – expressions. Through the use of emotions, Spinoza established the conditions for immanent evaluation. If the world is composed of manifestations – 'variations' or 'expressions' – of the same substance that encounter each other in either *sad* or *joyful* ways (Deleuze, 1978), the question arises then of how can one live in ways that are affirmative and joyful.

It is in such context that Nietzsche defined Spinoza as his only predecessor (Deleuze, 1986b, p.ix), establishing a 'natural' link with the second parameter in Deleuze's field.

9.1.3.2 Nietzsche: the throw of dice of an eternal return (of/to difference)

> Nietzsche questions the concept of truth, he denies that the true can be an element of language. What he is contesting is the very notions of true and false. Not because he wants to 'relativize' them like an ordinary skeptic. In their place he substitutes sense and value as rigorous notions: the sense of what one says, and the evaluation of the one saying it. You always get the truth you deserve according to the sense of what you say, and according to the values *to which you give voice*. (Deleuze, 1968, p. 135-6)

Nietzsche and Philosophy (1986b) was Deleuze's second book, written nine years after *Empiricism and Subjectivity*. Nietzsche provided Deleuze with a valuable step to move beyond transcendental systems of evaluation. He also "use[d] Nietzsche's thought to present a subtle and sophisticated critique of and alternative to dialectics" (Widder, 2012, p. 62).

If Deleuze made a similitude in Spinoza being the Christ of philosophy, it could be argued that he saw in Nietzsche – and his notion of the eternal return – the alternative figure to the 'Holy Spirit.' The eternal return was – together with the Will to Power – the "most fundamental concepts in the Nietzschean corpus [which, due to Nietzsche's

madness, was] hardly introduced at all" (Deleuze, 1967, p. 117).[96] The eternal return is a powerful notion that helped Deleuze expand his insights into Spinoza's immanence, affording him to consider difference as returning selectively. This selective return eliminates half-desires and crystalizes, at every moment, the full potential of becoming. As he wrote:

> Far from *presupposing* the One or the Same, the eternal return constitutes the only unity of the multiple as such, the only identity of what differs: coming back is the only 'being' of becoming. Consequently, the function of the eternal return as Being is never to identify, but to authenticate. (Deleuze, 1967, p. 124)

It is the eternal return that gives life its tragic and, at the same time, its joyful condition by affirming all the possible presentations that can manifest as life. Life is a dice-throw and to live requires people to affirm this multiplicity by engaging with the ordeals that present to ourselves – "misfortune, sickness, madness, even the approach of death" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 125) – in ways that are transformative of the suffering. This tragic engagement is then transformed into a heroism of sorts by providing those enduring such circumstances – the specific throw of the dice embodied through their lives – with a certain nobility that escapes external evaluation.

It is in this tragic condition that Nietzsche's philosophy organises itself along two axes (1986b, p. x). The first axis concerns itself with force and constitutes a study of signs.[97] Deleuze opened his book by indicating that "Nietzsche's most general project is the introduction of the concepts of sense and value into philosophy" (1986b, p. 1). With

[96] Deleuze explained further: "In the texts which Nietzsche published, the eternal return does not figure as the object of any formal or 'definitive' essay. It is only announced, intimated, in horror or ecstasy" (ibid, p. 123).
[97] The concept of sign is not synonym to linguistic expression. This is of special significance to the field given the current emphasis on language as determinant of the social field.

sense, Deleuze refers to an engagement with phenomena not as 'things in themselves' but as signs of the forces that constitute them.

For Nietzsche they are two types of forces at play – active and reactive – and what defines a body is the relationship between these forces. To talk about active or reactive forces is not the same as positive or negative forces since, for Nietzsche, all forces are affirmative and relational. What makes the difference is the quality of their relationship: whereas 'active' forces act on their own basis affirming their own existence, reactive forces act in response to other forces.

Reactive forces are related to an inability to move with the situation as it presents itself, choosing instead to return to the past in the search of "responsibility" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 21). This return is not the eternal return but a reactive one that attempts to re-enact a moment that is already gone, thus not accepting the challenges inherent to the specific throw of the dice at hand. In stark contrast with assumptions of SC, for Nietzsche – and for Deleuze as well – "Consciousness is essentially reactive" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 41). It is in this context that, for Nietzsche, *ressentiment* – 'it is your fault' – and bad conscience – 'it is my fault' – are the two great reactive forces hindering the unfolding of life.

Active forces, in contrast, accept the tragic condition proper to human life in its plurality and engage with the choices at hand. Thus, active forces are in constant experimentation, always articulating ways of maximizing their abilities to act.

"The second axis concerns itself with power and forms an ethics and an ontology" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. x). Power here represents the differential between forces. Unlike the previous axis, in this axis one can talk about affirmative and negative powers depending on which forces – active or reactive – are most present. It is at this level that Nietzsche

talked about good and bad players, with the former mastering active forces and the later reactive ones. For Nietzsche power was not necessarily corrupt. *Base* powers, that is, powers that are constituted by reactive forces are the ones that are usually associated with such image. In contrast, there are affirmative and *noble* powers – the ones constitutive of the *overman* – that are distinct to fixed 'egos' and the domination of others' abilities. Noble power is instead the one that 'wants in the will' connecting with the ability of being good players and engaging with the actual possibilities of a situation so as to actualize its potentials.

This second axis constitutes a recursive level of analysis: the valuing of those who are making sense according to the forces that traverse through them. Sense and values are then connected and considered as genuine philosophical pursuits discretely different to a humanistic approach: no longer values as judgements belonging to a transcendental (Christian) order, but evaluations that emerge out of the specific conditions of living which, "in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 1). Stating again a distinct difference with SC as well as prevalent scientific gestures in the field, Deleuze writes:

> Not that every interpretations therefore has the same value and occupies the same plan – on the contrary, they are stacked or layered in the new depth. But they no longer have the true and the false as criteria. The noble and the vile, the high and the low, become the immanent principles of interpretations and evaluations. (Deleuze, 1967, p.118)

It is this twist that explains that, for Nietzsche, phenomena are 'symptoms,' more than simply signs, and the philosopher's work, rather than being analytic, is one of being a physician who evaluates symptoms in terms of what they say about themselves and to the society in which they emerge. For Nietzsche, this diagnostic activity was what he

called 'genealogy.' Unlike Foucault, Nietzsche's genealogy not only has a role in defining the forces shaping an event but also on evaluating the position of the person/society who is evaluating such phenomena.[98] This point will be discussed further in section 9.2.1.

9.1.3.3 Bergson: on the virtual and the actual as an alternative to prevalent conceptions of time.

> If the past coexists with itself as present, if the present is the most contracted degree of the coextensive past, then this same present, because it is the precise point at which the past is cast toward the future, is defined as that which changes nature, the always new, the eternity of life. It is understandable that a lyric theme runs through Bergson's work: a veritable hymn in praise of the new, the unforeseeable, of invention, of liberty. Therein lies not a renunciation of philosophy, but a profound and original attempt to discover the proper domain of philosophy. (Deleuze, 1957, p. 30-1)

Bergson completed Deleuze's trinity by being the 'Father' of philosophy, for he provided immanence with an articulation of time (May, 2005, p.41).[99] Yet, the time that Bergson calls forth is not a phenomenological time – the time of experience – but a foundational time that affords experience to make sense and acquire meaning. For Bergson, space – 'extension' using Spinoza's terminology – 'breaks down' into matter and time with time, rather than matter, being central for life.[100]

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[98] As indicated in Chapter 6, this function in Foucault's project is explored through his interest in technologies of the self.

[99] In fact, as Widder (2012, p. 46-7) insightfully comments, Bergson provided Deleuze with an account of the past and the present as a springboard for the future. Deleuze chose Nietzsche's eternal return to provide the future with radical openness.

[100] It is important however to avoid a dualism of sorts when understanding this distinction. What constitutes life for Bergson was the expansion and contraction of time which, in turn, afforded an unfolding and folding of matter.

Bergson's interest in the temporality of substance resulted in the articulation of a number of concepts – 'duration', 'memory', 'élan vital' and 'intuition' – that were a move away from other common notions of time[101] and of relevance for Deleuze (1957, p. 22) as he elaborated in *Difference and Repetition*.

Bergson also critically reviewed prevalent notions of scientific knowledge, emphasizing the philosophical value of 'intuition' as a qualitatively different type of knowledge. He described intuition as an empirical comprehension; a holistic capture through one's senses of what is present. Comprehension for Bergson related to meaning rather than to data/information and objective truth; it related to a domain that was central for Deleuze: sense and non-sense (2001a).

In line with Bateson's epistemological considerations on the differences between Pleroma and Creatura, Deleuze stated that, through intuition, one can start to comprehend that which makes things different from each other is not 'matter' but 'duration.' As Deleuze wrote: "duration shows us the very nature of difference […] whereas matter is only the undifferentiated, that which is repeated" (1957, p. 27).[102] Aligning again with Bateson, for Bergson, knowledge arises from the perception of difference. The strength of Bergson's notion of duration for Deleuze resided particularly in this point. Duration is, essentially, difference – "*what differs from itself*" (Deleuze, 1956, p. 37). It is this differentiation that constitutes life.

Deleuze was to use this notion of duration in *Difference and Repetition*: what 'is' is difference; in life there is constant variation in durations but duration 'is.' This is what

[101] This refers to notions of time as either lineal (past, present and future) or cyclical

[102] It is important to maintain the monism of the approach: it is not that time is more important than matter – a statement that would make us slip back into some sort of dualism, thus transcendence – but that Bergson offers a different modulation, a nuanced variation of the overarching principle of the immanence of difference.

Bergson called *élan vital*[103] a concept that has been highly misunderstood, if not ridiculed (Protevi, 2006a, p. 64).

Duration differentiates itself through two movements: contraction and expansion. Here Bergson introduced the idea that present and past relate to these two modes: the present is contracted duration that focuses on what is useful to the actual conditions, whereas the past is the virtual expansion of all that is (*élan vital*). So past and present co-exist as manifestations, virtual and actual, of what is. In this context, the idea of memory as a 'recollection' is highly inaccurate.[104] Deleuze sees in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1981) a relevant exemplification of Bergson's insights (Deleuze, 2000b, p. 58).

With Bergson, the articulation of the concept of a differing immanence is given a type of material temporality that holds true to itself and affords the conditions for the eternal return to take place.

Having exposed the co-ordinates of Deleuze's field, there is space now to introduce some of the core notions of Deleuze's own thesis.

9.1.4 Difference and Repetition: A critique of representation as a static and dogmatic image of thought

> Essence is not only particular, not only individual, but is individualizing. Essence individualizes and determines the substances in which it is incarnated. […] This is because essence is in itself difference. But it does not have the power to diversify, and to diversify itself, without also having the power to repeat itself, identical to itself. […] Difference and repetition are only apparently in opposition […a]ctually,

[103] "[I]n the authorized translations, the key term 'élan vital' is rendered as 'vital impetus'. This version is not an entirely happy one and has often been criticized. The French word 'élan' has a much broader range of sense than the English 'impetus,' from 'momentum' through 'surge' to 'vigor'" (Tomlinson and Habberjam, 1988, p. 9).

[104] This description of time has significant connections with Cronen, Johnson & Lannamann paper: *Paradoxes, Double Binds, and Reflexive Loops: An Alternative Theoretical Perspective* (1982).

> difference and repetition are the two inseparable and correlative powers of essence. (Deleuze, 2000b, p. 48-9)

Difference and Repetition (1994) was Deleuze's aggregation thesis and it constituted a departing point in terms of creating his own project (Patton, 1994, p. xi). His thesis constituted a critique to Western philosophy which, from Plato to Heidegger, has upheld the notion of 'identity' as a core tenet and 'representation' as a fundamental activity of thought. Within this tradition, difference – and what is more, change – is secondary to identity; difference is that which lies between two identities. In this regard, difference has a negative/reactive quality instead of a presence in and of itself.

Deleuze's thesis critiqued this arrangement by repositioning difference as an active and affirmative phenomenon. Referring to Nietzsche, Deleuze asserted that it is not identity but difference that is the essential concept, thus turning the 'order of things' upside down and delegating identity to a secondary role, as that which remains stable across repetitions.

The third chapter in *Difference and Repetition* dealt with an important mystification in philosophy and everyday life: an image of thought that portrays thought as static. Deleuze argued that philosophy – and Western culture in general – holds a number of presuppositions about thought that "crush thought under an image which is that of the Same and the Similar in representation, but profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement" (1994, p. 167).

This static image of thought was further critiqued because of one of its practical corollaries: that it supports and is supported by morality (p. 132). With a static morality,

ethics – inasmuch as an ongoing evaluative process as pointed by Spinoza and articulated by Nietzsche – becomes irrelevant.

As an alternative to this static image of thought, Deleuze proposed a *nomadic* image of thought. Nomadic thought is empirical. It is a thought that is best conceived as an 'encounter' with the outside; as "something in the world [that] forces us to think" (p. 139) in search of solutions to the dilemmas that life presents. It is in this sense that Deleuze's philosophy is considered to be constructivist as will be discussed later in section 9.2.2.

There is no scope in this chapter to explain the method used by Deleuze to account for this shift but two key elements in his argumentation are worth mentioning. First, the change from identity and representation into difference and repetition does not mean a lack of foundation but, as stated earlier, an inversion in the explanation. In line with his insights into empiricism, Deleuze asserted that, rather than difference, it is identity that needs to be explained.

Second, Deleuze used of the concept of 'the virtual' in an equivalent position 'the idea' in Plato's thought. Yet, as a concept, it establishes interesting differences. It is similar to Plato's idea in that is it a concept that refers to a non-material dimension that informs the material world. Yet it particularly differs in that the relationship between the virtual and the material world is not one of representation but one of *actualization*: the world as is experienced is not a copy of a (transcendental and universal) idea but a concrete embodiment of a virtual possibility. The virtual is not a world of ideas but an undifferentiated mass – the cosmos, the Spinozan monist nature – in which there is no empty or negative space. The actual emerges as a result of a process of actualization in which the virtual acquires form through a transformation that takes place when a

number of undifferentiated elements connect with each other. In this process, an order is established out of disorder, a form emerges out of chaos.

What is important to understand is that such a process is one of transformation and of embodiment: the actual is different from its essence and does not have a direct and predictable relationship with its origin. In this way, Deleuze honours the Nietzschean idea of the eternal return by asserting that "difference must be shown *differing*" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 41, in Dosse, 2010, p. 152).

Having this in mind, it then becomes clear that it is not possible to ascertain a 'right judgement of *what is*,' for it is impossible to make accurate and reliable correlations between the world as one experiences it and the world as it is; about the nature of things in themselves. This inability is not due to epistemological limitations but constitutes a metaphysical condition that needs to not only be acknowledged but also be lived.

Prior to moving to an exploration of the practical implications of Deleuze's philosophical project, there is value in briefly commenting on the task of the philosopher within this project, partly because there is a strong resonance between the shift required for philosophers to engage with Deleuze's thought and the one required by therapists if they wish to entertain his philosophical approach as well as systemic gaze.

9.2 The task of philosophy: From the 'critical' interpretation of signs to the 'affirmative' creation of concepts

> Philosophy's not communicative, any more than it's contemplative or reflective: it is by nature creative or even revolutionary, because it's always creating new concepts. The only constraint is that these should have a necessity, as well as an

> unfamiliarity, and they have both to the extent they're a response to real problems. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 136)

So far through this chapter, a Deleuzian field has been introduced through the presentation of a number of coordinates. As an introduction it is, by definition, highly problematic since, as stated earlier, Deleuze is an experimental thinker and "his practice of philosophy is more problematic and problem driven […] there is always movement and discontinuity in his thinking from one problem or series of problems to the next" (Patton, 2010, p. 10).

Yet such a problematic introduction enables an engagement with Deleuze's concepts in a meaningful way – in a way that hopefully makes sense to readers – and to understand his repositioning of the task of philosophy. In line with his concerns regarding the restraints posed by the historical – if not canonical – readings of past philosophers, he thought of philosophy as an affirmative activity. Deleuze confronted philosophy – and those who do philosophy – with the challenge of thinking *anew*; of thinking in the face of difference. If there is a trajectory in his project, it is a trajectory that needs to be seen as a Deleuzian line of flight; a line that, rather than establishing a well-defined path with pre-established parameters of thought for future readers, traverses the established field of consciousness opening up thought for the uniqueness and the possibilities of each moment. This trajectory is not lineal but repeats itself throughout his project. Consistent with Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, each of these returns proposes a variation on the theme; a variation that moves or dislodges understanding from static (and dogmatic) images of thought. For Deleuze, as indicated earlier, there are two particular images of thought that need to be thought in this way: *common sense* and *good sense* (1994).

