

# Educating for 3C: Critical, Clinical, Creative

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## Abstract

*What is the aim of education? This long-time controversial question renders multiple solutions. More often than not, education is reduced to some technical objectives, now and then returning to the basic “3R”. In this paper I propose education as critical, clinical, and creative. I will unpack the notion of “educating for 3C” by reference to the philosophical legacy of French poststructuralist Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) as well as to the latest book by Nel Noddings “Critical Lessons” (2006). I will argue that only by embodying all three “Cs” can education become genuinely moral and bring the missing element of values into quality teaching (cf. Lovat 2006a). A specific pedagogical model will also be suggested.*

What is the aim of education? Or, rather, what *are* the aims of education? This long-time controversial question renders multiple solutions. We can recall John Dewey who asserted that the aim of education is more education, Maxine Green who focused on the education for freedom, Kieran Egan who questioned both the process and product of “open” education, or Alfred North Whitehead who explicitly stated the aim of education as the guardianship against useless and harmful, “inert”, ideas. Dewey defined education as a continual process of reconstruction of experience, that is, a problem-solving activity based on an active human mind interacting with an open world. In this sense, the goal of education coincides with the very educative process. Importantly, for Dewey, if the aim of education is to be democracy, then we should educate for democracy as much as we would democratise for education. The development and sustenance of the collective spirit of a democratic group is what education should aim for, with far-reaching implications for schools to become a mode of social life, the latter in turn to provide the necessary background of children’s attainments. As recently as 2006, at the very start of Nel Noddings’ latest book entitled “Critical lessons: What our schools should teach”, she said that when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, many public school teachers were forbidden to discuss the war in their classrooms, thus missing an opportunity to exercise critical thinking, even if such a restriction on free discussion appears to be simply outrageous in a liberal democracy. As if Dewey’s heritage were pretty much non-existent, education thus becomes reduced to some technical objectives, now and then returning to the basic policy of “3R” even if under several different guises depending on times and (political) contexts. Even as Dewey was adamant that “there is...no succession of studies in the ...school curriculum. ...[and] [t]he progress is not in the succession of studies, but in the development of new attitudes towards, and new interests in, experience” (Dewey 1897/Reed & Johnson 2000: 97), academic progress (and this is the *only* progress to be considered ) is still being measured by the successions in studies.

In this paper I propose that education is to accord with three criteria: *critical, clinical, and creative*. I will unpack the notion of “educating for 3C” by reference to the philosophical legacy of French poststructuralist Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) as well as to Noddings’ argument for critical lessons. Taking experience, together with Dewey, as an idea central to education in general and moral education in particular, I want to examine Deleuze’s unorthodox approach to “experience”. I will argue that only as embodying all three “Cs” in experience can education become genuinely moral and hence bring the missing element of values (Lovat 2006a) into the teaching profession. For the purpose of putting into practice the aforementioned theoretical considerations, I will suggest a specific pedagogical model hinted at by Deleuze.

Deleuze’s philosophy is pragmatic to its core; the corollary is a range of important educational implications as a follow-up to his philosophical method (Semetsky 2006). The confluence, in general, between pragmatic and continental philosophies can be warranted by their common epistemology defined in

*practical*, rather than theoretical, terms as experimental and experiential inquiry (cf. Bernstein 1995). Deleuze indeed considered himself an empiricist, however – and importantly – not in the reductive, *tabula rasa*-like, passive sense. Experience is that *milieu* which provides capacity to affect and be affected; it is a-subjective and impersonal. Experience is rendered meaningful not by grounding empirical particulars in abstract universals but by active experimentation on ourselves. Experience is not an individual property; rather, subjects are constituted in relations within experience itself. Experience is qualitative, multidimensional and inclusive; it includes “a draft, a wind, a day, a time of day, a stream, a place, a battle, an illness” (Deleuze 1995: 141): it is contextual and collective, therefore a singular experiential event is (as yet) subject-less. This means that experience is not private, confined to an individual Cogito of a Cartesian subject. Experience is always already public: as Deleuze (2000) says, we are made up of relations and experience makes sense to us only if we understand the relations in practice between conflicting schemes of the said experience. In fact, novel concepts are to be invented or created in order to make sense out of singular experiences and, ultimately, to affirm this sense.

