

Imaginative Interdependence: Imagination, Speculation and Aesthesis

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Abstract

This paper addresses the importance of creativity, speculative imagination and the production of novelty in pedagogic practices in art education and art practice. These terms refer to always incomplete assemblages or agencements of experiencing. Whitehead's ideas on imagination, speculation and propositions are linked with Stengers's work on speculation and the cosmic adventure. The paper proceeds to consider the notion of imaginative interdependence as a key leitmotif, illustrated by Haraway's (2016, p. 14) discussion of the children's game 'cats cradle.' Imaginative interdependence is then aligned with the notion of 'agencement' to move away from viewing practice or imagination as processes initiated by a prior or transcendent subjectivity, what we might call the phenomenological subject. In contrast, practice and imagination are conceived as emerging within agencements, interdependent relations, considered as cosmic adventures often involving human and non-human participants. Such adventures are explored and problematised in the context of art education. Questions arise involving the contrast between the dispositifs of institutionalised art education and local agencements of art practice that may not conform. The notion of aesthesis is introduced to explore these contrasts as well as that pertaining to the contrast between established conventions of art education and the rupturing force of art's education that may open new modes of sensing and becoming. To conclude the paper builds upon the notion of agencements of imaginative interdependence in the context of art education by emphasising the importance of aesthesis and Deleuze and Guattari's call for a new earth and a people to come.

Keywords

aesthesis, cosmos, imagination, interdependence, speculation

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Introduction

This paper focuses upon a philosophical inquiry into the importance of speculative imagination in pedagogic practices in the domain of art education and also art practice. In doing so it is mindful of Whitehead's stipulation that, "philosophy begins in wonder. And, at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains (1968, p. 168)." A term often associated with imagination is *creativity*, which, as Halewood (2013) informs us, was invented by Whitehead in 1926 who then employs it as an 'ultimate notion' in *Process and Reality* (Whitehead 1978). Creativity is used in many everyday contexts and more specialised ones, but, like imagination, it has no universal definition and is often related to other notions such as originality, ingenuity, and inventiveness. Similarly, with imagination, we can't point to it in itself we can only notice it through its 'creatures'. This is the word Whitehead uses to describe the outcomes of creativity; he writes (1978, p. 32) "[the] function of creatures [is] that they constitute the shifting character of creativity." This points to the diversity, divergence and infinite potential of creativity and its creatures.

For Whitehead, 'creativity is the principle of novelty (1978, p. 21): Creativity introduces novelty into the world. He saw the creative advance of novelty running through all aspects of life, human and non-human, organic and inorganic, an advance which in general terms signifies the production of the new. A similar approach to the notion of imagination and the creation of novelty will be adopted in this paper in the contexts of pedagogic work, art education and art practices. The task will not be to try to schematise imagination, speculation or creativity so as to form a prior classification or conceptual ground from which to operate, but rather to view these terms as referring to ongoing assemblages or *agencements* of experience and their productions of novelty. The notion of *agencements* will be elaborated below.

In an often-quoted passage from *Process and Reality* (Whitehead 1978, p. 5) Whitehead, referring to the limitations of Francis Bacon's empiricism, states:

What Bacon omitted was the play of free imagination, controlled by the requirements of coherence and logic. The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalisation; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.

How might this passage be relevant to the idea of imagination, the theme of this special issue? Though Whitehead is concerned with the process of discovery in the context of scientific work, his words do suggest a more general relevance to other domains of practice such as art, craft and design. The paper begins by giving a brief account of Whitehead's ideas on imagination, speculation and propositions, also linking these with Isabelle Stengers's work on speculation and her notion of the cosmic adventure. It proceeds to consider the notion of *imaginative interdependence* as a key leitmotif, which will be illustrated with reference to Haraway's (2016, p. 14) discussion of the children's game 'cats cradle' or 'string figures' from her book *Staying With the Trouble*.