Deleuze's project thus invites a different relationship with philosophy. As with the earlier section, there is value in framing this new relationship within two parameters namely, the ongoing critical role that philosophy has in understanding the times we live in, and its affirmative and creative dimension in the activity of thinking. These two parameters support a different kind of thought: a nomad thought that produces *rhizomic* knowledge.

9.2.1 Philosophy as Nietzschean critique

> The *diagnosis* of becomings in every passing present is what Nietzsche assigned to the philosopher as physician, 'physician of civilization,' or inventor of new immanent modes of existence. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 113)

As indicated earlier, Deleuze opened his book on Nietzsche by stating that "Nietzsche's most general project is the introduction of the concepts of sense and value into philosophy" (1986b, p.1). He clarified however that Nietzsche's understanding of these concepts was in stark contrast with a passive – reactive – acceptance of the values the West has inherited from Christianity. For Deleuze, Nietzsche was instead interested in evaluating "the value of values" (ibid). It is in this context that "[e]valuations, in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate" (ibid). With this change of meaning,"[Nietzsche] turns philosophy into an art, the art of interpreting and evaluating" (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 197).

In line with Foucault's admiration of Kant's interest, Deleuze thinks of philosophy not in relation to a (misguided) notion of what is eternal but to the complex subtleties of an (untimely differing) Now (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 112). It is in this repositioning of evaluation using external (Christian) values, to evaluation as an individual art that reads and gives moment to the present, that Nietzsche's ethical project became central

for Deleuze. The task of philosophy in this sense is critical inasmuch as it provides a reading of the types of life that a society is engendering; a reading that provides not only commentaries on the current state of affairs but also ways forward for societies through noble solutions to the dilemmas that constitute their current state of affairs. Furthering the analogy with the clinic, the task of philosophy is not only to provide a diagnosis of the current state of civilisation but also, and perhaps more importantly, to provide treatment recommendations.

These practices – of diagnosis, formulation and the provision of recommendations – are however to be seen as in constant variation. Their articulation needs to be understood in the context of a difference that is constantly differing. The effect of the eternal return then for the task of philosophy is that this 'clinical' process recursively demands, like the mythical Ouroboros, a constant return to diagnosis of the effects of its earlier recommendations. Such circularity affords a different engagement with forces that are neither conscious nor unconscious but foundational of one's modes of living. An active engagement with these forces engages in a genealogical understanding of these forces so as to position the philosopher/thinker as a good player in front of fate and their unique dice-throw.

Rather than providing for a stable system of critique – as perhaps was attempted by Marx and by Freud – this critique engages with what Deleuze calls "the dawn of a counterculture" (1973b, p. 253) where the concepts of 'dawn' and of 'counterculture' have significant value. 'Dawn' is of importance due to its half-light dimension: as a time and space of emergence rather than of plenitude; of becoming rather than of being. 'Counterculture' is of relevance because it is a practice that draws its *puissance* from the act of 'going against the grain,' engaging in an endless process of demystification. What

is of relevance in this engagement is that demystification is defined as a differential and relative concept: it doesn't refer to a certain state of affairs – of facts – but refers to an ongoing process of differentiation from any system of representation, including those that claim critical attitudes. It is this ongoing differentiation that allows the movement towards the new – to what is yet to come – confirming the ultimate act both of resistance and of art.

9.2.2 Philosophy as a constructive activity

> Yet more profoundly, philosophy is the art of inventing concepts themselves, creating the new concepts we need to think our world and our life. (Deleuze, 1987, p. 325)

Through the years, Deleuze refined his ideas on the productive and affirmative role of philosophy. Written twenty-three years after *Difference and Repetition*, *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991) unambiguously stated that "[p]hilosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" (p. 2), relegating the critical activity to a secondary role.

What is Philosophy? expanded on Deleuze's earlier critique of prevalent 'dogmatic' claims of thought as having a representational value. As he had indicated in *Difference and Repetition*, such dogmatic image of thought refers to the idea that "thought is the natural exercise of a faculty [and] that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for the truth or an affinity with the true" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 131). In his critique, Deleuze separated the act of recognition from the act of thinking. Thinking is a "different activity that takes place when the mind is provoked by an encounter with the unknown or the unfamiliar" (Patton, 2010, p.66). Thought is not about representing – not even about critiques of dominant knowledges, an activity that is reactive in nature –

but about engaging affirmatively with life. Thought is a key component in the endless process of articulation of life in that it poses solutions to the problems of living in the form of new possibilities. These possibilities – these new concepts – cut across the paradoxes of life. Thought completes what is present by moving it to the new – to what is to come – thus affirming the eternal return.

Thought then, for Deleuze, is best put to use in the creation of new concepts. "A concept is a complex feature, it is an assemblage a multitude and must not be confused with a proposition" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 135). For him, the main feature involved in the construction of new concepts is the "novel redistribution of things." (Deleuze and Eribon, 1991, p. 381). This characterisation of the concept as an organising composite connects with Nietzsche's claims that concepts should not be treated as "gifts" (in Patton, 2010, p. 68) as well as with Whitehead's comments that concepts do not explain but need to be explained.

9.3 From the concept (of Difference) to experimental actualities: The articulation of a (rhizomic) life

> When Foucault admires Kant for posing the problem of philosophy in relation not to the eternal but to the Now, he means that the object of philosophy is not to contemplate the eternal or to reflect in history but to diagnose our actual becomings: a becoming-revolutionary that, according to Kant himself, is not the same thing as the past, present, or future of revolutions. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 112-3)

With these clarifications in mind, the chapter will now engage in a discussion of the application of these ideas to concrete aspects of existence. For Deleuze, philosophical activity is not an abstract activity in some kind of absolute vacuum but the engagement with concepts resides precisely in a fundamental limit where thought encounters the

outside and where the philosophical plane "confronts chaos" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 218). It is in this 'line' where production – and ultimately, life – occurs. In line with his thoughts on thought, life for Deleuze is not about existing static entities but about the constant transformations that occur in the becoming of thought; from the movement of the virtual into the actual that is constantly constituting the real.

9.3.1 The Deleuze-Guattari assemblage

> And then there was my meeting with Félix Guattari, the way we understood and complemented, depersonalized and singularized – in short, loved – one another. (Deleuze, 1973a, p. 7)

Perhaps the most concrete and singular exemplification of Deleuze's thought can be appreciated in his long-standing friendship with Felix Guattari.[105] It was their encounter that, in many ways, grounded Deleuze's philosophical project as a socio-political proposal with clear implications for psychotherapy.

Theirs was a powerful and creative alliance that saw the production of four of Deleuze's most widely read books (1983, 1986, 1987b, and 1991).[106] They described their writing together as a multitude: "The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 3). For Deleuze, their work was not a simple addition but a unique combination – a negotiation of different rhythms – that was productive "between the two" (Deleuze and Parnet,

[105] Felix Guattari (1930 – 1992) was a Lacanian psychoanalyst and a leading anti-psychiatrist in France. Guattari was also known for his long standing involvement in political activism and his writings (Alliez and Goffey, 2011, Genosko, 1996, 2002, Guattari, 1984, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011) merit attention on his own right, specially so given his favourable appreciation of Family Therapy practice, in particular through the long term friendship he had with the Belgium psychiatrist Moni Elkaim (Dosse, 2010, p. 334-38, Guattari, 1989).

[106] The last of these books was written by Deleuze alone when Guattari was experiencing deep depression. The decision by Deleuze to include Guattari as a co-writer is but a sign "and a tribute to their exceptionally intense friendship" (Dosse, 2010, p. 456).

2006, p. 13). Their relationship not only saw each "falsify" the other (Deleuze et al., 1985, p. 126) but generated a third identity which was no longer any of them but an "us" (Deleuze et al., 1988, p. 136). The encounter of the two of them opened up the space for a multitude of people to be present in the one spot[107] which was, as they said, "already quite a crowd."

9.3.2 Capitalism and schizophrenia

> [W]hat we were both looking for was a discourse that was at once political and psychiatric, without reducing either dimension to the other. (Guattari in Deleuze et al., 1972a, p. 15)

Arguably, *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987b) – the two volumes on Capitalism and Schizophrenia – are the most well-known books of the Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage. These two volumes constituted a move from conceptual philosophy towards a practical and ethical philosophy (Foucault, 1983d, p. xiii). As Deleuze himself said in a later interview: "*Anti-Oedipus* was from beginning to end a book of political philosophy" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 170). In many ways, these two volumes are a good example of Bateson's method of double description and of Deleuze's call to show difference differing, for these two volumes have a very different structure as will be discussed next.

9.3.2.1 Anti-Oedipus: Nomadic life and schizophrenic processes

> The great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious, but once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theater was substituted for the unconscious as a factory; representation was substituted for the

[107] For this Deleuze-Guattari junction opens up for at least the following 'personae': Deleuze, Guattari, Guattarian Deleuze, Deleuzian Guattari and Deleuze-Guattari.

> units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself – in myth, tragedy, dreams – was substituted for the productive unconscious. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 24)

Anti-Oedipus was the first collaborative work of Deleuze and Guattari and one that was influential in its time for it was identified as the book of May '68 (Colebrook, 2002, p. xvii). It is a book with a passionate, at times angry, style that offered a strong Nietzschean critique of the then prevalent Marxist and psychoanalytical ideas upheld by French intellectual circles (Deleuze, 1985, p. 142). Like Foucault as discussed earlier in relation to the referential axes, Deleuze and Guattari used key concepts from these traditions and reorganized them within a Nietzschean frame. They saw value in the materialism of Marx's conceptualizations on the flow of capital and on the conditions of production and, with respect to Freud, they valued his proposal of the existence of an unconscious and of an economy of desire/libido.

Anti-Oedipus provided a strong critique of the then current prevalent ideas of psychoanalysis by providing a new model of psychic and social functioning; a model that was coherent with the nomadic thought that Deleuze saw Nietzsche proposing. Their claim was that psyche is better understood as a *schizophrenic process*[108] rather than a neurotic one. They wrote:

> A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch. A breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 2)

[108] Deleuze and Guattari however make a distinction between schizophrenic process and a person suffering Schizophrenia, the latter being a "failed experiment" of the former because of the "interruption of the schizophrenic process" that leads into collapse or further disintegration into total chaos (Deleuze, 1997, p. 3, Smith, 1997, p. xxi).

Honouring their commitment to the empiricists' principles, Deleuze and Guattari claimed that rather than an image of the psyche as composed of internal – intrapsychic – structures in dynamic relations, the psyche is best understood as a fragmented mind strolling in the outside; a psyche encountering elements that are outside of itself and establishing fragmented relationships with such elements.

Deleuze and Guattari further critiqued psychoanalytic conceptualizations, asserting that the best way to conceptualise the unconscious is as a *desiring-machine,*[109] standing against conceptualizations that used notions of 'repression' and of 'lack' as explanatory notions. Their idea of desire was productive and stood close to Nietzsche's will to power as a creative force that enters in contact with (parts of) the outside. This desiring process is endlessly affirmative and has no space for negative, destructive activities.

The unconscious then is not an Oedipal theatre that (re)produces/(re)presents a (pre)established dramatic script – Oedipus Rex – but a schizophrenic factory that produces social realities. More precisely, the productions of the desiring-machine are two-fold: on the one hand, it produces the (experienced) world and, at the other, the (sense of) self. Both of these are but sides of the same process of encounter. In other words, what is experienced as real is a productive phenomenon – a delirium – that emerges out of the encounters between one's desires and the outside.

Finally, they critiqued psychoanalysis for its unquestioned yet highly problematic collusion with the social organisation of capitalism. As they wrote:

> But we want to show that psychoanalysis is worse than the hospital, precisely because it operates in the pores of capitalist society and not in the special places of confinement. And that it's profoundly reactionary in theory and practice, not just

[109] They chose the concept of machine to make a distinction with notions that are either mechanical or organic.

> ideologically. Psychoanalysis fulfils precise functions in this society. (Deleuze et al., 1972b, p. 220)

Like Marx, Deleuze and Guattari considered capitalism a necessary step forward in terms of social organizations for it freed production from power dynamics and allowed for abstract/free floating partial connections to be established. Yet, capitalism betrays this free floating process of social production through despotic reappropriation of what is produced. According to them, this reappropriation is realised both through the ownership of material properties and, what is of more relevance to the field, through a subjectivity captured into sets of despotic values and power dynamics actualised by 'the family.' From their perspective, the family is an extremely effective machine that serves the interests of the state by inducting new members – children – into the capitalist regime of signs and practices.

In this context, the psychoanalytic Oedipal psyche served a crucial function within capitalist societies by capturing the unconscious as an intimate part of its machinery. By interpreting within the parameters of familiar arrangements the deliriums produced by the desiring-machine, psychoanalysis captured such production from its outwards wanderings. The fundamental protest that Deleuze and Guattari made against psychoanalysis concerns its misreading of the psychic functioning: "the unconscious isn't playing around all the time with mummy and daddy but with races, tribes, continents, history, and geography, always some social frame" (Deleuze et al., 1988, p. 144).

As an alternative to psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari proposed *schizoanalysis.* Schizoanalysis honoured the insights of psychoanalysis in terms of the production of desire yet it was no longer indexed to the family but to the historical, political, and

social world (Deleuze, 1984, p. 238-9), making it "inseparable from its revolutionary component" (Holland, 1999, p. 99). The task of schizoanalysis was "that of learning what a subject's desiring machines are, how they work, with what synthesis, what bursts of energy, what constituents misfires, with what flows, what chains and what becomings in each case" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 338). Schizoanalysis does not aim to 'understand' but to engage more freely with life. This 'liberating' activity was not to be associated with any political or otherwise predefined movement: although social in nature, it was essentially experimental and anarchic.

One significant corollary of this model of psychic and social organization is that there was no 'necessary' tension between the individual and systems of social inscription. The presence and degree of tensions between these two domains will depend on how able the social organization was to respect the individual within the social (Holland, 1999, p. 31). In other words, the stability of any social organisation was to depend on its ability to respect the schizophrenic process proper to the individual psyche which, in its relationship with the outside, established and created the social.

9.3.2.2 A Thousand [and one] plateaus

> In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. (...) All these, lines and measurable speeds, constitute an *assemblage*. (...) It is a multiplicity. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 3-4)

The tensions between the individual wanderings and social regimes were more fully articulated in the second volume of Capitalism and Schizophrenia: *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b). Deleuze and Guattari wrote this volume eight years later, in a far more conservative ("indifferent") milieu than that of *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987a, p. 308).

Consistent with the Nietzschean concept of the eternal return and with Deleuze's commitment to movement in theory, *A Thousand Plateaus* constituted a variation of the initial project: "[it] shares its subtitle (...) but it constitutes a very different project. It is less a critique than a positive exercise in the affirmative 'nomad' thought called for in *Anti-Oedipus*" (Massumi, 1987, p. xi).[110]

Like a painting by Francis Bacon so admired by Deleuze (2004b), concepts change between these two books: no longer "schizophrenia as a process" but "the process of life" (Smith, 1997, p. xxi); no longer productive desiring-machines but assemblages in relation to a territory; and no longer "desiring-machines" but "modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons or subjects" (Deleuze et al., 1980, p.26).

Psychoanalysis, as the measure for individual psychic functioning, is also left behind in one of the plateaus. As Deleuze explained:

> [O]ur last piece on psychoanalysis was something we wrote about the Wolf-Man in *A Thousand Plateaus*, showing how psychoanalysis is unable to think plurality or multiplicity, a pack rather than a lone wolf. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 144)

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, instead of a psyche the focus is on an assemblage: a complex arrangement that includes, but is not exhausted by the individuals. A brief description of some of its central ideas will now be exposed.

9.3.2.2.1 1000[1] plateaus: An open ended multiplicity of milieus

> [E]ach ring or plateau had to map out a range of circumstances […] What we are interested in, you see, are the modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons, or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event. (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 26)

[110] Nomad thought will be further discussed in 9.4.

In many ways, *A Thousand Plateaus* was a significantly more complex project than *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze, 1984, p. 239) with its most intriguing aspect being, perhaps, its structural openness. The book introduced a number of playful *plateaus*, a concept borrowed from Gregory Bateson (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 21-2).

A plateau is "a piece of immanence" (p. 158) that sustains itself. It "designate[s] something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (p. 22). As Massumi explained, plateaus articulate a "libidinal economy quite different from the West's orgasmic orientation" (1987, p. xiv). They hold together different elements – virtual and actual – and create a singular milieu where a distinct assemblage could be identified not as a transcendental essence but as an emergent actualization *out of* its circumstances. As such, each plateau brought forth a unique mode of individuation.