The creation of new concepts, meanings, and values constitutes Deleuze’s specific *pedagogy of the concept* (cf. Peters 2004) that employs the notions of *difference* and *becoming*. Difference is not an individual construct as a feature of personal uncertainty: it is an ontological category and is considered by Deleuze as “the noumenon closest to phenomenon” (Deleuze 1994: 222), which, however, is never above and beyond experience because every phenomenon is in fact conditioned by difference. It is (an ontological) difference that can make a (phenomenological) difference in our experience. The concept of difference is crucial: as recently noted by Lovat (2006a) in the context of values education, it is teachers’ ability to make a difference to their students’ lives that represents a contemporary challenge, both methodological and conceptual, to formal schooling. According to Deleuze, it is difference, a discord which is embodied in real experiential situations, that makes thought encounter a shock, or crisis, embedded in the objective structure of an event *per se*, thereby transcending the faculties of perception beyond some apparently “given” data of sense perceptions. *Transcendental empiricism* is what Deleuze called his philosophical method: thinking is not a natural exercise but always a second power of thought, born under constraints of experience as a material power, an almost physical force. Something in the experiential “world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but a fundamental ‘encounter’... It may be grasped in a range of affective tones” (Deleuze 1994: 139). An encounter with difference is intense, and the intensity of difference is a function of affect. Affect (or desire) is embedded in experience: the infamous object of desire would be “the entire surrounding which it [desire or affect] traverses” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 30).

The ontological priority of relations (without which difference would be non-existent) presents “a vital protest against principles” (Deleuze 1987: 55). If relations are irreducible to their terms, then the whole dualistic split between thought and world, the inside and the outside, becomes invalid, and the relational logic by nature is the logic of multiplicities not “subordinate to the verb to be” (Deleuze 1987: 57), that is, it is not reducible to the logic of identity. Multiplicities are constituted by experimental differences, and the logic of experimentation is inspired by empiricism because “only [radical] empiricism knows how to transcend the experiential dimension of the visible” (Deleuze 1990: 20) without the necessary recourse to the totally separate realm of Ideas. The experiential world is folded, the fold being “the inside *of* the outside” (Deleuze 1988a: 96), where the outside is virtual yet real by virtue of its pragmatics. It unfolds in an unpredictable manner, and it is impossible to know ahead of time what the body (both physical and mental) can do. Because the body, acting within experience, is defined by its affective capacity, it is equally impossible to know “the affects one is capable of” (Deleuze 1988b: 125): life therefore becomes an experiment that requires, for Deleuze, practical experiential wisdom as both an intellectual and ethical element in an almost Spinozian sense. In practice, it manifests by means of immanent evaluations of each and every experience as a mode of existence. As affective, experience is as yet a-conceptual, and Deleuze emphasises the passionate quality of such an experience: “perhaps passion, the state of passion, is actually what folding the line outside, making it endurable, ...is about” (Deleuze 1995: 116).

In his work *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994) presents a story of an athlete who learns to swim by means of *becoming*. The novice athlete struggles against the waves because she is facing the unknown or what Deleuze called *unthought*. Not-yet-knowing-how-to swim, the athlete's movements do not resemble the movements of the wave. Nor do they aim to merely imitate the instructor's movements given while not in the water but on the shore. Theoretical knowledge is being transformed into practical apprenticeship: the swimmer is learning "by grasping [movements] in practice as signs" (Deleuze 1994: 23) that are, by definition, to be interpreted and evaluated. For the athlete who finds herself in a novel situation – in the water – there literally is no solid foundation under her feet, and the world that she has to face loses its reassuring power of familiar representations. To learn means to move *together* with a particular *milieu*. Deleuze (1995) expands on this idea by referring to new sports, like surfing, windsurfing and hang-gliding that would have required one to enter into an existing wave. The athlete has to invent a novel concept of what it means to swim in the midst of the very encounter with the unknown problem, via her own unfolding experience. Acknowledging a particularly narrow approach to education, Deleuze (1994) describes it as students' discovery of solutions to the problems posited by teachers. In this way pupils lack power to themselves create or formulate problems, and the construction of problems, for Deleuze, is tantamount to one's sense of freedom. Only if and when "thought is free, hence vital, nothing is compromised. When it ceases being so, all other oppressions are also possible" (Deleuze 1988b: 4). Deleuze asserts that problems should not be considered as given, that is, requiring the Cartesian method as the infamous "search for the clear and distinct" (Deleuze 1994: 161) idea as its finite solution. Rather, learning is "infinite ... [and] of a different nature to knowledge" (Deleuze 1994: 192), but that of the nature of a creative process as a method of invention or concept-creation.