Imaginative interdependence is then aligned to the notion of 'agencement', which is translated into English as 'assemblage'. The key point of this alignment is to move away from viewing practice or imagination as processes initiated by a

prior or transcendent subjectivity, what we might call the phenomenological subject. In contrast, practice and imagination are conceived as emerging within agencements, interdependent relations that can be considered as cosmic adventures often involving human and non-human participants. Such adventures are then explored and problematised in the context of art education. Some questions arise. Do the scalable agencements of institutionalised art education (Tsing 2015, pp. 37–43), that is to say, its established orders, its dispositifs of practice, its key concepts, assessment and competences that constitute practice, override or marginalise what we can call the *aesthesis* of local modes or agencements of practice that do not conform? The notion of *aesthesis* will be considered as a crucial factor in the creation of agencements. This disparity between established institutional assemblages of art education and the immediacy of local art practices that may not conform is echoed in the contrast between institutionalised art education and art's education, or art's pedagogy, where the former relates to the formal process of educating according to established historical and contemporary practices, whilst the latter is concerned with rupturing or exiting (Baldacchino 2012) such practices in order to open up new existential territories and universes, new modes of sensing and new modes of becoming (Guattari 1995). The notions of sensing and making sense assumed by the notion of *aesthesis* will be developed. To conclude, the paper builds upon the notion of agencements of imaginative interdependence in the context of art education by emphasising the importance of *aesthesis* and Deleuze and Guattari's call for a new earth and a people to come.

Whitehead's flight, propositions and speculation

Whitehead links imagination to his idea of speculation in a specific sense. Leaving the established ground of observation, the flight revels in the air of imaginative generalisation and then returns with a renewed sense of observation. But this does not assume a process of empirical observation being enhanced by imaginative generalisation, which will either be confirmed or dismissed when landing. This is because the ground from which the flight takes off is not the same when it lands. Nor is the subject who takes flight and then lands. Halewood (2017, p. 54) advises that Whitehead insists that "imagination does not arise from the faculty of human consciousness." There is more to it. This is made clearer when Whitehead discusses his idea of propositions as "lures for feeling" in *Process and Reality* (1978, pp. 25, 256–265). Such propositions arise *in specific actualities* where something in the environment attracts me, or entices me, repels me.

As Shaviro (2014, p. 54) puts it, "A proposition proposes some sort of potentiality to me; it holds forth the prospect of a difference," and this is always "anchored in some 'particular actuality.'" The key point here is that Whitehead's notions for 'free imagination' and 'imaginative generalisation' always emerge within particular actualities that 'proposition' or lure a subject into feeling or sensing, a process of *aesthesis* that emerges between participants in an encounter that may include both human and non-human entities. As will be seen, these encounters are considered in terms of agencements and their interdependent relations. Such processes of sensing, which are not reducible to cognition, may lead to forms of 'making sense' and thereby to what we call imagination or knowledge. The immediacy of sensing/feeling, no matter how intense or slight, of entertaining a proposition invokes a transformation of being, a novel becoming.

Whitehead's aesthetic notion of feelings or sensings does not just relate to humans but to all entities, animals, plants, rivers, cells, mountains, clouds, and so on. The important point is that encounters with other entities are an inter-relational, inter-active and interdependent process of sensing. Whitehead (1978, p. 50) writes, "We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures." For him the term 'creatures', as was noted earlier, refers to the diverse and divergent outcomes of creativity (1978, p. 20), a process of the production of novelty that applies to all aspects of the world (Whitehead 1978, p. 21). The process of aesthesis or sensing is not exclusive to humans but is 'experienced' by all entities, human and non-human. Whitehead (1978, p. 177) "attributes feeling throughout the actual world." This would suggest, speculatively, that imagination is not particular to humans and brings to mind Bennett's (2010, p. 89) notion of vital materialism. Imagination then is never completely free but emerges from specific actualities and their potentials (Whitehead 1978, p. 132).