9.3.2.2.2 A Thousand Plateaus as a metaphysical project: On flows and machines.

There is value in briefly discussing the metaphysical and ontological claims proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, prior to referring to the political implications of their work. In order to respond to the relevant question of 'what is a plateau and how do we understand ourselves within it?' there is value in returning to Deleuze's fundamental move from representation and identity to difference and repetition. As discussed, his reorganization focused not on *space* but on *time* as the shaping theme. Central to Deleuze and Guattari's project was the idea of processes and flows. Rather than essences and 'things,' what is foundational for them, is flows of unformed and unstable matter and/or free intensities that traverse the space, at different speeds, passing each other and encountering each other in arbitrary and unforeseeable ways.[111] Visual and re-

[111] This is not a very accurate metaphor since the reference is to unformed matter. As such, it cannot 'pass' or 'encounter' other equally unformed matter. As indicated earlier, when discussing the

presentational attributes were pushed back and were replaced by musical conceptualizations, in particular, by the notion of life as a refrain of endless ritornellos (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, chapter 11, and Deleuze and Eribon, 1991). Music and its pulsating forces resonated strongly with the processes of production and transformation inherent to life.

In Plateau 11, Deleuze and Guattari discussed the rhythms of life that emerge out of this chaotic flow. Like a melody – a refrain, a ritornello – that serves to soothe a child in the darkness, the chaos of flows establishes a sort of order by establishing a rhythm of expansion and contraction.

Coexisting with the processes inherent to flows, there are also machines – *assemblages*. Unlike the (often) negative readings of machines in the field, for Deleuze and Guattari the notion of (functioning) machines was a defining element of life. As indicated, in *Anti-Oedipus,* they introduced the notion of *desiring-machines*. Machine was used in "its maximum extension […] as any system that interrupts flows" (Deleuze et al., 1972b, p. 219). Machines from this perspective impose a certain order – a life. Amongst other things, the desiring-machine is the responsible for the creation of desire.[112]

In *A Thousand Plateaus* the concept of machine is transformed into the concept of *assemblage*. This was a more inclusive and complex concept that expanded from one explaining the functioning of the unconscious psyche into one that incorporated a multitude of other elements. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> On the one hand it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective*

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transformations that take place in the movement from the virtual to the actual, the changes do not take place in a specific domain but in the transition from one to the other. At its best, this metaphor attempts to indicate the highly probabilistic nature of the constitution of matter.

[112] The desiring-machine must not be confused with the subject.

> *assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 88)

Assemblages operate through a continuum process of establishment of territories. As the domains in which they emerged, they also experienced rhythms of expansion and contraction. Their activity generates a "mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing or substance […: a] season, a winter, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 261).

9.3.2.2.3 A Thousand Plateaus as a political project: On state and nomad extensions

> "But we should not confuse these […] assemblages […] with organizations such as the institution of the family and the State apparatus." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 242)

A clear political element was then added into this understanding given the constructed and machinic conceptualization of subjectivity and of life. Patton (2006, p. 108) commented that Deleuze's ideas are especially helpful in understanding the way in which people are subsumed into states. This is possible due to Deleuze's (and Guattari's) nuanced understanding of how space is organised and occupied. They identified two types of spaces: smooth and striated. Striated space is "a space riddled with lines of divide and demarcation that name, measure, appropriate and distribute space according to inherited political designs, history or economic conflict" (Conley, 205, p. 258). A striated space is a well-defined space that captures (nomad) becomings into stable identities; into an interiority that is often confused with subjectivity but, in fact, constitutes a sophisticated mechanism of continuous control (Deleuze and Negri, 1990, Deleuze, 1990c). Striated space is the space of State apparatuses and, as such, it has an implicit danger of overcodification and totalization. For Deleuze and Guattari, "the three great strata concerning us, in other words, the ones that most directly bind us

[are] the organism, significance, and subjectification" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, 159).

Deleuze and Guattari were however more interested in how these assemblages were traversed by forces that made them move elsewhere and change. Change is possible because "*you will never find a homogenous system that is not still or already affected by a regulated, continuous, immanent process of variation*" (p. 103). Their emphasis was on what Deleuze and Guattari called *lines of flight*. Lines of flight permit assemblages to deterritorialise; to detach from the space they had occupied which turned them into predictable and rigid structures or entities.

The space created through this movement is what Deleuze and Guattari called smooth space. They defined this space as "boundless and possibly oceanic, a space that is without border or distinction" (Conley, 205, p. 258). Smooth space is created by assemblages they called *war machines*. In itself a confusing concept, war machines "tend much more to be revolutionary, or artistic, rather than military" (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 33). They were "not 'machines for war,' but are 'roughly synonymous' with the rhizome" (Bonta and Protevi, 2004, p. 136). They were the space where nomad becomings took place.

A final point of clarification is required before turning to nomad thought and rhizomic knowledge. For Deleuze and Guattari, these relationships – between striated state-like spaces and smooth nomadic ones – were neither simple nor lineal. As they explained: "of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. […] Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 500). What mattered for Deleuze and Guattari was the unique "passages and combinations" (ibid) –

the movement – that took place between these two types of spaces; the movement that afforded the uniqueness of each articulation.

9.4 Nomad thought and rhizomic knowledge

> There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies, and then if you're more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers. And you treat the next book like a box contained in the first or containing it. And you annotate and interpret and question, and write a book about the book, and so on and on. Or there is the other way: you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is 'Does it work, and how does it work?' How does it work for you? If it doesn't work, if nothing comes through, you try another book. This second way of reading's [sic] intensive: something comes through or it doesn't. There is nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. It's like plugging in to an electric circuit. […] This second way of reading's [sic] quite different from the first, because it relates a book directly to what's Outside. (Deleuze, 1973a, p. 7-8)

With these clarifications in mind, it is now possible return to his philosophical work and discuss his perhaps most popular concept: the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, Plateau 1). Deleuze connected again with Nietzsche asserting that thought is essentially nomadic and ever-changing in unpredictable ways. As an alternative to the dogmatic image of thought critiqued in *Difference and Repetition,* in *A Thousand Plateaus* they offered "an empiricism that unfolds […] rhizomically, in shoots and connections emanating from a middle without [origins or] ends: a free multiplicity that allows for all sorts of nomadic couplings and connections that are irreducible to an overarching structure" (May, 2001, para. 12).

Rhizome is a central concept to Deleuzian thought. It "is the best term to designate multiplicities" (Deleuze, 1990a, p. 362). The rhizome characterizes the type of

knowledge proper to nomadic thought. Deleuze and Guattari even stated that the "the brain's [sic] organized like a rhizome" (Deleuze et al., 1988, p. 149).[113]

In botany, the rhizome refers to a type of plant that is essentially different to the tree: instead of having a lineal and centralised distribution (roots, trunk, branches and leaves), the rhizome growths by extending itself through/on the surface and developing both roots and offshoots when it finds a nurturing environment. Rhizomic knowledge, in turn, is a type of knowledge that is essentially decentralised. Instead of constructing itself 'vertically' – deeper into an ever-increasing interiority or higher into a parallel ever-increasing totalitarian regime of signs – rhizomic knowledge grows 'horizontally' constantly expanding in unpredictable yet highly complex ways. Instead of being a stable thought, it is highly contingent and contextual.

As knowledge, it does not attempt to represent an image of the world but is fundamentally connective and productive. It establishes experimental connections with the outside; an outside that is – in itself – also shifting. This is thought in movement – a war machine as mentioned earlier – that engages with the world in an empirical way, creating spaces of existence; populating "desert islands" (Deleuze, 2004a) with different entities that are, themselves, continually changing.

9.5 Concluding Remarks: Engaging with a world to come

> When someone asks "what's the use of philosophy?" the reply must be aggressive, since the question tries to be ironic and caustic. Philosophy does not serve the State or the Church, who have other concerns. It serves no established power. The use of philosophy is to *sadden*. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is

[113] They explain further: "'an uncertain system,' with probabilistic, semi-aleatory, quantum mechanisms. Not that our thinking starts from what we know about the brain but that any new thought races uncharted channels directly through its matter, twisting, folding, fissuring it. […] New connections, new pathways, new synapses, that's what philosophy calls into play as it creates concepts" (ibid).

> not a philosophy. It is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful. Its only use is the exposure of all forms of baseness of thought… Fighting the *ressentiment* and bad conscience which have replaced thought for us. Conquering the negative and its false glamour. Who has an interest in all this but philosophy? (Deleuze, 1986b, p. 106)

> In a modern world of stupefying banality, routine cliché, mechanical reproduction or automatism, the problem is to extract a singular image, a vital multiple way of thinking and saying. (Rajchman, 2000, p. 125)

May opened his introduction to the work of Deleuze by stating that the philosophical question that has emerged during the twentieth century – "in the wake created by thinkers such as Nietzsche and Sartre" (May, 2005, p. 4) – was that of *how might one live.* This is the question that Deleuze addressed throughout his project. The elegance and value that many in philosophy and cultural studies see in his project rely on Deleuze's ability to maintain a singular consistency with respect to immanence as the ground to understand difference. More than Hegel's dialectic, it is the guiding principle of transcendence – with, as Foucault pointed out (1983d), its fascist ideological effects when applied in concrete politics – that Deleuze questioned, through not only a critical but also as an affirmative project. In line with insights in modern physics, accepting the constructive radicalness of Deleuze's critique requires an understanding that it is no longer possible to believe in the existence of a transcendental order and/or a stability that could provide (external) organisational principles to one's life. Current dilemmas are no longer a matter of interpretation, of unveiling a truth awaiting its discovery by a discerning reader.

Deleuze's order of things is 'ironically self-aware' to the extent that foundational – existential – questions regarding one's own existence cannot be ignored nor can they be taken for granted. They need to be considered instead in their own measure, as a process

of radical construction; as pertaining to a Munchausen-ian will that affirms life by its own accord. Such a will is not an individual process but a collective one; a process that includes yet is not exhausted by real people in the richness of their everyday life.

Deleuze also warns of the seduction of easily conceived and/or ready-made solutions – of end products and grand solutions – which solidify ideas into extinction. "We require just a little order to protect us from chaos" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 201), enough to soothe one's existential angst but not too much so as to disengage from the ongoing process of encountering new fragments and new problems. What Deleuze invites us to do with his concepts is to appreciate the complex balance in life; of a need for order within a context of disorder. Such a balance calls for a complex engagement with life; an engagement which has the effect of an eternal celebration of difference and multiplicity; an engagement that is endlessly inviting to think anew.

This brings us to a final comment on the power of these ideas, a comment that refers us back to the political and ethical aspect of knowledge. It is in this area that one can see the powerful connections between the work of Foucault and Deleuze, connections that perhaps account for their sustained friendship: in order to live life, there is a need for a thoughtful consideration of the perils lurking in the endless process of control present in any state. In their shared Nietzschean heritage, both Foucault and Deleuze acknowledged the (modern) human condition as a category created by its (modern) circumstances: a new image of thought that conveys both its possibilities – for self-creation – and the dangers of living a life of subordination and domination (Deleuze, 1966). The care of the self, the need to take responsibility for the life that we live and, simultaneously, engage with the social – that is, with structures larger than the self – is

indeed present equally in both of these authors. For both of them there is an art in living, an art that sees in each of us an artist in waiting.

Both Foucault and Deleuze have highly nuanced conceptualizations of the insidious subjectifications currently available in any society; mechanisms of control that are not centrally controlled but constitute invisible webs of surveillance. The question of *how one might live* has then a political and ethical domain that can be summarized through these Deleuzian words:

> So how can we manage to speak without giving orders, without claiming to represent something or someone, how can we get people without the right to speak, to speak; and how can we restore to sounds their part in the struggle against power? I suppose that's what it means to be like a foreigner in one's own language, to trace a sort of line of flight for words. (Deleuze, 1976, p. 41)

Chapter 10 – Becomings of life

> What is interesting is that the Greeks seem to have thought of *anangke* [destiny, necessity] as a totally impersonal theme in the structure of the human world. It is as if, from the initial act onwards, dice were loaded against the participants. The theme, as it worked itself out, used humans emotions and motives as its means, but the theme itself (we would vulgarly call it a "force") was thought to be impersonal, beyond and greater than gods and persons, a bias or warp in the structure of the universe. Such ideas occur at other times and in other cultures. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p.137)

> What is immanence? A life… No one has described what *a* life is better than Charles Dickens […]. Between [a disreputable man's] life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of *a* life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life […]: a "*homo tantum*" with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil […] The life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life… (Deleuze, 2001b, p. 28-9)

Reading Bateson 'through' Foucault – in what has been termed the Bateson-Foucault assemblage – provides the field of family therapy with an analytical and critical appreciation of how knowledge and one's sense of self are constructed through discursive practices that shape specific distributions of power in the social field. This approach can be powerfully used to reclaim the radical nature of systemic thinking. Deleuze on the other hand, presents a different, perhaps complementary, project to the one of Foucault, which focuses instead on Bateson's own commitment against the reification of nature into 'things' and the rigidization of the constructed and constructive nature of knowledge and nature. This is possible because, as explained in the previous chapter, Deleuze's project has an inherent focus on movement and processes; of machines working and producing possibilities of individuation.

Compared with Deleuze, Foucault's project gives the impression of being static.[114] Foucault demands that his readers approach a situation with a cold and analytical detachment, even a detachment from the reader's own sense of self. In many ways, Foucault's project is a radical critique that takes the field of analysis-critique to its limits, remaining however *still* within its confines. Deleuze on the contrary, demands the reader to forget critical activity and fully engage with the actualization of difference through the production of alternative modes of being. No time to analyse but to create; to dissolve one's self through encounters with the outside in an almost opposite gesture to the one of Foucault.

The value lies precisely in this difference between their projects, for they articulate a Batesonian double description that has energizing effects on the field. This is not to say that, if read independently, the connections established with each of these authors do not

[114] This has been discussed with Deleuze who agreed that his was a "more fluid view of the social world than Foucault's [who] uses more architectural metaphors" (1986a, p.280).

provide a wealth of information. The point is however, that the articulation of a pragmatics that emerges from a philosophy of difference needs to, as Deleuze himself had indicated, be shown to be itself differing. In this context, this chapter and the next have a double imperative. On the one hand, they need to stand to individual scrutiny in their coherence and value. On the other hand, they should also be read as running in parallel to Chapters 7 and 8. In order to support this double requirement, these chapters attempt to follow a similar structure to Chapters 7 and 8 even when, at times, the styles and the effects called upon by these authors are quite different.

10.1 The uses of Deleuze in family therapy

> And we are stuck in familialism as we indicated earlier. Perhaps confirming Bateson's intellectual force in the field, we can find in his idea of double bind something that can help us to move forward. There are a number of connections traversing through the work of both Bateson and Deleuze that help us understand the power of the double bind as a line of flight. (Barbetta and Nichterlein, 2010, p. 403-4)

> [A]nd the work scholars wanted to add "attachment" too. With a civilization changing technologically at a rapid rate, the relationship of these words begins to be a sort of pincers that keeps catching us. […] It's a very elaborate organic attachment, not just a parasite we could shake off tomorrow and feel relieve, but symbiotic whose tissues have grown together with our tissues. And the withdrawal symptoms would be pretty remarkable if we started to drop it. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 130)

Following with this intent and repeating the start of Chapter 7, a first step is to reconnoitre the appropriation of Deleuze's ideas in the field and the extent in which such reading holds true to Deleuze's own project. In many ways, this is an easier task with Deleuze than Foucault for Deleuze has only recently attracted the imagination of practitioners in the field. When this thesis commenced, back in 2005, there was hardly

anything written on Deleuze's ideas in the field, let alone connecting his work with the one of Bateson. Despite Deleuze's appreciation of Bateson's work (1981a, para. 25, 1981b, para. 47) and Guattari's direct praises of the field (1989), the literature search found that, with the exception of a very informal piece written by the present author (2004), there were only a few references to the work of Guattari (Elkaim, 1982, 1997, and Fried Schnitman, 1994).

This state of affairs has changed since 2006. This chapter will start the analysis of these readings starting with Hoffman and her colleague, given that Hoffman's work can be seen as a later variation of SC in the field. The focus will then move to the narrative uses of Deleuze's ideas.