The Deleuzian object of experience, being as yet un-thought of (because it is created in practice and not subject to an *a priori* theoretical judgment), is presented only in its tendency to exist, or rather to subsist, in a virtual, sub-representative state. It actualises itself through multiple different/ciations. Deleuze's method, compatible with Bergson's intuition, enables interpretation of signs, symbols, and symptoms that lay down the dynamical structure of experience. Experience is not limited to what is immediately perceived: Deleuze conceptualises *becoming* as a spatio-temporal dynamism, which is future-oriented. The line of becoming is real even if "we don't see it, because it's the least perceptible of things" (Deleuze 1995: 45). Thinking, enriched with desire, is experimental and experiential: experience is extended, expanded and enfolded, and – I repeat – not confined to an individual mind. *Becoming* by definition is an experiment with what is new, that is, coming into being, *be-coming*. Experience constitutes a complex place, and it is our experimentation on ourselves as enfolded in the world that, for Deleuze, is our only identity. It is an experience that provides real conditions for our intellectual and moral growth, however not at all as a property of hierarchical structuring; Deleuze rejected "the principle of linear progressive 'building up knowledge'" (Deleuze 1995: 139). Rather than discovering the pre-existent domain of truth(s), learning consists in the experimental and heterogeneous production of meanings as newly created concepts. Thinking demands turning upon its own *implicit* assumptions so as to be able to express them *explicitly*: this is a self-reflective, *critical* element in Deleuze's philosophy. Deleuze's model of learning is based on the explication of extra-linguistic signs, such as involuntary memories (similar to those awakened by Marcel Proust's famous *madeleine*), images, or aesthetic and artistic signs as potential sources of meanings in accord with the logic of sense (Deleuze 1990). What takes place is an examination of life or re-valuation of the modes of existence analogous to the Socratic "know thyself" principle that has been put into practice<sup>1</sup>.

Noddings (2006) is adamant about the importance of self-knowledge as the very core of education: "...when we claim to *educate*, we must take Socrates seriously. Unexamined lives may well be valuable and worth living, but an education that does not invite such examination may not be worthy of the label *education*" (Noddings 2006: 10). The structure and dynamics of critical lessons that Noddings proposes specifically for schools cannot be taken in isolation from life with its multiplicity of experiences and socio-cultural relations; real-life events are themselves those critical lessons from which we can and should learn. Importantly, Noddings does not differentiate between critical and reflective thinking: it is by using self-reflection in the

context of personal beliefs and decision-making that every domain of human interaction becomes critically examined because no meaning can be given *a-priori*. Concepts will have to be *created* as products of a dynamic process and, according to Deleuze, as embedded in a triadic relationship with percepts and affects. Experience is rendered meaningful not by grounding empirical particulars in abstract universals but by experimentation, that is, by treating any concept “as object of an encounter, as a here-and-now, ... from which emerge inexhaustibly ever new, differently distributed ‘heres’ and ‘nows’. ...I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentered center, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them” (Deleuze 1994: xx-xxi).

Making and remaking of concepts constitutes a creative process, which is not reducible to a static recognition but demands an experiential and experimental encounter that would have forced us to think and learn, that is, to construct meaning for a particular (presently un-thought-of and lacking sense) experience. For Deleuze, the creation of concepts is impossible without “the laying out of a plane” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 36). To think means to construct a plane – to actually show that it is there rather than merely “to think” it – so that to pragmatically “find one’s bearings in thought” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 37) by means of stretching, folding, unfolding, enfolding, that is by multiple movements of this plane’s rhizomatic lines. *Rhizome* is a biological metaphor used by Deleuze and Guattari to describe a model of thinking irreducible to stable foundation as a principle for certain knowledge. The movement creates a network of traversing lines leading to the creation of concepts. This network, in contrast to a map *representing* a given territory, *engenders* the very territory to which it is supposed to refer. Hence, Deleuze’s terms of *de-* and, respectively, *re-territorialization*. Accordingly, a static representation of the order of references gives way to a relational dynamics of the order of meanings.