Whitehead draws an important distinction between imagination and speculation. This again is tied to the notion that imagination emerges from a specific event or encounter and the possibilities that may appear and be realised. It is the pragmatic possibilities that are 'rendered acute' beyond the specific event where speculation derives its difference from imagination. As Halewood (2017, p. 55) puts it, "To call our acts of imagination truly speculative, we must move beyond the field from which they originate." This concerns leaving the ground of a particular event, a pedagogic event for instance, for an imaginative flight (speculation), but when we return, the test for success of our speculation is not that we return to the same ground or the same self, but that our understanding of the world will have changed so that our findings will be applicable beyond the initial (pedagogical) ground from which we left. Speculation thus involves risk and uncertainty, as put by Savransky *et al.*, but it may lead us into 'unforeseen possibilities' (2017, pp. 4, 5):

... it matters how we enter the future, what senses of futurity we bring into play, and which modes of relating to the not-yet we enable knowing and thinking practices to nurture. Thus, rather than objects of knowledge or thought to be captured by a backward-walking present, possible futures are here engaged as vectors of risk and creative experimentation. It is futures themselves that, whenever one takes the risk of cultivating them, can escape the impasses of the present and lure our own practices of thinking, knowing and feeling to unforeseen possibilities.

It is with the sensings (aesthesis) and futures of speculative imagination, the becoming of novel events of practice, and its unforeseen possibilities for pedagogic work in the contexts of art education to which this paper is attentive. Speculative imagination therefore is not concerned with determining in advance what is or is not possible, for this would neglect the actual and virtual eventfulness of practice. It values the ground of inherited practices and their values but also recognises that such ground can never exhaust the possibility for 'other' modes of practice and their potentials to which the former may remain insensitive. Each practice of learning can be conceived as an eventful 'now' from which many pathways could proceed and which therefore requires pedagogies of taking care that themselves become speculative ventures.

Isabelle Stengers and cosmic adventures

When a teacher feels that what she is doing is important, that it is not only a transmission of useful knowledge, [...] she indeed participates in what may be called a cosmic adventure, because the manner the children will experience new possibilities, feelings and ideas, or stubbornly keep to their abstractions, to their judgement about what matters and what does not, is indeed a cosmic stake. (Stengers 2006, p. 15)

In this passage, the importance of the cosmic stake of pedagogic work relates to the capacity of a teacher to enable students to experience new modes of sensing and thinking through learning encounters. We might feel that in our current epoch educational practices require a new sense of *importance* in that the prioritising of particular domains of practice referred to as the STEM subjects and the marginalising of others, such as the arts, by implication produces a preference for some subjectivities over others. In contrast, importance would shift towards a more inclusive approach to different modes of practice but also within these to each student's facility to embrace new possibilities so that each student's capabilities are both challenged and enhanced, thereby undergoing a cosmic adventure. Equally, the adventure for each teacher is to work with and support such adventures.

We can understand the experience of new ideas and new modes of practice as propositions, as discussed above, as lures for feeling, as experiences that draw interest and ask students and teachers to take a leap of imagination. In his last book, *Modes of Thought* (1968, p. 116) Whitehead writes, "Have a care; here is something that matters! Yes – that is the best phrase – the primary glimmering of consciousness reveals something that matters." This would seem to characterise the sense of importance in pedagogic work to respond sensitively and empathetically, to each student's sense of mattering and their different and divergent ways of making sense in their respective modes of practice. Such a concern for importance would constitute the pragmatic ethico-aesthetic aspect of pedagogic work, an aspect that itself will require speculation and imagination.

For Stengers the meaning of the term *cosmos* is quite specific; it does not refer to the traditional idea of a universe that already exists but to "the unknown constituted by multiple divergent worlds and the articulations of which they could be capable (Stengers 2005, p. 995)." The emphasis is placed not upon existing worlds but upon processes of becoming and their as yet unknown potentials, such as the becoming of students and teachers in educational domains.

In the spirit of Whitehead's flight, Stengers (2009), this time referencing William James, uses the notion of jumping out from established modes of practice or thought that dominate particular contexts of practice. She emphasises, however, the dimension of faith and risk in speculation, the risk of the leap and the faith that the world will meet us, which will not be the same world from which we leapt. As mentioned above, rather than viewing the world as 'there', the same as it was when we jumped, we view the world itself as *in the making*, which in turn suggests that the creation of novelty applies not just to the jumper but also to the world, a world that is itself indeterminate.