10.1.1 Rhizomic (social) networks

> The rhizome is a social network, like Facebook. (Kinman, 2012a)

> It's become a common place these days to talk about the breakdown of systems, the impossibility of constructing a system now that knowledge has become so fragmented ("we are no longer in the nineteenth century…"). There are two problems with this idea: people can't imagine doing any serious work except on very restricted and specific little series; worse still, any broader approach is left to the spurious work of visionaries, with anyone saying whatever comes into their heads. Systems have in fact lost absolutely none of their power. All the groundwork for a theory of so-called open-systems is in place in current science and logic, systems based on interactions, rejecting only linear forms of causality, and transforming the notion of time… What I and Guattari call a rhizome is precisely one example of an open system. (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 31-2)

Hoffman's introduced her interest in Deleuze's work in March 2008 at the XVI World IFTA Congress in Porto, Portugal. She introduced her interest as the result of her collaborations with the Canadian community worker Christopher Kinman. Perhaps

continuing her tradition as a host in the field, Hoffman's presentation was entitled "Interlopers and Upstarts: Family Therapy in the Rhizome Century." Her presentation was followed by Kinman's workshop "The Idea of the Rhizome and the Way of the Gift-Exchange."

Since then, Hoffman and Kinman have continued their collaboration presenting their ideas using multimedia and the popular wide world web. Kinman manages a website – "rhizomeway" (2012a) – where articles written by Hoffman (2008a, 2008b) provide the theoretical underpinnings of their work. Their aim seems to be the facilitation of a global network of practitioners that connect with each other around some key Batesonian and Deleuzian ideas. Consistent with this purpose, they recently organised a conference: *Gregory Bateson and the rhizome century: building sustainable webs* (Kinman, 2012b).

This line of enquiry clearly has particular relevance to this thesis. Although a promising development of interest in Deleuze's work, there are nonetheless significant difficulties with their project. First and aware that generic (mis)readings of Bateson have already been discussed in Chapter 4, there are specific difficulties pertaining to their reading of Bateson's project, a reading in which they have disconnected Bateson's articulation of an ecology of mind from his profound commitment to critical scientific enquiry. Perhaps due to her own dislike of cybernetics, Hoffman's claims seem to imply that Bateson's later developments constituted a move away from science, logic and, perhaps more worryingly, cybernetical matters. Instead, Hoffman saw Bateson as articulating an interest with "analogy, similitude and metaphor" (2008a, para. 5) as the type of communication proper to Creatura. For Hoffman this was a welcomed move that she further associated with the dislike Bateson had for Haley's emphasis on control.

Accordingly, her proposal reads Bateson's work (just) as a type of creative (humanistic) poetics, where loose connections can be established in discourse. The implied assumption is that it is in this (poetic) looseness that genuine human connections can take place.

This claim however stands in contrast with the type of language that Bateson was investigating. His interest in analogic modes of communication[115] was not, as stated in Chapter 2, a move to distance himself from science. On the contrary, he was in search of an alternative scientific proposal – "as Creatural scientist" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 192) – that could address the limitations Bateson saw in Cartesian logic, behaviourism and positivism. Unlike Hoffman, Bateson never abandoned cybernetics or the need for a method that could help understand the living world. For Bateson, such a method would not dismiss but rather add complexity to the rules established in the non-organic life of Pleroma. Furthermore, what made Creatura distinct to Pleroma was not the presence of analogy or metaphor but the fact that an observation took place. An observation turns the predictable activities proper of the latter unpredictable. This is the distinction that von Foerster established between trivial and non-trivial machines as discussed earlier. In summary, Bateson's project is a scientific project that not only requires poetic synthesis but also significant discipline and rigour; words that have often been misconstrued as cold engineering and technification in Hoffman's later writings.

More relevant to this section, there are also difficulties in their reading of Deleuze, in particular, in their reading of the Deleuzian concept of a rhizome as a metaphor. The critique is twofold. First, Deleuze – like Bateson – was well-known for disliking a lack

[115] Analogic modes of communication should not be confused however with metaphor. Bateson referred to metaphors in a particular way: to refer to a topological method to address the application of logical typing.

of rigour that he associated with those who use the language of metaphors. As Deleuze stated, “all metaphors are sullied words, or else make them so” (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 3). As indicated in the opening quotation for this section, the rhizome for Deleuze was not an alternative to a systemic approach but a particular example of systems: an open one.

A further difficulty emerges when Hoffman uses rhizome as a concept to refer to the politics of both her work and the (post) Milan Group. She considers rhizome to be a useful concept to describe the vast network of professionals with whom she had engaged in her productive life in the field. Joining with Kinman’s notion of “gift-exchanges” (Kinman, 2011), theirs is an overt attempt to define a new “brand” of practice (Hoffman, 2008a, para. 5). Such a venture however impresses more as a gesture of late capitalist globalization rather than of a Deleuzian nomadism. In fact, there is a need to face the prospect that their emphasis on the rhizome as a core concept to represent their approach might be misleading and that, perhaps instead of a rhizome, their project is better read as a fascicular type of knowledge. Fascicular knowledge is a nuanced distinction that Deleuze and Guattari made to refer to a type of knowledge that is a distortion of traditional (tree) type knowledge. Fascicular knowledge emerges when “the principal root is aborted, or its tip has been destroyed [and] an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 5). For Deleuze and Guattari, fascicular knowledge is dangerous insofar as it appears to be a validation of diversity when, in fact, it “it does not really break away from dualism […] while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject” (p. 6).

10.1.2 Deleuze and narrative lines of flight

> What is the task of therapy? To create/produce arenas and possibilities of visibility where we can become visible to ourselves and to others… where we get a kind of sense of self… where we become alive again. (Holmgren and Holmgren, 2011, 49:10 - 49:30)

> We've been trying to create concepts with fine articulations, extremely differentiated concepts, to escape gross dualisms. And we've been trying to uncover *creative functions* which would no longer require an *author-function* for them to be active […]. This wholesale return to the author, to an empty and vain subject, as well as to gross conceptual stereotypes, represents a troubling reactionary development. (Deleuze, 1977, p. 139-40)

Apart of the present author, Jenkins[116] is perhaps the earliest reader of Deleuze in the (English speaking) field. Jenkins investigations into Deleuze are included in this section to acknowledge his long friendship and connection to White. Jenkins introduced his interest in Deleuze during his keynote presentation at the 26th Australian Family Therapy Conference (2006). He has continued to write in this area (2009, 2011a, and 2011b). In many ways, Jenkins' investigations have more coherence than Hoffman's attempts. By avoiding technical discussions, Jenkins focuses on the experimental element of Deleuze's work. There is in his writing however still a focus on personal agency – at times, even of redemption – in ways that point to a humanistic reframing of Deleuze's work.

This tendency can be seen even more clearly in the recent work of other narrative theorists. There has been a surge on writings on Deleuze in the narrative field, as a result of White's beginning interests in Deleuze just prior to his sudden death (Winslade, 2009, p. 345, Carey, 2011, para. 1). In their desire to honour White, these

[116] Alan Jenkins is an experienced and well recognized Australian practitioner working in the area of domestic violence (1990).

authors wrote of 'lines of flight' as a personal technique (Winslade, 2009) that could be mastered rather than as a process of apersonal deterritorialization that requires a disengagement with prior subjectivities. Similarly other narrative authors have simplified Deleuze's concept of difference to mean "the baseline of experience" (Carey et al., 2009, p. 322).

These writers in narrative therapy have continued with White's tradition of using theoretical concepts by giving subjective meanings to the material. Their reading orients to a humanistic becoming rather than a Deleuzian *becoming-imperceptible*.

10.2 Reading Bateson through Deleuze

> If any particular anthropologist were to be singled out for his importance on Deleuze and Guattari's *oeuvre*, it would have to be Gregory Bateson. (Jensen and Rodje, 2012, p. 18)

> What Bateson wrote with such angelic clarity was a philosophy of mind inhering in relationships – not only between people, as Sullivan had suggested, but also between living beings in evolving biological fields, such as the prairie or the redwood forest. Mind has an 'ecology,' he wrote, a set of lawful external relations. (Beels, 2001, p. 88)

Given the previous clarifications, the task of establishing productive connections between the work of Deleuze and Bateson is still to be done, a task that fits with the importance Deleuze gives to clearing the space for 'the new' to emerge (2004b, p. 11).

As indicated in Chapter 5, it is in Deleuze that Bateson finds perhaps one of his strongest allies in furthering the articulation of an ecology of mind. Engaging with Deleuze's ideas provides a powerful leverage to set Bateson's radical spirit unhinged "from the doldrums of an aging uncritical and atheoretical museum of ideas of family therapy" (Nichterlein, 2005, p. 73).

A recent publication by Brown (2012) provides a very useful frame to articulate this encounter, even when his distinctions are made in the context of a different project. Brown proposes four general areas in which Deleuze's project is of relevance to the social sciences.

10.2.1 Nomads in search of a sacred plateau (of difference)

> This concept [the double-bind], as developed by Gregory Bateson, was to have a profound influence on Deleuze and Guattari's work. (Bell, 1995, p. 2)

> These two species of superstition […] the supernatural and the mechanical, feed each other. In our day, the premise of external mind seems to invite charlatanism, promoting in turn a retreat back into a materialism which then becomes intolerably narrow. We tell ourselves that we are choosing our philosophy by scientific and logical criteria, but in truth our preferences are determined by a need to change from one posture of discomfort to another. Each theoretical system is a cop-out, tempting us to escape from the opposite fallacy. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 51)

The first of Brown's areas of relevance relates to the conceptualization of Deleuze's project as a *flat ontology*; an ontology that affords the articulation of "the magic that we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM" (p. 105).

The search for this flat ontology connects with the profound intellectual disquiet that both Bateson and Deleuze shared in relation to prevalent understandings of thought and of knowledge. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bateson referred to his discontent by using the English figure of speech "Every Schoolboy Knows." Interestingly, Deleuze used a similar figure when articulating his concerns with a philosophy of representation. As Deleuze wrote:

> Everybody knows, in a pre-philosophical and pre-conceptual manner... everybody knows what it means to think and to be... As a result, when the philosopher says 'I think therefore I am', he can assume that the universality of his premises – namely,

> what it means to be and to think ... – will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think, and to think is to be ... Everybody knows, no one can deny, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. When philosophy rests its beginning upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back – except, of course, the essential – namely, the form of this discourse. (1994, p. 129-30)

No doubt, their discontent was, as expected within a philosophy of difference, due to different 'particular' reasons. It seems reasonable to argue however that both were concerned with the value of then prevalent forms of disciplinary knowledge, engaging instead in constructively affirming an alternative. In line with May's comment referred to earlier – that Deleuze was the only one of his generation to provide a positive proposal – Bateson was not only straying away of the established milieus of academia but was, simultaneously, engaging in a line of flight for the social sciences.

Both Bateson and Deleuze's projects offered an alternative that was systemic and immanent in nature. Furthermore, both their projects broke away from traditionally held mind-body dualisms and challenged notions of transcendence and external authority. It is in the theme of articulating a theory based on immanence – where diversity is understood within a fundamental unity – that Brown's first area of interest is foundational for both Deleuze and Bateson. The complex articulation of differences within a common substratum – of an immanent difference – becomes a platform to explore the resonances between these two authors. There are three dimensions that could help articulate the connections between Bateson and Deleuze within this substratum.

10.2.2 Three differential concepts

> Forms are totally necessary if we are to understand both the freedoms and the rigidities of living systems. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 166)

> What we are interested, you see, are modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons, or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event. And maybe it's a mistake to believe in the existence of things, persons, or subjects. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 26)

As previously indicated, this chapter is organised so that it could be read in parallel to Chapter 7. In that chapter, Foucault's three axes – knowledge, power and self – were used to frame the Bateson-Foucault encounter. This was a structure that was syntonic with Foucault's idea. With Deleuze, a different order is required. What is central for Deleuze is the differentiation that takes place in the creation of new concepts. Deleuze's focus connects with Bateson's interest in "*the difference that makes a difference in some later event*" (1973, p. 351). As pre-empted earlier, the three critical points identified in this section relate intimately to the remaining areas identified by Brown's.[117] First, Brown's second area of relevance – *the critique of common sense* – will be discussed in relation to the centrality of thought and of formalization. Second, Brown's third area – *the demolition of the subject* – a point that will be sketched here but will be expanded in 10.3.1, will be used to comment on the centrality of difference in its participation in the continual articulation of immanent systems. Finally, the Deleuzian concept of becoming will be discussed to address Brown's fourth area: issues of power and control.

10.2.2.1 On thought and formalizations as human activities: Breaking concepts open and away from common and good sense

> The extraordinary achievement of the writers of the first chapter of Genesis was their perception of the problem: *Where does order come from?* […] This problem has been central to biology and to many other sciences for the last five thousand years, and the problem is not trivial. (Bateson, 1970b, p. 313)

[117] Brown's points also resonate with Foucault's referential axes affording possible further connections.

> The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept or the signifier, but the *assemblage*. […]which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events. The proper name does not designate a subject, but something which happens, at least between two terms which are not subjects, but agents, elements. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 38)

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze critiqued a philosophy of representation, in particular its manifestations as *common and good sense*. As Brown explained, Deleuze instead asserted "that thinking only really begins when its faculty is confronted by a 'sign' that throws it into 'discord'" (2012, p. 106). It is in the discord, when "what is expected" is no longer there, that thought is called for in a similar way that, for Bateson, information is only achieved through a difference that makes a difference.

Both Bateson and Deleuze saw constructivism as central to human activity. Yet, unlike current versions of constructivism present in the field, Bateson's and Deleuze's approach did not refer to an open-ended story-telling, nor to an abstract notion of negotiability. For them, life is not a story that can be organised according to linguistic structures and cannot be managed by a storyteller of sorts, regardless how sublime such a storyteller and/or story may be.

Bateson and Deleuze were interested instead in the process of construction in itself, aware that "the mental world is vastly bigger than what we are" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 174). Both also agreed that, in order to comprehend this functioning, one has to accept that "[i]n the natural history of the living human being, ontology and epistemology cannot be separated" (Bateson, 1971a, p. 285). 'Knowing' and 'being' interlace in life highlighting the experimental nature of such process. Furthermore, for Deleuze, what was particularly relevant in life was not the stable and predictable aspects

of experience but the acts of transgression to that stability. It was in these transgressions that life was affirmed.

Within this common agreement in a radical constructivism, Deleuze's particular insights into empiricism have much to offer to the field's attempt to (re)read Bateson's project. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deleuze's empiricism opens concepts that are often taken for granted to the most rigorous interrogation: "concepts do not explain but need to be explained" was perhaps one of the ideas that Whitehead discussed at the Bateson's home in one of their Sunday lunches (Peterson, 2010, p. 26). Such an examination introduces an awareness that formalization – the creation of form – is central not just for cognitive/epistemological purposes but for life activity as a whole. The call by Spencer-Brown to "draw a distinction" (1979), was for Bateson the first step in the world of Creatura.

Drawing a distinction, in turn, expands with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *refrain* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, Plateau 11): a difference that returns and, in its return, establishes a certain rhythm. With the notion of the refrain, the process of formalization core to Bateson's constructivist thought acquires movement. A distinction is transformed into a "series" (2001a): not just the drawing of one (transcendental) distinction but a number of repetitions of such a distinction. In a series there is a double movement that both confirms elements within the repetition as well as undergoes variations. This nuanced understanding simultaneously confirms the validity of what is consciously experienced (including the conditions of emergence of such consciousness) as well as the possibility of otherwise; of a future that could be different. It is in this *double confirmation* that the radical exercise of construction embedded in a metaphysics

of continuous differentiation acquires its full force when compared to a transcendental reality brought forth by a philosophy of representation.

In line with these constructivist considerations, there are a number of similitudes[118] that may be identified between Bateson's scientific orientation and Deleuze's philosophic project:

10.2.2.1.1 A material and ethical orientation

At the formal end, both Bateson and Deleuze were committed to a material orientation. Bateson's project "studied the area of impact between very abstract and formal philosophic thought on the one hand and a natural history of man and other creatures on the other" (Bateson, 1970a, p. 423). Like Deleuze's metaphysical investigations, Bateson was interested in a material understanding of the world of the living. Furthermore, both of them appreciated the detrimental effects of a type of knowledge that excises human activity from the world in which such activity takes place. For Bateson, the articulation of a relational kind of knowledge was not just an analytical exercise but was also intimately associated with an ethical position that, he strongly felt, was necessary to address the *real* (ecological) dangers created by human activity. In a similar spirit, Deleuze's project was intimately associated with the events of May '68 and addressed a different level of damaging effects of human activity, namely, the dangers of fascism in thought. For both of them, the intolerable was neither a personal affair nor an ideological/discursive one, but a profoundly ecological dysfunction that called for a different kind of thought.

[118] These similitudes have led to the recent identification of Bateson's cybernetics as a good example of Deleuzian nomad science (Pickering, 2010, 2012).

10.2.2.1.2 Complex assemblages

The relational knowledge called forth by Deleuze's project not only focuses on a connection between people and their environment but also establishes connections between (empirical) concepts, perceptions and affects, offering strong support to Bateson's search for a logic that honours the "reasons of the heart" (1967, p. 111-2). It is in the concept of *assemblage* that a full appreciation of a language that escapes Cartesian dualism presents most concretely. This concept will be discussed further in 10.2.3.

10.2.2.1.3 Open(ning) systems

Empiricism for Deleuze also makes the concept accountable to the social for 'it needs to be explained'; it needs to be put into practice and it needs to *become* meaningful for those using it. As Deleuze writes, "Concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations" (1994, p. xx). Bateson was also aware of this requirement when he was in search of new theoretical conceptualizations for the social sciences and when he was concerned about the education provided to fellow citizens. This social and relational orientation within empiricism affords the emergence of a (micro)political element. An example of this reorientation can be found embedded in the concept of the double bind: is pathology an individual characteristic or is it something that is distributed within a certain field? Seen from this perspective, Bateson's double bind is not an abstract conceptual exercise but an attempt to articulate – to give/provide shape to – a social theory of complexity.

10.2.2.2 (Actual) Differences and lines away from the subject

> To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it.
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p.22)

> Central to the effort to describe Creatura is the problem of a description consisting of multiple parts which are nevertheless *unified*, with a logical organization which in some way models the complexity of organization in living systems. Within the living system, myriad separate events occur, and yet somehow the whole hangs together. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 193)

The third of Brown's area of relevance is Deleuze's treatment of the notion of the subject. As he states, "the demolition of the 'subject' accomplished in *Anti-Oedipus* offers a comprehensive rebuttal to the idea […] that it is necessary to constitute a theory of the subject as a means of accounting for how persons 'invest' in discursive fields" (p. 106).

Deleuze's conceptualizations around the notion of the subject will be discussed in the next chapter. It is important at this point however to address the ontological and metaphysical aspects underlying conceptualizations of the subject. This refers to Deleuze's commitment to a philosophy of difference. Bateson of course shared a similar fascination towards difference. There is an interesting synchronicity in their research: as Deleuze was writing *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Bateson was writing about the centrality of difference in any process of categorization inherent to living processes (1971b, p. 29). Deleuze was critiquing static images of thought in philosophy, around the same time that Bateson was working on the distinction between Pleroma and Creatura.

Bateson's work supported an engagement with a qualitatively different type of knowledge. His distinction between Pleroma and Creature confirmed *formal* difference as central to his project by affirming the validity of not one but two levels in which

phenomena simultaneously takes place.[119] Bateson's distinction also affirmed difference as a specific *content*: difference was for Bateson the core component of both an (ecological) mind[120] and, in general, the world of the living.[121] These ideas have strong resonance with Deleuze's articulation of a differing difference as discussed in the previous chapter.

Expanding on these insights, a centrality of difference adds an interesting twist in terms of the relation of the virtual with a material world. Deleuze's use of Nietzsche's eternal return affirms that, if we are to know anything about the world, it is that it will change. Deleuze's critique of philosophy as an exercise or representation emerges out of this awareness. Similarly, Bateson was constantly warning against the dangers of reification: "[t]here are no things in Creatura, only ideas, images, clusters of abstract relations" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 188). Against the common sense of everyday perception, both Bateson and Deleuze were emphatic that, rather than looking at 'things,' there was a need to look at the system – the field of resonance – out of which 'things' emerged.

In this context, a unified subjectivity is an alienating reification. Instead of a subject, both Bateson and Deleuze challenged the reader to think systemically. Both of them had a strong understanding of systems which, as Bateson often stressed, is not an addition of individual parts. Bateson's statement could perhaps be better understood using its Deleuzian counterpart: in order for the one – the unique – to be constituted, it needs to

[119] "Although there is an apparent dualism in this dichotomy between Creatura and Pleroma, it is important to be clear that these two are not in any way separate or separable, except as levels of description" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 18).
[120] "Of course, the sensory end organ is material, but it is in this *responsiveness to difference* that we shall use to distinguish its functioning as "mental" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 17).
[121] "[W]e will use *Creatura* for that world of explanation which the very phenomena to be described are among themselves governed and determined by difference, distinction and information" (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 18, see also Bateson 1969, p. 242).

be subtracted from the multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 6). This subtraction – "*n*-1" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 6) – does not refer to a breakdown of systems. Deleuze used this argument to assert the productive element of systems and to reject linear forms of causality that led to a unified and totalizing field. As indicated earlier, the rhizome is precisely one example of an open system (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 31-2). Deleuze was not against machines. Quite the contrary, as indicated in the previous chapter, assemblages *are* machines.

10.2.2.3 Becomings and 'the problem of purpose and control'

> Deleuzean pragmatics will argue for a necessary order, form, protocol, etc., but will likewise claim that such a protocol cannot, nor should it, be used to determine what the order will be like in the future. There is thus a purposiveness to Deleuzean pragmatics, for there is the creation of a necessary order and protocol which circumvents the double bind, but there is no purpose or goal which transcends this purposiveness.
> As purposiveness without purpose, Deleuzean pragmatics attempts to clarify the plateaus, planes of consistency, and assemblages that are themselves constitutive and constituted exemplifications of this purposiveness without purpose. Pragmatics has no prior agenda (i.e., purpose), nor is it without purpose; it makes plateaus and rhizomes. (Bell, 1995, p. 29-30)

The last of Brown's areas refers to Deleuze "offer[ing] an account of power that transcends many of the limitations of both classical Neo-Marxist and more recent Foucaultian notions" (p. 106). As explained through Chapters 2 and 3, power and one of its manifestations – control – have been at the heart of Batesonian and cybernetic investigations. In fact, in their wish to avoid traditional (humanistic) lines of thinking around power and governance, Bateson and other cyberneticians looked at these notions with an almost Deleuzian naïveté. Theirs had the necessary newness in the gaze for the creation of concepts. In this context, it is not surprising that discussions around

therapeutic micro-politics – of the power dynamics within families and between families and therapists – were soon to be strongly felt in the field. As explained in Chapter 2, Bateson's departure from the field was not due to concerns regarding the need to discuss issues of power, but to the premature and reductionist nature of both these discussions and the attempts to implement these insights into the clinic. It was Bateson's belief that a premature closure and application would lead to a rigidification in the positioning of all parties involved.

Within his general concern regarding reification (e.g., 1969a, p. 243), his specific concerns regarding control and purpose – concerns that were present since very early in his career[122] – were more nuanced than just a reactionary antagonism. Bateson did not consider that the controls and restraints inherent to regulation were per se a problem, a theoretical mistake of sorts. His point was rather that such regulation is non-lineal and could not be controlled by a conscious and individual mind (i.e. a therapist). For Bateson, such a regulation relates to organic – often invisible to conscious perception – ecological processes. Bateson was acutely aware that premature (e.g. consciously instructive) solutions often have iatrogenic consequences of great significance. Consider, for example, his hesitations in relation to the premature publication of their paper on the double bind (e.g., 1977a, p. 206) or his reflections on the political events around Versailles (1966). It is in this context that a commonality can be claimed between Bateson and Deleuze – both of them conceptualized the self as 'off centre,' as part of a larger ecology/assemblage.

[122] In 1925, a young Bateson wrote to his mother: "I argue 'Animals are very complicated and adapted but not purposed (i.e. designed), therefore machines which are complicated and adapted are not *purposed*. And I say it shamelessly and would add that even if machines are purposed I will not worry much about their purposes, neither shall I fall down and worship 'em.'" (Bateson in Lipset, 1980, p. 111).

Furthermore, Deleuze's concept of an assemblage provides a nuanced articulation of a way forward for Bateson's insights. Deleuze's assertion that "[e]verything is simply an encounter in the universe, a good or bad encounter" (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 45) provides this opening. Encounters take place and are the constitutive feature of what Deleuze and Guattari called assemblages. In some respects, assemblages are machines that process encounters in the 'schizophrenic walk.' As such, the notion of assemblage is a more refined and complex understanding of the commonly held notion of 'system' for it is defined simultaneously by "matters of expression," "acts of discernment" and "molecular combinations" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 336-7). An assemblage is not only a combination "of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another [but also] of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 88). In other words, the concept of assemblage includes both pragmatic (actions and passions) and semiotic (a regime of sigs) considerations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 504).

When compared with Deleuze's notion of an assemblage, the social constructionist (SC) approach to human systems is reductionist in its claim that "essentially social systems are systems that exist only in meaningful linguistic exchange" (Anderson et al., 1986, p. 3). The SC approach reduces the focus of explanation to *only* the linguistics aspects of what takes place, if not to *only* the consciously 'negotiable' aspects. In an assemblage on the other hand, a specific story is embedded within a certain constellation of material conditions that are both able to work together[123] and opened to an infinite number of (future) alternative (re)organizations. It is this openness in its organization – what Deleuze would call 'open system' – that affords the movement within and between

[123] "The assemblage's only unit is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'" (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p.52).

concepts. The movement of an assemblage however is not a predictable lineal movement of growth and/or maturation. On the contrary, it is a movement that radicalises the concerns that Bateson had with the notion of the self and of *hubris* by setting a unique and counterintuitive direction to the movement of humans, that of becoming-imperceptible. This concept will be discussed in the next section.

There is one final element of importance when understanding the potential of the concept of assemblage for the field. As indicated before, core to Bateson's and Deleuze's project is the articulation of immanent forms of organisation. The immanence of assemblages is confirmed through their unpredictable wanderings. As Deleuze stated, their activity is better represented with the image of nomadic "war machines" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, Plateau 12). These are machines that are in constant tension with the attempts of the State to capture them within its grid. It is in this context, of a nuanced interplay between the (capturing) mechanisms of the state and the nomadic war machine, where a political dimension emerges. In this dimension, the nomadic war machine has strong resonances with the ecological considerations of Bateson, shaping the value of an ethical approach to life.

10.3 Productive encounters

In line with the structure of Chapter 7, this chapter started with a review of the (mis)readings of Deleuze in the field. The chapter then proceeded to engage in an interrogation of the connections between, this time, Bateson and Deleuze. This investigation looked at the way in which both Deleuze and Bateson focused their research in a similar core concept: difference. This conceptual core commonality was then further interrogated in a manner that was partly syntonic with the use of Foucault's referential axes. Difference was discussed in three dimensions: in its participation in the

formalization not only of concepts but of life; in terms of its participation in descriptions of singularity that escape the subject, forming instead complex and open systems; and in its relation to purpose and control, in particular in its nuanced interplay with state ready-made definitions. These considerations on the commonalities between Bateson and Deleuze's use of difference provide a shared *differential* foundation.

Such a theoretical foundation however does not have a lineal translation to material actualities. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deleuze asserted that, as with other movements, the transition from the virtual to the actual sees ideas suffering unpredictable/non-trivial transformations that make 'lineal' translations impossible. Although sharing 'virtual' – formal – commonalities, each plateau has its own internal organization.

The next chapter will look at a specific manifestation of these ideas, one that is of relevance to the clinic in the search of a human(e) life.

Chapter 11 – The search of a 'human(e)' life: Deleuzian applications to systemic family therapy

> What Deleuze finds in common between 'great literature' and 'great philosophy' is that both bear witness for life (…) That is why great authors are not always in good health (…) these writers have seen something too enormous for them, they are seers, visionaries, unable to handle it so it breaks them. (…) There are things we manage to see, and in some ways, we never recover, never return. This happens frequently for authors, but generally, these are precepts at the border of being ungraspable, of being thinkable. (Stivale, 2001, p. 4)

> In the Scots language, there is a word, *fey*, which is of the same root as *fate* and *faery* and refers to an elevated state in which many previously unrecognized truths become plain. […] In William Blake's phrase, it becomes possible to look *through* the eye so that the illusions of success and failure, shame and vanity fall away. If all were at the point of death, envy could be no more. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 170)

This final chapter identifies and explores one of the possible concrete articulations of the connections so far established between Bateson and Deleuze in relation to a commitment to difference. This articulation concerns a constructive engagement with the problematic notion of the subject and the work in the clinic.

Respecting the integrity of the differences in the projects of Foucault and Deleuze requires further differentiation. Whereas in the reading of Foucault's ideas, a progression to the notion of the Enlightenment and its relation to science and civic life could be seen as logical sequence emerging out of a critical exploration of Foucault's referential axes, with Deleuze, the emphasis moves to the productive aspect of critical (or otherwise) activity. This change of structure and orientation is consistent with the effects of both theories. With Foucault, the recursive exercise of thought affords the emergence of a superstructure of critical thought. With Deleuze's empiricism, this hierarchy is left aside and, instead of superstructures providing corrections to the original system, recursivity works by moving the system forward into uncharted territories. Interestingly, Bateson commented on these two types of feedback himself (Bateson, 1977b, p. 220).

The chapter is organized around perhaps the most important question that arises out of the double irony at the heart of this thesis: "what would have happened had Bateson found a way not to leave the field as he did, disheartened by the repetitive roles of all its players?" That is, "what would have happened if the field had afforded him to articulate his ideas around an ecology of mind whilst still fully immersed within the world of the clinic?" Would he have written more about the subject, its field and change? And if so, how these ideas would have been expressed as a genuine alternative to Watzlawick's pragmatics?

Ideas regarding the self and subjectivity have entered the field after Bateson's death mostly through the consolidation of social constructionism (SC). As indicated in Chapter 4, SC prevalence can be understood as a convenient compromise in relation to the radical insights constitutive of the field for these not only provided a sort of correction to the highly instrumental use of Bateson's ideas but also have claimed to honour Bateson's insights. Yet, as also indicated, this is a difficult compromise and little critical investigation is required to question the integrity of these claims. In particular, like in the critiques that Deleuze and Guattari did in *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to the domestication of the unconscious by psychoanalysis, the conversational approach of SC commodifies – and sanitizes – Bateson's insights, removing their "revolutionary"[124] as well as their critical elements. As already caricaturized, the potential in Bateson's insights have been turned into gent(i)le[125] conversations open to endless opportunities.

There is a significant difference between the pragmatism called upon by SC and the one that Deleuze so admired in American literature (e.g. Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, ch. 2). Rather than a triumphant and optimistic outlook – a position that stands in stark contrast to Bateson's own concerns – Deleuze praised a more problematic figure of what underlies the human condition. Rather than a (sublime) hero, what defined for Deleuze the human condition is better expressed by the image of a stuttering anti-hero as Melville's Bartleby (1997, chapter 10) and of an artist struggling with ill health as will be discussed in section 11.4.1.

[124] A reminder is required at this point. As explained earlier Deleuze was weary of traditional uses of this concept and was aware of the detrimental effects of past revolutions. The notion of "revolutionary becoming" makes reference to the transformational element ever present in life.
[125] This is a problematic addition that is purposeful made to accentuate often uncritical and, often unconscious, exclusions that take place in well-intentioned texts. In many ways, this is a central preoccupation of this thesis.

Deleuze did not give a specific name to such position. His emphasis was instead in punctuating difference and movement. In line with his concerns with representation, the concept he was comfortable with was the one of becomings (which will be discussed in 11.2). Yet, as a concept, becomings did not pertain exclusively to humans, and it goes in a different direction to hermeneutics and general humanistic values. It is in this context that his ideas are often associated with machinic and post-human approaches (e.g. Clarke, 2008, Hayles, 1999, Wolfe, 1998, 2010).

Continuing Deleuze's own style of transforming the concept, the notion of *human(e)* will be used to establish a uniquely ironic focus on the human condition. Such a focus positions the human(e) as a recursively/self-referentially construed condition rather than as an expression of a transcendental human nature. It is acknowledged that, as a name, 'human(e)' is a problematic choice that runs the danger of being read as a return to humanistic principles, a return that would betray Deleuze's project. The choice is however deliberate, so as to highlight the subtleties inherent in such a concept, subtleties that serve as a continual reminder that the multitude of alternatives available for human existence are not fantastic but materially constructed out of common elements. Ultimately, the human condition and, with it, how we respond to the riddle that fascinated Bateson so much, is a condition that we all share as equals.

11.1 Problematizing the subject (and its subjectivity)

> For a long time, [the concept of the subject] fulfilled two functions. First, it was a universalizing function, in a field where the universal was no longer represented by objective essences but by noetic or linguistic acts. […] Second, the subject fulfils functions of individuation in a field where the individual can no longer be a thing or soul, but a person, a living and lived person, speaking and spoken to (I-You). […] We believe that the notion of the subject has lost much of its interest *in favour of pre-individual and non-personal individuations*. (Deleuze, 1988a, p. 349-51)

> [T]he 'self' as ordinarily understood is only a small part of a much larger trial-and-error system which does the thinking, acting and deciding. […] The 'self' is a false reification of an improperly delimited part of this much larger field of interlocking processes. (Bateson, 1971a, p. 302)

As has become evident through the unfolding of this thesis, a systemic conceptualization of human life – including prevalent notions of the subject – needs to be problematized so as to both position it within a larger frame of an ecology of mind and to value its uniqueness as an unrepeatable moment of differentiation. If we are to read Bateson, the challenge is to read him in his critique of the reifications that have taken place in the social sciences, particularly for the purposes of this thesis, within the clinic. Humans are not stable unities neither do they exist in equally stable environments (e.g. families). They are ongoing (material and semiotic) constructions that emerge out of the activity of complex fields.