To briefly summarise these points. Both the person who jumps or takes flight and the world itself are constantly in the making; the jump or the speculation is

part of the world in the making. Speculative imagination is not simply a property of the individual; it is also a crucial aspect of the world. This suggests a speculative interdependence in which our actions and speculations are evaluated in terms of what they produce in the making of a world. If I apply this to the more practical world of pedagogic practice in art education, this may be helpful.

Will a teacher responding to a student's drawing (or other art practice) that appears mysterious because it does not meet the teacher's pedagogical frameworks view the experience of the drawing through established orders or view this experience as a new experience irreducible to such orders, an experience that requires imaginative speculation? Will the teacher in William James's sense, echoed by Stengers (2009, p. 18) "keep the windows and doors open"? This would mean leaving the solid world of established pedagogical practice and its transcendent values in order to cultivate an art of hesitation in which the speculation and the drawing may open up new possibilities, new articulations, for this particular world in the sense of cosmos proposed by Stengers.

Agencements: imaginative interdependence and pedagogic work

This section considers the idea of imaginative interdependence in pedagogic practice through the game of string figures or cat's cradling, as discussed by Haraway (2016, pp. 13, 14) in her book, *Staying With the Trouble*. Haraway introduces this game as a metaphor for conceiving processes of working-with (sympoiesis) and speculation. It involves one pair of hands holding a string figure, an entanglement that is then taken hold of by another person into their hands but in a different form. The process requires an ecology of trust and a tentative openness to future possibilities. It is in the cautious process of *passing between*, a passing or relay speculated by the receiving hands from the entanglement offered by the other hands. "Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works [...] something that wasn't there before (Haraway 2016, p. 10)." It is not too implausible to suggest that pedagogic relations can function speculatively and creatively, like the becoming-with, the passing and receiving of patterns in string figures. This would consist of a pedagogical agencement.

The term *agencement* is used rather than its English translation *assemblage* because the French term *agencer*, meaning to lay out, to arrange, or to piece together (Savransky 2021, p. 277), reminds us that the agencement (assemblage) itself has agency or intention through the interdependent becoming of its participants. If an agency belongs to the agencement, it is no longer a case of a subject acting on a detached passive world; rather, it is a case of *worlding-with*, what we might call an *ecogenesis*.

Sourriau (2015) suggests this notion of agencement, though he does not use this term, through the notion of a 'work-to-be-made' to emphasise the point that an art practice should be considered as a complex inter-active and inter-dependent process in which artist, materials and work exist-in-relation. He does not describe this process as initiated by an artist because its journey has no pilot or conductor; there is no model because at each moment the work to be made is precarious, and so is the being of the artist. It is not a realisation of potential through the creativity of an inspired artist but more of a co-respondence, a co-responding of the

to-be-made and the made. Nothing is given in advance (artist or work); everything emerges along the journey.

The notion of agencement is important as it moves away from viewing subjectivity in phenomenological terms. Linked to this idea of agencement, Guattari (1995, p. 107) writes about the 'responsibility of the creative instance with respect to the thing created.' This suggests, as Hynes (2013, pp. 1935, 1936) argues, that the responsibility for the creative instance is not to be placed with an 'individual who creates', but rather with agencements, in this case, of art practice. Such agencements will involve both actual and virtual ecologies. It is not a case of a transcendent subject creating but rather of the creative capacities of an agencement through which creatures, in Whitehead's terms, or subjectivities, in Guattari's terms, emerge.

The shift away from a phenomenological logic of subject and world, that is to say, the world as it is experienced by an individual consciousness, an already-constituted subject, is important. Because as Deleuze and Guattari argue (1994) art, for example, concerns modes of affects and percepts that do not emerge from a prior subjectivity but involve becomings that arise from what we might call inter-dependent relations emerging within agencements involving human and non-human entities and virtualities. This shift is mirrored in the difference that Deleuze and Guattari make between world and earth. For them, *earth* relates to forces that deterritorialise established horizons of meaning that constitute our world (Roberts *et al.* 2022, pp. 138–140).