Furthermore, for both Bateson and Deleuze, it is a mistake to talk about human life as a 'privileged' – even perhaps 'superior' – entity that is neatly distinguishable from its geopolitical contingencies. As explained in the previous chapter, for Deleuze the sense of self is a by-product of the activity of the desiring-machine; a by-product that has an inherent danger of serving a function within the state apparatus through the positioning of individuals in defined – definite and static – spaces. As an alternative to State definitions – which Foucault called biopower – Deleuze asserted that such subjectivity is *only* for consumption. The sense of self one has of one's self is a product of the activity of the desiring-machine that serves the function of providing elements for further experimentation. In such analysis, it is the transgressions of limits established by the definitions of the self – the moment when the self forgets its own definition – that are central to the constitution and the health of human(e) life.

Deleuze's gesture should not be considered to be a nihilistic project. Quite the contrary, and (re)stating an intimate relation with Bateson's project, humans have the capacity to fully engage in life when they no longer recognise an individuality that separates them from their larger ecology. In other words and in a manner that is paradoxical, humans are able to be more fully present, when they are able to let go of their identities in favour of a vitalistic and affirmative connection with larger forces: "cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 263).

11.2 Peoples' becomings

> It's just that becoming is distinct from history. There are all sorts of correlations and echoes between them. Becomings begins in history and returns to it, but it is not of history. The opposite of history is not the eternal, but becoming. (Deleuze and Eribon, 1991, p. 377)

> Fluid becoming is opposed to static being […] becoming itself as intrinsically transformative, creative, and marginal – and as intrinsically multiple. Becoming has 'itself' no fixed identity or being, is always becoming-other. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 186 n. 8)

Ultimately, Deleuze transforms the humanistic dictum of fully becoming (human) into an untimely *becoming-imperceptible.*

Becoming is a concept that has been present in Deleuze's work since his book on Nietzsche (May, 2003, p. 139). Becoming is a central concept to his philosophical project. Deleuze's concept however, presents a very different proposal to the traditional usage. Becoming for Deleuze is not the romantic idea of a self that actualises its potential through a lineal mechanism of expression of a (transcendental) essence but an endless affirmation of life through the affirmation of a differing difference. Becoming is

the Nietzschean eternal return that articulates its own presence through the ongoing transformation of whatever is – including the self – into something else: into an-*other* to itself.

This Deleuzian becoming is the concrete manifestation of the schizophrenic process they explained in *Anti-Oedipus*; of the person being open to the encounter with the outside and the production of new combinations. In this sense, becoming is also "always 'between' or among" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 2) a (departing) self and an (attractive) other.

Becomings are also always collective. There is no becoming of an individual that does not imply an equal process on the other side. The becoming of one's self is paired with the becoming of the other/context in a way that any distinction between these processes is highly arbitrary. Both the self and the world are by-products of the same desiring machine and inherent parts of a unique assemblage. Intimately aligned with Bateson's notion of an ecology of mind, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 2) … Not man as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of being. (ibid, p. 4)

Becomings are individuations that are not self-centred but event-centred. They constitute a "logic of impersonal individuation rather than personal individualization" (Rajchman, 2001, p. 8). This impersonal individuation transcends the person and presents a singularity – a moment and a circumstance – that is unique and intimately associated with a time and place outside; "a gust of wind" as Deleuze often would remark.

In summary, "[b]ecoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling [sic],' or 'producing'" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 239). It is an untimely process, infinite and endless in nature. Like a Batesonian plateau that never reaches a culmination or a climax of some sort, the becomings that traverse our bodies never reach a 'final point,' a destination and/or actualization. It is instead an untimely becoming of the "people to come" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 218).

What is of interest in this movement is that becoming-imperceptible, as a purpose in one's sense of self, marks the necessary movement away from the self to facilitate the functioning of the larger system in which such self emerges, operates and acquires meaning. In this sense, becoming-imperceptible both addresses Bateson's concern with hubris as well as his appreciation of unconscious processes.

11.3 Grace in style

> For the attainment of grace, the reasons of the heart must be integrated with the reasons of the reason. (Bateson, 1967, p. 102)

> Like Melville before it, pragmatism will fight ceaselessly on two fronts: against the particularities that pit man against man and nourish an irremediable mistrust; but also against the Universal or the While, the fusion of souls in the name of great love or charity. Yet, what remains of souls once they are no longer attached to particularities, what keeps them from melting into a whole? What remains is precisely their 'originality.' (Deleuze, 1997, p. 87)

Bateson's use of the concept of *grace* becomes relevant in this context. In 1967, Bateson wrote a position paper for a conference titled *Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art*. Referring to Huxley, Bateson stated that the central problem of humanity is the quest for *grace*; a quest for "a naïveté, a simplicity which man has lost [through]

deceit – even self-deceit – by purpose, and by self-consciousness" (p. 101). For Bateson, the question of *grace* was one of integration, both of the bits of the self that are unconscious and of the self with the larger context.

Integration, as a concept, also needs to be problematized so as to avoid representational traps of an alluring holism. For Bateson, grace – as the sacred, a concept that will be discussed later – was not connected with a humanistic conceptualization but with the ability of the individual to engage with the complex functioning of the larger system. For him, grace was the means by which the human(e) condition could "regain evolutionary wisdom" (Charlton, 2008, p. 159). In line with *A Thousand Plateaus*, he argued that "there are many species of grace […] and also there are many kinds of failure and frustration and departure from grace" (Bateson, 1967p. 102).

The grace that Bateson is calling forth holds significant resonances with Deleuze's emphasis on *Style.* Deleuze wrote:

> Becomings – they are the thing which is most imperceptible, they are acts which can only be contained in a life and expressed in a style. Styles are not constructions, any more than are modes of life. In style it is not the words which count, nor the sentences, nor the rhythms and figures. In life it is not the stories, not the principles, nor the consequences. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 2-3)

In style, a unique crossover takes place, for style is not achieved in an insulated space but in a social and an ecological one. Style sits at the limit where an ecology of mind is articulated as a particular expression – that of an artist. Prior to discussing the position of the artist, there is value in discussing further this subtle double description of the human condition, for it is in style – as it is in grace – where the social and the individual connect and where one can appreciate the emergence of a fully relational understanding of what it is to be human(e). It is in the appreciation of style as a unique presentation

constructed out of (ecological) forces – a gust of wind – that the *social*, as a valid domain (not just a reified and conveniently positioned 'family'), can be integrated into the social sciences and, ultimately, into the clinical project.

Yet, 'the social' also needs to be problematized so as to engage fully with this radical empirical and relational project. If style is the expression of an individual becoming human(e) – of a becoming-imperceptible that affords the paradoxical articulation of one's self within a unique moment in life – at a social level, such becoming also needs to be conceptualized as an expression of differentiation. Rather than State-like expectations of normality, for Deleuze the social articulates itself through a *minority*. Minority for Deleuze and Guattari is a "very complex" (Deleuze et al., 1980, p. 105) concept that is "not necessarily defined by the smallness of their numbers but rather by becoming or a line of fluctuation, in other words, by the gap that separates them from this or that axiom constituting a redundant majority" (p. 469). The notion of minority was discussed briefly in the previous section and will be further discussed when exploring the uses of literature in the clinic.

There is however value in making one final comment regarding the value of style at this point. Both Bateson and Deleuze valued the importance of engaging in human(e) activities in search of style and becoming an artist. Bateson argued that "art is a part of man's quest for grace" (1967, p. 101) and, as will be discussed in the next section, Deleuze saw art as central to human(e) life. Such a life – the life of an artist– is indeed fragile. As Deleuze and Guattari explained:

> In this respect artist are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quite mark of death. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 172)

In its full, the schizophrenic process implied in a nomad/graceful psyche is a walk in a limit-line; a line that marks the distinction between total disorganization on the one side and the pressures of (rigid) State-like definitions on the other. The life we live as individuals is, ultimately, an experiment in both differentiation and immanence and, as such, it cannot be judged nor can it be contained from the outside. This is not to say however, that it is entirely chaotic and/or unpredictable. A number of helpful guidelines for such experimentation can be drawn out of its inherent configuration.

First and as it has already been indicated, there is little if any value in engaging with transcendental judgments. Artists have to honour an immanent point of view and relate with the unique circumstances of their life and their ecologies. Such a position calls for an equally individual assessment of the quality of their encounters. It is in this respect that questions regarding the effects of such encounters become central: do they produce Spinozist's sad or joyful passions?

Second, there is the question as to whether artists are genuinely experimenting with the new so as to articulate new and unique positions or whether are they merely engaging in pre-empted paths, if not clichés, dictated by market forces? A work of art is a response to paradoxical situations that present in the artist's life; it is a call for a passionate thought to engage in the production of a creative line of flight that resolves the unique double binds posed by life if lived fully.

Lastly, consideration needs to be given to the question as to whether such solutions – such lines of flight – are able to 'hold.' In other words, are these becomings sustainable? Do they create planes of immanence, social and environmental milieus, in which such life styles are not only sustainable but also acquire affirmative meaning by affirming differentiation and diversity?

11.4 Therapy as experimental becomings in the world

> Freudian psychology expanded the concept of mind inwards to include the whole communication system within the body – the autonomic, the habitual and the vast range of unconscious process. What I am saying expand mind outwards. And both of these changes reduce the scope of the conscious self. A certain humility becomes appropriate, tempered by the dignity or joy of being part of something much bigger. A part – if you will – of God. (Bateson, 1970a, p. 437)

> A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987b, p. 311)

It is in the consideration of these guidelines on living a graceful life that we can turn to the question of the clinic. In the last section, Deleuze's insights were used to articulate a hypothetical expansion of Bateson's ideas had he not left the field. The question asked in this section is a further move in the process of (re)integrating Bateson into the field: "what sort of proposal could turn Bateson's nausea into an affirmative reminder that the task of the clinic is not one of subjectification of those of attending the clinic through an efficient use of State sciences,[126] but one of renewal and (re)engagement with life and that which is healthy?"

Once again, Deleuze's work could help to articulate some points of departure for this line of flight by highlighting some nuances inherent to this process of re-engagement. Such articulation starts with understanding that such re-engagement is not a 'controlled' exercise. It does not even refer to an 'appreciative' conversation (Anderson et al., 2008). It is instead an engagement with the constructive and experimental nature of both life

[126] And here a reminder that 'Mental Health' is the 'other' child of cybernetics.

and knowledge as discussed in the previous chapter. There is a need to differentiate information – and the fascination that Bateson had with it – from the prevalent conceptualization of therapy as a conversation. Bateson's interest in information, as indicated in 10.2.2.1, is in relation to the formative and constructive effects of making a distinction, a gesture that is more alike to 'making sense' out of signs rather than a highly choreographed – performative – conversation. Deleuze highlighted this distinction further:

> Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money – and not by accident but by their very nature […] Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so that we can elude control. (Deleuze and Negri, 1990, p. 175)

Both Bateson and Deleuze understood that, instead of a choreographed piece, a return to health is a line of flight with significant turbulence and an uncertain trajectory. This uncertainty is of a different kind to the negotiability discussed by SC. Passions – the reasons of the heart – engage with the current pre-established order – the reasons of reason – so as to produce new (and often unforeseeable) combinations that, by their very nature, imply a transgression of sort or, as Deleuze would say, a betrayal. As he wrote:

> There is always betrayal in a line of flight. Not trickery like that of an orderly man ordering his future, but betrayal like that of a simple man who no longer has any past or future. We betray the fixed powers which try to hold us back, the established powers of the earth. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 30)

This betrayal could be best understood "as an attempt to transform the world, to think a new world or new man insofar as they *create themselves.*[…] It is first of all the affirmation of a world in *process*" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 86).

This transformative process is neither conscious nor interpretative. Nor is it a rational process of storytelling because such a process – story-telling – is inevitably limited by the linguistic structures within which the story is organized. It is instead an attempt to *think otherwise*: an awkward self-awareness that arises after the insights of structuralism (Dosse, 1997a, 1997b). This is to say, a self-awareness that emerges after the insights into the ways in which linguistic structures shape, often unconsciously, one's experience. In this sense, the (re)turn to health present in the clinic is conceived as a process of genuine experimentation that, rather than reflecting and/or interpreting pre-established definitions, creates a space and a 'sense' for the workings of people and their assemblages; a space that, recursively, facilitates further movement. Such a line of flight is a (re)engagement with the grace of an assemblage.

Such an experimentation is more like a stutter than a well-polished script. As Deleuze explains: "It is no longer the character who stutters in speech; it is the writer who becomes *a stutterer in language*" (1997, p. 107). In turn, Bateson was aware of this point and, although he did not have the language yet to describe it,[127] he pointed to the same issue when he commented on a description of a therapeutic modality: "[t]he experiences that the programme provides for the patients must be something a little more alive than the dry bones of the programme […] described" (1960, p. 201-2).

With these considerations in mind, it is possible to return to the intention of this section which is to attempt to create a line of flight for Bateson's nausea; a way out for his sense of despair at the state of the clinic. Reference will now be made to Deleuze's own

[127] There is an example of Bateson himself working in the creation of new concepts in Bateson et al., 1976, para. 91-3.

investigations in relation to the clinic which will be followed by a (re)turn to Bateson's own investigations to make some final comments on the notion of life and the sacred.

11.4.1 The 'critic and the clinic' project

> *Criticism* and *the clinic* ought strictly to be identical. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2006, p. 89)

For Deleuze, the constructive nature of knowledge and the central role of the author is of particular relevance for the modern condition where "the order of the cosmos has collapsed, crumbled into associative chains and noncommunicating viewpoints"(2000b, p. 113) and where "the only wholeness and unity available is that which may be constructed in art" (Bogue, 2003, p. 58). In such chaos, the artist becomes a central image. The artist, as previously explained, is the one who creates 'a life.' In Deleuzian terms this means a certain moment of singularization; a unique individuality that populates the space in ways that are beyond good and bad (Deleuze, 2001b, p. 28-9). It is in this activity that, for Deleuze, a connection is established between the role of philosophy and its task of creating concepts and the role of the artist as a creator of possibilities of life; a connection which is perhaps most visible through Deleuze's ongoing focus on the use of literature.

"What are the uses of literature?" is the opening question that Deleuze states in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (2006, originally written in 1967). As a question, it marked the beginning of a continual investigation (Smith, 1997, p. xii) into the connections between literature and the clinic, more specifically, a critique of the clinic using literary tools.

Deleuze's critique started by "questioning the very concept of an entity known as sadomasochism" (2006, p. 13), and followed a similar path to the one of his investigations in relation of the tasks of philosophy as discussed in Chapter 9, with a dual gesture of both critique and of affirmation. His last book – *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1997) – was particularly focused on the latter.

11.4.3.1 Literature as a (critical) diagnostic activity

> Because the judgement of the clinician is prejudiced, we must take an entirely different approach, the *literary approach* [...]. The critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning. Symptomatology is always a question of art. (Deleuze, 2006, p. 14)

Deleuze argued that the connection between literature and the clinical is possible due to the peculiar nature of the 'symptomatological' method, a method central to clinical practice. In line with Foucault, Deleuze made the point that symptoms are constellations of signs that point to the effects of the complex forces present in the life of individuals. For Deleuze these effects produce affects – a pathos. He noted that these signs are ordered, "named, renamed and regrouped in various ways" (2006, p. 15) and that, through history, there have been significant changes to such ordering, as well as to the therapeutic practices they produce.

Symptomatology constitutes then an essentially creative act of organising the symptoms – joining some at the same time as separating some others – in order to form a figure of either health or illness (Deleuze, 1990b, p. 237). Given that these symptoms are signs of possibilities of life, their interpretation is not limited to clinicians only. As he wrote, "symptomology is located almost outside medicine, at a neutral point, a zero

point, where artists and philosophers and doctors and patients can come together" (Deleuze and Chapsal, 1967, p. 134).

Furthermore, Deleuze had concerns regarding the practice of grouping symptoms into specific diagnoses because of the implied danger of engendering totalitarian regimes of signs. He was particularly critical of the use that clinicians make of symptomatology. A good example of his concerns can be found in his book *Masochism*, where Deleuze critiqued the merging of Sade and Masoch into one clinical presentation. He argued that Sade and Masoch's projects were incommensurably and essentially different in their treatment of both sexuality and violence. He wrote:

> there is an urgent need for clinical psychology to keep away from sweeping unities […] the idea of a sado-masoquism is simply a prejudism [that] results from hasty symptomatology, such that we no longer attempt *to see* what is there, but seek instead to justify our prior idea. (Deleuze and Chapsal, 1967, p. 133)

In line with systemic concerns with the value of diagnosis and with Nietzsche's insight on the diagnostic activity of philosophy, the emphasis of Deleuze and Guattari was on cartography as an alternative to traditional diagnostic practices: no longer the search for assessment according to interpretative principles, but an active engagement with the act of creating maps of life. Cartography is closer to pragmatics and empiricism rather than to pre-defined theoretical structures.

Deleuze saw a final connection between literature and the clinic within etiology. Whereas medicine sees a necessary connection between symptomatology and etiology, the creative literary writer is not bound to this connection and can explore other relationships. It is the openness found in the writer of great literature that Deleuze sees as most productive and relevant for the clinic as will be discussed next.

11.4.3.2 Literature as health

> The world is the set of symptoms whose illness merges with man. Literature then appears as an enterprise of health […] What health would be sufficient to liberate life wherever it is imprisoned by and within man, by and within organisms and genera? […] Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing. […] This is not exactly a people called upon to dominate the world. It is a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary […] a bastard people, inferior, dominated, always in becoming, always incomplete. *Bastard* no longer designates a familial state, but the process or drift of the races. (Deleuze, 1997, p. 3-4)

Furthering the critical function just examined, for Deleuze the value of (good) literature is that it brings forth new possibilities of existence. What literature brings to the clinic is its appreciation of the affirmative and transformative powers inherent to "the great books [that] give tomorrow's health" (Deleuze, 1985, p. 147). Deleuze talked about this productive aspect of literature in the second edition of *Proust and Signs* (2000b). In this edition, he specifically added a chapter for this purpose. He wrote: "the modern work of art is a machine and functions as such" (p. 145), producing signs and affects. Literature for Deleuze, rather than being an interpretation of what is 'out there,' engages with the real in order to produce possibilities of life. The artist engages neither in the representation of an objective reality nor in a subjective interpretation, but in the articulation of a self-differentiating difference. This is possible because, for Deleuze, language is a "heterogeneous assemblage in perpetual disequilibrium [that] cannot be broken down into its elements [but] can be broken down into *diverse languages ad infinitum*" (emphasis added, Deleuze, 1990d, p. 368).

Close to systemic theory, Deleuze's understanding privileges stylistics and pragmatics. Deleuze uses Proust to explain this orientation: "every great author speaks a kind of a foreign language. […] When I say style is like a foreign language, it is none other than

the language we speak – it is a foreign language *in* the language we speak" (1990d, p. 370). In this sense, "[e]very language is a kind of Black or Chicano English […] there is always another language in every language ad infinitum. This is not a mixture, it is heterogenesis" (1990d, p. 367).

It is thus *in* language rather than *with* language that change is affirmed. It is through the manipulation of language rather than through the articulations of specific storylines that change takes place. This is an insight that has profound importance for the world of the clinic; an insight that has already been in the sight of systemic therapists. In the field, such insight has been used in concepts like 'reframe' and 'positive connotation' yet acquires its full meaning with a comment Maturana did in one of his lectures back in 1988: "perhaps rather than asking families what they want to change, one needs to ask them what of themselves they want to keep."

Furthermore, such use of language is graceful inasmuch as it integrates, as Bateson indicated, the reasons of heart with the reasons of reason. An author of great literature experiments with language and pushes it into its limits "mak[ing] the language itself scream, stutter, stammer, or murmur" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 110). In line with the comments on becomings, Bogue explains that "[t]he artist, the surrounding world and the work of art are all part of an apersonal unfolding of signs, and the finished artwork is a Joycean 'chaosmos,' a chaos-become-cosmos" (2003, p. 3-4); "a composed chaos, neither foreseen not preconceived" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 204) that is continually self-differentiating and, through this process, creating a multitude of plateaus.

Literature, as a process productive of difference, enters then in resonance with the clinic. It does so simultaneously at two levels. At one level, it addresses the individual

life of its clients by understanding the individuality involved in their search of a human(e) life, a process that includes but is not limited to a personal construction of a storyline.

Perhaps more importantly, literature resonates with the clinic by fully integrating the social in its operation. At this level and in line with the despairing insights of Bateson, the clinic itself is conceived as a unique space that is in constant danger of being (over)defined and transformed, from a space of healing, into a stratified space serving other purposes, namely, the confirmation of a wider social order, an order with winners and losers. In the latter, the clinic is transformed into an institutional set of disciplinarian practices that position people's becomings within regimes of subjectification. Within such regime, a literary approach to the clinic enters into a play of difference by creating lines of flight of this present system of (re)presentation, articulating an untimely reminder that the clinic is, primarily, an art form rather than a technical exercise.

It is in this ongoing play of differentiation that the artist has a revolutionary potential and the clinic a therapeutic one. Prior to returning to Bateson, there is value in further exploring this notion of a revolutionary artist by reconnecting with the concept of the *minor*. In line with the clarifications made in section 10.3, the minor is not a term that is part of a dualism – it is not the opposite of the major – but refers to a qualitatively different relation in the artistic engagement, one that is necessarily political. As Smith comments, "[i]f art was to find a political task, Deleuze argues, it would have to be on a new basis […] not that of addressing an already existing people, but of contributing to the invention of a people who are *missing*" (1997p. xli-i). Those who are missing, those who are not present in civil life, constitute a minority that is not quantitative in nature –

for often there is a larger number of individuals in the minority groups – but refers to a unique and alternative way of existence: "a minority by definition has no model; *it is itself a becoming or a process*" (Smith, 1997, p. xliii). Minorities can be seen as groups of people as a multitude of collectives actively engaged with their contingencies. In other words, they are nomad assemblages. Their literature is part of a Deleuzian war/nomad machine and articulates the endless variation of life by constantly imagining new possibilities of movement. It is in this light, that the words of Milan Kundera make sense: "the writing of a novel takes up a whole era in a writer's life, and when the labor is done he is no longer the person he was at the start" (2007, p. 61). Minority writing is thus political because it is transformational.

In the context of the minor, literature then has a fundamental therapeutic role for the clinic in that it facilitates its flight away from a role of being a judge – an interpreter of what is sane and what is mad – into a continual ethical evaluation of possibilities of life in terms of "[their] 'vitality', [their] 'tenor of life'" (Smith, 1997, p. liii). Such a reading of life is beyond good and evil, making instead life itself sacred by providing "[a] consciousness of the earth and ocean […] ready to begin the world anew" (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 11). In this light, and in line with Frosh's insights on the possible contributions of postmodernism as discussed in 4.4, a therapy inspired by this understanding of literature is less preoccupied with storylines but with an opening of possibilities of existence, some of which are not articulated as stories.

A (re)turn to Bateson is possible with these considerations in mind.

11.4.2 Life and the sacred

> Specifically, we must bear in mind the barriers that must be maintained if the network of mind is to become richer and more complex, evolving towards

> something like ecological climax, a semistable system of maximum differentiation, complexity and elegance. […] Of all imaginary organisms […] *economic man is the dullest*. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p.175)

> A capitalism that does not exploit resources – be they natural or human – is as yet unthinkable. A capitalism that is symbiotic rather than parasitic may never be possible. As Gregory Bateson point out, for too long humanity has adopted 'survival of the fittest' as its maxim – and this is taken to its extreme by free-market competition – whereas if humanity is to survive it must reconfigure this goal into that of 'survival of the organism plus environment' (Bateson, 1973). At present the major capitalist countries are also the major polluters of the Earth. The mass media creates a climate of unquestioning passivity. (Guattari, 2000, p. 15)

This final section in the body of this thesis will focus in (re)connecting with the difficulty lying at the base of the double irony that gave it shape. As discussed in Chapter 1, this double irony relates to the difficulties inherent in engaging with a systemic gaze.

The present author's attempt to engage with such gaze has been through reading Bateson in conceptual encounters with both Foucault's and Deleuze's philosophical projects. It is the claim of this author that such encounters are not only possible but also productive for the field at least at two levels. First, at a theoretical level, the exploration of these encounters (re)introduce a number of conceptual considerations and tools to the field as an attempt to (re)energize its rich yet neglected theoretical apparatus. Second, at a clinical level, this exploration attempts to engage with foundational preoccupations regarding conceptualizations of the client not as an individual person who carries either a defective constitution and/or poor lifestyles but as a person struggling to make sense of a life and to break free from a pathogenic environment.

In this thesis, in particular in this last chapter, notions of grace and of becoming-imperceptible have become central to the therapeutic task of engaging with a (re)turn to health. Consistently, these are notions that have direct relevance to the systemic gaze.

Perhaps more importantly, through honouring the subtle balance that is needed to attain a "purposiveness without purpose" inherent to the grace of becoming-imperceptible, it is possible to (re)connect with one of Bateson's most graceful creations: the method of double description (Bateson, 2002, chapter 3). In line with Deleuze's insights, Bateson saw in this method "a higher order duplication–differentiation pattern at work […] that links mind and nature" (Hui et al., 2008, p. 91). Double description is a method of creation of knowledge through the often unconscious comparison that takes place in the juxtaposition of two descriptions, a comparison that "discloses an extra dimension called *depth*" (Bateson, 2002, p. 81). Bateson was clear that such method was "always and inevitably *personal* [for] the point of the probe is always in the heart of the observer" (p. 82). Recursively, for Bateson, this method allowed him to "surrender to the belief that my knowing is a small part of a wider integrated knowing that knits the entire biosphere or creation" (ibid). It was through the method of the double description that Bateson could work with notions of grace and the sacred.

Yet, here lies perhaps the most misunderstood aspect in the double irony that haunts the field for, during most of the history of the field, Bateson's fundamental quest to understand life through an integration of the reasons of the heart and the reasons of reason has not been acknowledge. Perhaps in line with the discomfort that the field had later with the ideas of Maturana and his assertions about love, the notions of grace and the sacred are perhaps too complex, too messianic (Johnson, 2001a) and/or simply 'too much' for a systemic therapist to bear. This would not be surprising, since to hold one's

self vis-à-vis a truly systemic gaze is an often humbling and recursively confusing, if not tumultuous, process as Bateson knew all too well.[128] Deleuze and Foucault knew this too (Roudinesco, 2008). Yet they all also knew of the genuine need to continue such conceptual pursuit for what is at stake is of far more importance than the comfort of one's life. What is at stake in their investigations is a genuine engagement with the larger (than one's self) forces of life as an ecology of mind.

The method of double-description articulated by Bateson was the method he thought afforded the generation of the systemic gaze. It was a disciplined engagement to push to the limit the observer in his perception – to push the observer outside of what is taken for granted in one set of definitions, and attend to the more foundational issue of one's participation in the process of creating difference.

Recursively, as explained in Chapter 2, Bateson's trajectory was clearly influenced by the set of material and semiotic contingencies that saw the emergence of his sense of self and of his intellectual project. In the same way that for Deleuze was important to undo some of the shortcomings that emerged as a result of prevalent rationalist traditions in France, Bateson's priority was in line with Darwinian attempts to question the prevalent – yet often invisible – Christian assumptions and to develop an understanding that would privilege immanent forms of organisation. As he stated, "I myself am a fifth generation unbaptized atheist" (1979b, p. 301). Bateson was well aware of the tensions between religious and scientific – natural history – traditions that were at the core of academic life in Cambridge. These tensions significantly informed the specific shape of his quest and it was this awareness that led him to write

[128] It is in this context that Bateson's request to be read the story of Job through the last moments of his life becomes meaningful (Bateson, 1980, para. 14).

> In the 1950s, I had two teaching tasks. I was teaching psychiatric residents at the Veterans Administration mental hospital in Palo Alto and young beatniks […] To the psychiatrists, I presented a challenge in the shape of a small exam paper, telling them that by the end of the course they should understand the questions in it. Question 1 asked for brief definitions of (a) 'sacrament' and (b) 'entropy.' […] I was offering my class the core notions of 2,500 years of thought about religion and science. I felt that if they were going to be doctors (medical doctors) of the human soul, they should at least have a foot on each side of the ancient arguments. (Bateson, 2002, p. 5-6)

It was in this awareness that he developed his ideas around Creatura as distinct to – yet intimately coexisting with – Pleroma. His distinction is perhaps clarified through Deleuze's articulation of the importance of style as an active and affirmative engagement with the forces that traverse one's bodies so as to create assemblages that would roam through the steppes of life – through the desert of our material contingencies – populating such spaces and making them sacred (Deleuze, 2004a, p. 10). Consistent with a paradoxical understanding of the human condition, an understanding that both Bateson and Deleuze would appreciate, the human(e) possibility to regain grace – to regain the innocence lost through the self-deceit of consciousness – is through an affirmation of a life that is larger than the individual self; an affirmation that is embedded in a Deleuzian becoming-imperceptible.

Bateson's quest was further informed by his increasing awareness of the dangers involved in an humanistic privileging of (hu)man activity over the wellbeing of the whole ecologies, a gesture that is itself a legacy of Christian theology in a perhaps too triumphant Enlightenment. As he wrote:

> "We face a world which is threatened not only with disorganization of many kinds, but also with the destruction of its environment, and we, *today, are still unable to think clearly about the relations between an organism and its environment*." (emphasis added, Bateson, 1970ap. 423)

In this context, the sacred for Bateson had two important connotations. At one level it articulated and focused the attention on the intimate connection that humans have with their environment thus providing a limit to human hubris by decentering its agency and making it accountable to a larger system, to an ecology.[129] At another level, Bateson saw in the concept of the sacred something that was "peculiarly related to the healthy" (1974a, p. 265)[130] thus stressing the need to have certain parameters in which the experimentation involved in living could hold as sustainable. Together, these points are of significant importance in that they establish some axiomatic parameters to guide human(e) action in how to navigate the nuanced line that is established between an affirmative experimentation and the dangers of both trivial individualistic pursuits and totalizing discussions on (the limits of) Capitalism.

It is in this frame that Bateson's interests in the sacred as an immanent practice become relevant:

> St Paul (Galatians 6) said that 'God is not mocked,' and immanent mind similarly is neither vengeful not forgiving. It is of no use to make excuses; the immanent mind is not 'mocked.' But since our minds – and this includes our tools and actions – are only parts of the larger mind, its computations can be confused by our contradictions and confusions. Since it contains our insanity, the immanent mind is inevitably subject to possible insanity. It is in our power, with our technology, to create insanity in the larger system of which we are parts. (Bateson, 1973, p. 442)

Bateson's preoccupation with the inadequate education we provide to our children and his disheartened departure of the field can then be seen as manifestations of a more

[129] Some years ago, the present writer witnessed a relevant graffiti at a university campus. A poster had been displayed by the liberal (conservative) student association stating: "the fall of the wall marked the end of Communism." As a response, someone wrote: "and climate change will mark the end of Capitalism."

[130] Needless to say that what is healthy needs to also be problematized so as to avoid a return to a transcendental morality.

fundamental concern with the sacred, its vulnerabilities and one's human(e) responsibility – one's ability to respond – towards it.

Reading his project then, requires holding this preoccupation in sight; to struggle with such a gaze as he himself did, knowing that our access to this kind of gaze will never be complete, but constitutes an unending creation and an ongoing affirmation of life and difference. It is in here that we once more see an intimate connection between Bateson's project and Deleuze's nuanced process of territorialisation-deterritorialization-reterritorialization inherent to human(e) life.

When the field engaged in the aesthetic turn that marked the entry of SC, perhaps the most profound irony took place, for this entry did not mark an increase in complexity for the field but the creation of a dualism where SC position itself *not in dialogue* but *in direct competition/opposition with* strategic approaches.[131] In this positioning, the field left behind the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion on the meaning of 'intervention,' that is, on the uses of power within the clinic; of how the political – including the micropolitics present not only in the therapist-client dynamics but also in the positioning of individuals and families within a State apparatus (Donzelot, 1997) – manifests itself in the clinic. Ultimately, what was left behind was the possibility to have relevant discussions regarding ethical action and social accountability.

If one reads Bateson and Deleuze well however, it is not a matter of a simple critique of either the strategic or the SC approaches or of creating a 'third option' to put in the fashionable market of therapy. If there is anything to be learnt from the encounter between Bateson and Deleuze, it is that life works by change and that, whatever the

[131] There is a further irony on this point because SC's most controversial member – the solution oriented approaches – is the one that maintain some connections with cybernetic approaches in the field. This connection has been the reason for their exclusion rather than for their praise.