Dwelling upon cat's cradling as an agencement, we might see that a pair of hands holds the entanglement, but it is also held by the entanglement. Here the binary relation between subject and object is dissolved into an interdependent agencement, consisting of a *sympoiesis*, a making-with or a worlding-with (Haraway 2016, p. 58). The passing-between-hands is an event, a creative instance, or expression in which the entanglement held by the initial agencement functions as a proposition for the receiving pair of hands so as to form a new agencement. And yet this is even more convoluted in that the two agencements that involve a passing-between are themselves a more complex agencement.

Can we speculate upon this simple children's game, its acts of sympoiesis, its passing-between, that function as a making-with or a worlding-with, its relaying of agencements, and thereby employ this speculation to consider pedagogical relations? Can we cat's cradle the learning encounters that are held out to children or students without prior criteria of judgement but open to the eventful passing-between? A cat's cradling that does not pre-define what agencements of teaching and learning are. Indeed, are we conscious of our pedagogical entanglements, our pedagogical string figures, and the effects of their passing? Are we attentive to the pedagogical cartographies of passing-between that emerge in the passing, the sympoietic relays of becoming-with?

Art education and art's pedagogy: scalability and non-scalability

Returning to the phenomenological notion of subject and world already mentioned, Guattari, in line with the notion of agencements as interdependent processes, intimates a non-phenomenological view of art. He writes (1995, p. 106), "Art does not have a monopoly on creation, but it takes its capacity to invent mutant coordinates

to extremes: it engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being.” He continues (1995, p. 131), “The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense ... which leads to the recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself.”

In other words, art agencements, their transversal dynamics and relations (machinism), have the capacity to move beyond the human and its horizons of meaning that constitute its world. They function in a dissensual space or create a dissensual cartography of sense. They function in a speculative register of ‘processual creation’ (Guattari 1995, p. 107) to produce what Deleuze and Guattari call a new people and a new earth. I will come to these notions shortly. Before doing, so it is important to consider differences between institutionalised art education and art’s education or art’s pedagogy, and from this difference draw out some of the inherent problematics for art education. These arise partly, I suggest, due to the contrast between the scalable professional dispositifs of art education and the rupturing forces of art.

In recent decades in England and elsewhere there has been a growing tendency to view educational progress and achievement in schools and also in teacher education in terms of measurement and audit. In the domain of art teacher education, abstractions such as standards and competences have been deployed, whilst in schools, curriculum attainment targets and assessment criteria relating to programmes of study are set. Such professionalisation in education brings to mind Tsing’s (2015, p. 38) writing on scalability. Scalability does not mean to discuss things in terms of scale; rather, “a scalable [...] project admits only data that already fits the project frame.” Data that diverges from the frame and which might bring about beneficial change (or not) tends to be marginalised. This is not to argue that scalable projects are bad and non-scalable ones are good. Rather, the important pragmatic issue concerns how a particular project, let’s say a project in art education, can respond effectively and inclusively to the variety and divergence of the practices of those involved. If the scalability of such a project, the metrics or criteria that govern and thereby constitute the project, takes precedence thereby excluding or marginalising certain practices, then it is likely to dilute diversity that could bring transformation. In contrast, we might argue that practices that are not subject to pre-established models or criteria could develop modes of sensing and making sense, through which practice is understood according to its local modes of *aesthesis*. Such empathetic dispositions towards local modes of practice would suggest a civilised pedagogy. Isabelle Stengers writes:

Presenting oneself in a civilised manner means presenting oneself in terms of one’s specific matter of concern, that is, admitting that others also have their matters of concern and their own ways of having their world matter.
(Stengers 2018, p. 101)

Becoming civilised does not relate to modes of practice and being that pertain to a hierarchical sense of value, where some practices (or people even) are deemed superior to or more acceptable, more ‘civilised’, than others. To be civilised, on the contrary, is to take into account the worlds of other practices and values. This would suggest that in encounters or situations that involve others that, such situations “be understood through the diverse matters of concern that connect with it, with no *a priori* differentiation between what really matters and what doesn’t (Stengers 2018, p. 102).” In the context of art education, this would

demand cultivating a sense of speculative imagination towards those other matters of concern. It would mean to approach other practices without judging them according to the scalability of established criteria but to avoid imposing such universal criteria.

There is no doubt that in England and elsewhere educational practices in schools and other institutions have been subject to increasing levels of institutional scalability over the last few decades. The pressures of measurement and audit have themselves transformed how teaching and learning are now conceived. Scalability according to established criteria and values reduces complexity to the homogeneity of the frame; it thins the world. Art practice as a process of disobedience or dissensus, a process that exits established practices and values, a process that invents mutant coordinates and cartographies, producing new modes of sensing and the making-sense, lies in stark contrast to the scalability structures of art education. This is not to suggest that we simply abandon art education and those social contexts such as schools; they are important contexts for social and civic investments, but in the words of Guattari (1995, p. 133), can we make them more effective by asking, “How do you make a class operate like a work of art?” How can the collective of a classroom function to enable each individual to gain a “purchase on existence” (Guattari 1995, p. 133)? How might it generate creative advances of becoming, not simply or only beholden to those practices that are already formulated by established criteria but also welcoming ‘other’ unforeseen modes of practice? Like the radical force of a work of art, can we ask how a class might invent or imagine new mutant coordinates of sensing and becoming? In summary, how can we make art education function like a work of art?

Do, for example, the established dispositifs of art education consisting of the basic elements of art, modes of assessment, conceptual models of practice, established knowledge and skills, pedagogical models of learning and teaching, curriculum models, and so on, form constituted processes and practices that may unintentionally establish boundaries? Such dispositifs are important; they provide both conceptual and pragmatic frameworks aimed at facilitating effective platforms for practice. However, Whitehead (1968, pp. 38, 39) advises that though such abstractions are important, we need to take care of them in order to appreciate their limitations. The implications of this for art education viewed as a work of art seem to revolve around the notion of *aesthesis*; that is to say, if art is characterised by its forces of rupture to enable new modes of sensing and becoming, then art education must also be open to such forces. It must be able to adopt a speculative imagination, as discussed above, towards a future not yet known. Not to allow established knowledge to totalise the future but to also allow views of the future in terms of risk and experimentation that lure practices of sensing and making sense towards unforeseen possibilities.

Aesthesis, speculation, world and earth

Aesthesis is one of the root terms for our word aesthetics, it refers to processes of sensing and making sense (Williams *et al.* 2019, p. 204; Fuller and Weizeman 2021). *Aesthesis* is not exclusive to humans but is applicable to other sensing organisms such as cells, animals, plants or even non-organic entities including rocks or clouds that register changes in temperature or other environmental effects. As well as referring to the immediacies of local (minor) agencements of art practices, it can

also refer to collective (molar) mediating agencements of practice such as established curriculum models, the ways in which these sense and make sense, that invoke specific modes of aestheticisation through conceptual and practical formats such as those discussed above. Therefore, we can conceive institutional art education as a *constituted* aesthesis, that is to say an already formed aesthetic framework of sensing, values and making sense. This framework exerts an aestheticisation of teachers and learners that promotes particular patterns of functioning as teachers and learners ... an ethics and politics of practice.

If art education is to function like a work of art, then a key disposition to adopt is to welcome those challenges invoked by heterogeneity, by 'that which does not fit', that contests its current worlding, and that disrupts its modes of sensing. This may arise from the agencements of practices that children or students produce or from the rupturing forces of new art agencements or from other sources emerging in other domains, such as cultural or philosophical studies. To put it another way, as well as developing curriculum content, conceptual models, and pedagogical approaches, art education also requires a culture of sensing linked to a speculative disposition for making sense so as to dilate practice towards new agencements of worlding. To make art education function like a work of art, it has to be able to exit itself. Art's pedagogy is a pedagogy of exit, of disobedience to established orders of sensing and making sense, an exit into new agencements of aesthesis. Similarly, art education can be viewed not only in terms of a constituted agencement of aestheticisation and subjectification but more as a speculative constituting force that can somehow work with and expand the evolving modes of aesthesis of students and teachers as well as those emerging in current art practices. The difference between constituted and constituting agencements is important because it reflects the difference between established grammars and subjectivities of practice and those practices that exist 'outside,' what we might call pagan, that are not knowable or sensed through constituted criteria. This difference can be captured quite simply through the terms 'IS' and 'AND'. The former denotes established orders, whilst the latter denotes an open and speculative futurity that is to come.