‘state of the art’ in therapeutic intervention is at any one moment in time, it will move and change in the next. In such a context, perhaps the largest danger in our walk on this earth refers us back to the concerns that Whitehead had on misplaced concreteness and with (uncritically) assuming that specific types of reifications of life (e.g. predefined subjectivities) are ‘the real thing.’ This is a practice that, as Foucault has warned us, turns our life and potentials into ‘docile bodies’ and, as Deleuze equally warns, stops one’s schizophrenic wanderings. This danger is a continuous reminder of one’s untimely need of owning one’s self responsibility of becoming-imperceptible; of owning one’s engagement with the question of ‘how might I live.’

In this sense, grace – becoming-imperceptible – enters in full resonance with the sacred, facilitating the transformation of the ‘self as an observer’ to a “self as a nomad citizen” (Holland, 2011), ethically engaging either as a client or as a therapist in the untimely creation of the social. The social is different to a familialism of sorts in that it is itself accountable to the whole of the ecology. The potential force of the clinic then lies in its possibility to engage in facilitating the emergence, not of normality but of minorities that populate this earth in an infinite process of differentiation. Needless to say, such a process is not ‘selfish’ in the sense that it is not about what is needed by either the client/therapist or their children. It is not even what is needed by their children’s children but for the people and the earth to come. Ultimately, it is what is needed for an untimely horizon of life.

And on this tone, I would like to finish this last chapter of this thesis once again referring to Bateson:

> Two things, however, are clear about any religion that might derive from cybernetics and system theory, ecology and natural history. First, that in the asking of questions, there will be no limit to our hubris; and second, that there shall

always be humility in our acceptance of answers. In these two characteristics we shall be in sharp contrast with most of the religions of the world. They show little humility in their espousal of answers but great fear about what questions they will ask. (Bateson and Bateson, 1987, p. 136)

Closing remarks

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.

And if these difficulties, whose essence we share, hinder us, it is understandable that the rational talents on this side of the world, exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without valid means to interpret us. It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest of our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary […]

I do not mean to embody the illusions of Tonio Kröger, whose dreams of uniting a chaste north to a passionate south were exalted here, fifty-three years ago, by Thomas Mann. But I do believe that those clear-sighted Europeans who struggle, here as well, for a more just and humane homeland, could help us far better if they reconsidered their way of seeing us. Solidarity with our dreams will not make us feel less alone, as long as it is not translated into concrete acts of legitimate support for all the peoples that assume the illusion of having a life of their own in the distribution of the world. (García Márquez, 1982, para. 6-8)

As I indicated in the preamble, in writing this thesis my desire was to constructively and productively engage with the conceptual trajectory of the systemic family therapy field. My wish has guided this conceptual research on reading Bateson's project through time. The aim of this research has been the engagement with the ongoing renewal of the theoretical frame that defines this specific approach to the clinic.

Like García Márquez, in writing the thesis, I had no intention to claim a privileged position in regards to a transcendental truth but to honour – to tell the truth of/from – my (therapist's) position as a (perhaps equally roving and nostalgic) cipher – or, as Nietzsche would say, a diagnostician – of the times in which I live. As such, this thesis hoped for nothing more than to articulate one of the many positions that populate this earth we all love; a position that focuses, ultimately, on helping with issues of suffering, pain and healing. For, if we are to honour the ideas of both Bateson and Foucault (as well as many others), pathos is not about essences of the kind that can be located in specific people but has to do with complex fields of experience; of forces that traverse through the different technologies of care of the self that are currently available in Western society.

As the author, I have ironically chosen to finish the last chapter of the thesis with a quotation of Bateson – with the words of another author – to (re)affirm what I consider to be two of the most central human(e) activities available to guide one's actions: on the one hand, to ask questions and wonder and, on the other, to be equally open to the answers one gets. This gesture is not one of obedience (or even helplessness) with a (mysterious) outside, but one that opens the human condition to a position of curiosity about the outside and of engagement with an unfolding multitude.

It is the former, one's openness to ask questions (and, as Foucault would say, to tell the truth), that nurtures the revolutionary spirit that Deleuze calls upon and that I have attempted to reinforce at multiple levels through this text. The latter, one's openness to receive answers, refers to a complementary process that I have only indirectly engaged with so far: solidarity.

I would like to finish this thesis by making some brief closing remarks on this mirror process starting with stating that solidarity, as other concepts discussed, is a concept that needs to be problematized so as to, once again, avoid interpretations that reduce such activity to a rhetorical exercise between humans (only). Solidarity as a foundational human(e) activity needs to be framed within its larger context; it needs to engage with a fundamental respect and care of the diversity that frames life in general.

In many ways, Bateson's often misunderstood committed engagement with science, as the path required to articulate a relational type of knowledge, refers to this point. Knowledge, to be in effect solidarity, needs to resist self-serving agendas, either conscious or unconscious, and needs to "succeed […] in sticking to it […] without surreptitiously moving from the selection of the 'what' to another selection" (Stengers, 2011, p. 33). Needless to say however, such science, although empiricist, is not equivalent to what is now referred to as Evidence Based Practice unless the latter includes a critical appreciation of the insidious power dynamics underlying the construction of such evidence.

At a clinical level, such problematization invites a consideration of a number of different activities that recursively inform each other. I will briefly touch on two: solidarity vis-à-vis our clients and solidarity vis-à-vis one's self as a therapist, thus to the body of knowledge that defines one's self as a therapist.

In regards to the first of these points, that is, of the solidarity that as clinicians we hold to our clients, I believe that the abovementioned extract from García Márquez' lecture provides a good example of the dilemmas that are present when facing the suffering of other fellow beings and provides a powerful insight into the care clinicians have to put in the position they occupy when engaging with those requesting help. His warnings in relation to the dangers of measuring the sufferings of others through a personal interpretative yardstick – a yardstick that is often veiled behind a language of objectivity and of reason as Foucault has discussed – is a good reminder of the possibly alienating effects of even the best intentions of therapists. Such (mis)use of reason, as both García Márquez and Foucault were aware, often serves to mystify further such suffering leaving those enduring such experiences with a deeper sense of isolation.

To bring solidarity as central to the clinic opens up this activity to powerful lessons. They are lessons that move away from integrative – Tonio Kröger-like – practices that see the clinic as a space for either 'personal development' or for the assessment of a pathos that is qualitatively different/alien to the one of the therapist and of everyday life. Both of these approaches are definitional gestures that often mask a number of un-interrogated assumptions of a (unified) human condition. Solidarity, as a human(e) activity, attempts to embrace, through an active engagement with the development of sustainable minorities, not just other fellow human beings but also a deeper process of nurturance of the multitudes constitutive of life. In an earlier article, I talked of the importance of solidarity vis-à-vis the sufferings that bring clients to the clinic. In that article, I discussed the vignette of a client – who, perhaps not surprisingly, I called *Grace*. Grace presented as quite fragile, often struggling with suicidal ideation. As a reflection on the clinical work I wrote:

> What the handshake did for Grace – which we only got to know from Grace one week later – was the trust she experienced from us (that she was able to make evaluations about what she needed to do to keep safe), the solidarity of a group (that could resonate with her exhaustion in the midst of suffering, yet was not afraid of naming it and exploring alternatives together) and the belonging that came with a handshake, a symbol that she was not alone and that we knew she could find a way out (even when we had no idea what direction that would take). (Nichterlein, 2011, p. 32).

In referring to this writing, I see a necessity to discuss a little further the apparent 'lack of expertise' in terms of defining a way forward. As I have attempted to explain through this thesis, a philosophy of difference makes us realize that the future is an open space that is 'yet to be articulated' as a possible reality amongst many. This however does not leave us – as clinicians – without thoughtful ways to engage in this practice. Rather than techniques however, what the ideas explored in this thesis call for, are a set of relational considerations to have in mind when working in the clinic. As such, they constitute a sort of compass. A compass is a tool of a different kind, a tool that refers its user, as Bateson often would say, to a different level of analysis. A compass gives general orientations but no clear path. The specific path is to be contingently defined according to the nuances of each presentation, thus confirming the limits of a technical approach.

Furthermore, the orientation provided by the compass is in reference to a specific point – the north. The question in this analogy remains as to what constitutes such a 'north' in the clinic. I hope to have been able to respond this question in the last chapter. To illustrate however this point further, let me again refer to García Márquez, this time to one of his novellas; a novella he claims is better described as journalism. He writes:

> Despite the pressures, the threats and the most seductive attempts of bribery, Luis Alejandro Velasco did not deny a line of his story. [As a result] he had to leave the navy that was the only job he knew how to do, falling in the oblivion of a common

> life. Before two years, the dictatorship fall and Colombia was left to the mercy of other better dressed but not more just regimes […] Nobody knew further of the lonesome shipwreck until a few months ago when a lost journalist found him behind a desk in a bus firm. I have seen his photo: *he had gained weight and age and one could notice that life had gone through him intimately, but had left him with the serene halo of the hero who had the bravery to dynamite his own statue*. (translation and emphasis by the present author, García Márquez, 1970, p. 15)

Rather than specific behaviours and/or emotions, the qualities articulated by García Márquez refer to the effects that the forces of life had on Luis Alejandro Velasco and how he 'wore' them with a grace that, as Deleuze (and Nietzsche) would say, went beyond 'good and evil' to articulate a momentous event. This is, I believe, what Deleuze refers to as style and what constitutes the compass of our clinical work in solidarity: to engage with the uniqueness brought forth by one's clients in ways that appreciate their 'bare' life; as a life that does not give in either to pressures, threats or seductions of sorts, yet stubbornly lives.

Bateson himself was aware of these nuanced distinctions. In a book that is rarely mentioned in the field – *Perceval's Narrative: a Patient's Account of his Psychosis, 1830 – 1832* (1974b) – Bateson stated:

> Perceval asserts again and again that the patient knows more about the nature of insanity than either the general public or the 'lunatic doctors.' [...] What he has to say on the subject is first and foremost this: that it is the task or duty of the physician or of those who love the patient to *understand*. […] Merely to deny or to mock at the delusory material only subtracts from the patient's self-esteem. It asserts that he is incapable of the necessary wisdom and motivates him to a further caricaturing of his own imputed weakness. (p. viii-x)

Bateson was not advocating an uncritical acceptance of what clients brings to the clinic but a more nuanced process: "other material indicates that [his] later recovery was facilitated whenever he encountered primary acceptance accompanied by doubt or

criticism" (p. viii). It is this subtle balance between acceptance and doubt that supports the client in taking responsibility of their unique journey on this earth.

In regards to the second of the points I wanted to address in these closing remarks, those regarding a solidarity vis-à-vis one's self as a therapist, thus to the body of knowledge that defines one's self as a therapist, I see a need to engage with the subtleties and the (Spinozean) passions that account for the (historical) choices that we make in our formation as therapists and in our ongoing practice. I have advocated throughout this thesis for the need to respect multiplicity as a foundational concept. Multiplicity is coherent with what we observe in the clinic in terms of a wide range of theoretical constructs informing this practice, with an even wider range of ways in which different clinicians put these ideas into practice. I indicated in my Preamble that there is an intuitive resonance between the theories that inform systemic practice and the beliefs and values that I identify as core to my existence. Other practitioners make different choices. This is part of the richness of life that the authors interrogated in this thesis attempted to honour. There is a warning however at this point, for it is necessary to make an important distinction between a (mis)use of the concept of eclectic that appeals to the "street-level relativism that often passes […] for the hallmark of postmodernism" (Anderson, 1998, p. 26-7) and the empiricism called upon by both Bateson and Deleuze; a warning that sees its equivalent in Deleuze's distinction between the schizophrenic process proper to the unconscious and a particular schizophrenic, the latter being a failed example of the former.

Theories, as personae, have an integrity that needs to be taken care of as the self we wear needs to. Throughout the life of any assemblage (e.g. systemic therapy), it is expected that different forces will traverse through the field it populates. To expect that

the assemblage will not be touched by such forces is candidly unrealistic. What constructs a noble assemblage is, as García Márquez states, not only its ability to survive the passage of such forces but to do so having the effect of a 'serene halo.' It would be foolish to expect the ideas espoused by Bateson and the field in general, not to be open to transformations, for these transformations renew their engagement with the currency of life. Yet, a certain integrity in the ideas is to be honoured so that a certain continuity is maintained. The art is in realizing that such continuity, as Bateson would say, is not of 'things' but of a certain spirit, of a virtual untimely dilemma at the base of the formalizations attempting to address the human condition. In this sense, this thesis has attempted to articulate a certain (relational) spirit that traverses the work of Bateson, Foucault and Deleuze and that gives this systemic field a unique coloratura, a unique style that differentiates it from other clinical traditions.

What distinguishes this unique systemic coloratura is a relational type of knowledge that is radical in its attempt to break away from the mind-body dichotomy and the individualism so deeply entrenched in the Western mindset. The break – the line of flight – proposed by systemic family therapy is through an engagement with a practice that unites the unique reasons of the heart and the reasons of reason of both client(s) and therapist(s) in the search for equally unique ecological solutions to the problems of living that brought such client(s) to seek assistance. Such a practice cannot be seen as a technique of sorts; a technique that repeats and confirms transcendental values and, in doing so, subordinates our becomings to pre-established patterns of existence. Rather than a technique, such practice is an art; a rhizomic art in search of a graceful populating of this sacred earth; an art that confirms our untimely connection with this earth and this people as well as those that are to come.

Ultimately, the position from which I write attempts to show solidarity to a fundamentally different engagement with life than that which, as Bateson indicated, has dominated our Western sensibilities: one of collaboration and mutual engagement rather than of control and domination. As I have attempted to demonstrate through this thesis, such an alternative honours the endless diversity that populates this earth and makes it sacred.

And in this awareness, I would like to bring a final problematization that relates to solidarity, a problematization that is quite personal in nature. In the writing of this thesis, there was a further desire on my behalf to honour the people and the circumstances that constituted my childhood and my youth, informing the sense of self that I define as myself. Studying family therapy in Chile (and the reasons to do so) was inextricably different to doing so in other countries. It was in that context – in *that* oversized and unbridled reality – that I could strongly experience the shortcomings of many individual/intrapsychic modes of understanding human and psychic functioning. It was in *that* context that I saw deep value in the ideas of Bateson and systemic therapy. Since migrating, I have experienced and have learnt (many times painfully) the multitude of ways in which the knowledge and wisdom of that space – my country and my people – has been judged as lacking or as 'a developmental stage.' In this context, part of the desires invested in this thesis refer to my deep solidarity with what is now often called 'the south' but in the past was better known as 'third world countries.' As such, in writing this thesis, I had a somewhat perverse hope to articulate a twofold movement of both undermining the forms of prevalent authoritative knowledge as defined by a 'developed north' as well as honouring the type of knowledge that I still locate with the people and the places in 'the south.' In many ways, I get some personal solace in the idea that this thesis, in many ways, attempts to reconnect with the

hospitality that intimately belongs to the country I left behind and in the fact that the ideas proposed in this thesis are not from the north but from the south; a south that resists colonization and continues to reminds us of our inextricable connection with this earth.

Ultimately, what I have attempted to nurture with this thesis is an untimely search of justice as a human(e) activity not towards myself and those I love but as central to a sacred engagement with the people and the earth to come. And in this spirit, I would like to finish this, my closing remarks for this thesis, ironically referring to a contemporary English writer:

> If we *believe* that humanity may transcend tooth & claw, if we *believe* diverse races & creeds can share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree, if we *believe* leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable & the riches of the Earth & its Oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. It is the hardest of the worlds to make real. Tortuous advances won over generations can be lost by a single stroke of a myopic president's pen or a vainglorious general's sword.
>
> A life spent shaping a world I *want* Jackson to inherit, not one I *fear* Jackson shall inherit, this strikes me as a life worth the living. Upon my return to San Francisco, I shall pledge myself to the Abolitionist cause, because I owe my life to a self-freed slave & because I must begin somewhere.
>
> I hear my father-in-law's response. 'Oho, fine, *Whiggish* sentiments, Adam. But don't tell *me* about justice! Ride the Tennessee on an ass & convince the red-necks that they are merely white-washed negroes & their negroes are black-washed Whites! Sail to the Old World, tell'em their imperial slaver's rights are as inalienable as the Queen of Belgium's! Oh, you'll grow hoarse, poor & grey in caucuses! You'll be spat on, shot at, lynched, pacified with medals, spurned by backwoodsmen! Crucified! Naïve, dreaming Adam. He who would do battle with the many headed hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him! & only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean!'

Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops? (Mitchell, 2004, p. 528-9)

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