Can we imagine this speculative aspect of art education itself as a work of art in Whitehead's sense as 'a flight after the unattainable' (1929, p. 65), an 'imaginative improvisation' that is 'untrammelled by method' (Savransky 2022, pp. 285, 286) because it has to speculatively invent its methods and, in doing so, push art education towards its outside? Through its local challenges of lived encounters, this flight of art education may leave the ground of established or habitual methodologies to attend to that which insists in its interstices and which may lead or lure towards new modes of sensing and making sense. Whilst we cannot function without abstractions (curriculum models, etc.), we have to be vigilant in revising them, to rupture their settled territory and speculate upon new possibilities. As Whitehead (1929, p. 76) put it, "To set limits to speculation is treason to the future."

If art education is able to function like a work of art, then its mode of functioning has to prioritise the process of aesthesis and a speculative disposition in relation to minor or local encounters of practice and their potentialities, rather than be fixated upon molar organisational structures that validate art practice according to pre-defined criteria and conceptions. It has to attend to what Guattari calls a "non-discursive register," which refers to that pre-conceptual or pre-cognitive process of sensing before opening up new avenues of making sense. It has to avoid the imposition of transcendent values and try to work with nascent processes of

creation that may allow new ways of experiencing and new dispositions towards the world. Aesthesis is thus viewed as a generative process of ontogenesis, and such processes may, in their singular creative instances, pass beyond established framings of practice and tap into new modes of potential. Hence the requirement for art education to exit itself in order for it to be able to embrace these nascent potentials for becoming that cannot be known in advance.

The notion of speculative becoming is key to Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) call for a new earth and people in their final book, *What is Philosophy?* The call is directly addressed to the contingencies and pragmatics of practices, to the local relations of agencements of practice (Keating and Williams 2022, p. 94). Deleuze and Guattari are discussing the creation of concepts as a 'resistance to the present' (1994, p. 108), in order to open up new possibilities for becoming that would bring about a new earth and people. This lies in contrast to the phenomenological relation between subject and world. The earth is something that lies outside of a world, as a force or collection of forces that "deterritorialise our horizons of meaning and in doing so abstracts us from the concrete familiarity of our world (Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 137)." The earth is considered as a plane of deterritorialising forces that cannot be contained within the horizon of a subject's phenomenological world (Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 136). Moreover, these forces make themselves known to thought through the violence and 'shock' of sensation (Roberts and Dewsbury 2021, p. 1521), which is why art plays such an important role in problematising the subordination of earth to world (Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 137).

The call for a new earth and new people can be understood through the notion of a problematic encounter, such as the eruption of a world and its modes of making sense, as might be experienced in encounters with art. The people being called do not yet exist; they are not known in advance (or imagined through established parameters of practice); they rely upon the outcomes of the *creative instance* (Guattari 1995, p. 107; Hynes 2013, p. 1935). Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the notions of a new earth and a new people concern the processes of becoming and the production of novelty, no matter how slight.

When an artist creates an earth-shattering work, they often do not even 'know' what it is they are doing (or how), let alone know in advance the precise features of the work as a 'possibility'. (Lundy 2021, p. 132)

Similarly, when a student or child engages in an art encounter a similar process is involved in which the forces and intensities of the encounter may invoke new modes of sensing, however slight or modest, that open up new modes of making sense and a refiguring of the agencement of subjectivity. Viewing practice in this way replaces the notion of an already existing individual perceiving the world with conceiving it in terms of an interdependent process of forces and intensities that constitute agencements producing subjectivities (see Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 138). Art education functioning as a work of art generates encounters with art in order to effect modes of sensing that lead to novel modes of making sense, to new subjective agencements. In other words, by functioning as a work of art, art education ungrounds the world of established subject agencements by challenging its horizons of sensing and making sense. Art education deterritorialises established modes of sensing and making sense through the force of art encounters in order to create new or modified agencements of practice.

Viewing the function of art education as a work of art is then, essentially, a concern for becoming, the speculative becomings of agencements of subjectivity and practice without imposing established parameters of practice. This is a difficult task! This seems to be the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari give to the notion of the 'new' in contrast to the more established notions of subject and world. Even though practice is to some extent grounded in the past, that practice has an inheritance; it is, as Lundy (2021, p. 134) puts it, important insofar as we use it to create something new, to create new agencements of practice, new modes of sensing and making sense, and new cosmicities for becoming in which new registers of experiencing emerge. Making a drawing, building a construction, and creating a performance involve, even though perhaps only momentarily, experiencing forces and intensities that hitherto were imperceptible (Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 143) but which can effect new modes of sensing and making sense. Through art practices we can find ourselves "exposed to a deterritorialising shock of sensation (Roberts *et al.* 2022, p. 144)" that can reveal the contingency of our established habits and modes of practice and thereby precipitate new modes of sensing and thinking. The double challenge of art education, therefore, is perhaps paradoxical: to introduce and generate modes of practice but also to challenge established practices, habits of thinking and feeling ... to both enter and then exit. This applies not only to the practices of teachers and students but to art education itself.

Encounters with art, according to Colebrook (2019, p. 16), create a form of life *without a world*; that is to say, the forces and intensities of such encounters pass beyond established modes of sensing and making sense that constitute our established world and open up possibilities for future becoming. This brings to mind Stengers' notion of cosmos, "the unknown constituted by multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable (2005, p. 995)." This unknown can be equated with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a people to come and underpins the speculative and imaginative dimension of art education, not, in the words of Paul Klee to represent or render the visible but to make visible.

Coda

Over 200 years ago, William Blake drew sharp contrasts between the growing industrial revolution that promoted the rise of the cities and rural England. He also contrasted the burgeoning forces of scientific logic and reason with the infinite worlds of imagination, sensation and feeling. Blake was not anti-scientific, but he did distinguish Newton's mathematical worldview, which he thought was narrow, attenuated or reductive, from a wider, more mysterious world, including that of the imagination and its intellectual force. In his poem *London* Blake comments on the growing force of commerce and economic exploitation; he writes of 'the charter'd streets and the charter'd Thames' and the 'mind-forg'd manacles' created by what came to be known as capitalist economics that spawned self-interest, the profit motive, growing inequality, competition and exploitation that were to constitute the dominant zeitgeist of future epochs.

Turning to our current political, economic and moral climate, our current zeitgeist, the spirit of Blake's *London* is echoed by the writer, poet and rapper Testament, who appeared in a recent episode of *The Romantics and Us* (Simon Sharma BBC Two, 2020):

Imagine we live in a world of rapid technological advancement, but it's being done at the cost of people being exploited far away (but also at home).

Imagine that people are talking about the outrage that is being done to nature.

Imagine that society is telling us that science is the only way and that imagination is being bred out of schools.

Imagine that we live in a world of discrimination, of racism and sexism, a country that declares itself the upholder of values that it doesn't keep.

Imagine we lived in a world like that.

We might add,

Imagine a state education system that advocates that no child should be left behind all the while instigating policies and practices that engender the inequality of dispossession.

Imagine an education system in which the arts are undervalued and threatened.

Today, the world in which we exist with others, human and non-human, our understanding of the human and its material conditions is changing more quickly than in other epochs, thereby reconfiguring and redistributing agencements of subjectivity and their relations. Perhaps we are in a time when we need to reclaim our modes and values of educational practices and pedagogic work, to reconsider the idea of the school or the university, and to reclaim and reimagine education, teaching and learning.

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