Deleuze’s philosophical method is *both* critical *and* clinical, because the re-valuation of experience is inseparable from self-reflective critical thinking. By virtue of experimentation thinking-as-becoming escapes the old frame of reference within which the movement along the line of becoming seems like a sort of immaterial vanishing through some imaginary event horizon, and creates its own terms of actualisation thereby leading to the “intensification of life” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 74) by means of *re-valuation of experience*. The latter constitutes the moral, or rather ethical, dimension of experience or what Deleuze would have called *clinical*. It is the ethical task, as a re-valuation or reconstruction of experience, that supplements *critical* thinking and understanding with its *clinical* dimension. It is *clinical* not only by virtue of it being an assessment, as if a diagnosis, of a particular mode of existence by means of assessing the latter’s symptoms, that is, reading them as the signs of the present. Rather, the dynamics of an unfolding experience is a process that includes both the actual past and potential future. It is the clinical element that demands evaluation of the directions embedded in the growing rhizome as if anticipating its future possibilities. Deleuze wants to be able to foresee which of the rhizomatic lines would be dead-ended or blocked, which might cross some of the experiential voids, etc. However the most important is the line of becoming that he called the line of flight: it is the line of the steepest gradient or of the infinite speed of movement. The line of this type is afforded a special place in Deleuze’s philosophy because it is along the line of flight where all *becomings* take place. The most important question posited is where this line might take us, “towards what destination” (Deleuze 1987: 120), which is unknown, untimely, and as yet un-thought-of. It is along the line of flight where novelty comes into being, or *becomes*. Such is the *creative* element embedded in Deleuze’s philosophy: novelty is created in experience when some potential “non-localizable connections” (Deleuze 1994: 83) meet each other along the lines of rhizomatic *becomings*.

At the level of perception by regular senses these non-local connections would remain imperceptible. But learning by means of the interpretation of facts and “an apprenticeship in signs” (Bogue 2004) enables one’s perception to vitally increase in power, thereby tending to *becoming-percept*, that is, becoming able to perceive something previously imperceptible: thus “connecting the dots” in experience. “Connecting the dots” in the multileveled rhizomatic network enables one to make sense out of the disparate bits and pieces of information, that is, de-stratify one’s old way of thinking by means of some novel interpretations: as such, what Deleuze and Guattari called *transformational pragmatics* is inseparable from the pedagogy of concept-

creation. The process of transformational pragmatics consists in opening up to a new creative function. For Deleuze, learning is “infinite ...[and] of a different nature to knowledge” (Deleuze 1994: 192) but that of a nature of creative process as a *method of invention*. Positioning the origins of philosophical thinking at the level of practice, Deleuze brings thought into intimate relation with *non-thought*, or as yet unthought, unknown, and unpredictable. Thinking without recognition will have first to interpret or evaluate experience by means of which “we rediscover singular processes of learning” (Deleuze 1994: 25). It is the rhizomatic process-structure that is able to produce novelty, to make thought free and emancipated so that it “reconquers an immanent power of creation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 140). When positioned within the context of education, the transformational pragmatics is oriented towards *becoming-other*, as regards both epistemology and ethics. The pedagogy of the concept, then, aims towards transcending or overcoming one’s old mode of knowledge and existence. As Noddings comments, the traditional curriculum rarely provides any conditions for discussing “genuinely controversial issues” (Noddings 2006: 1) that would have contributed, even if potentially, to perhaps *becoming-other* for a while by means of understanding the multiplicities of different perspectives and viewpoints. This understanding would have constituted learning as an experiment with the world and with ourselves therefore discovering, in the Deleuzian spirit, some new and as yet *unthought-of* connections. This type of education, sure enough, “does ...challenge deeply held beliefs or ways of life” (Noddings 2006: 1) as the old outlived habits of the mind. Yet, old habits can and should be transformed: a new mode of existence would be characterised by “new percepts and new affects” (Deleuze 1995: 164) as some new ways of thinking, feeling and perceiving.

Deleuze emphasised the triadic relationship based on the inseparability of percepts, affects, and concepts; therefore a newly created concept is ultimately *self-referential*, that is, the concept – at the moment of creation – posits itself and its object simultaneously<sup>2</sup>. Concepts are invented or created as if reborn. The concept stops being a propositional statement: “it does not belong to a discursive system and it does not have a reference. The concept shows itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 140) in experience, at the level of practical, ethical action. Deleuze’s assertion that the concept shows itself sounds a bit mystical, yet such practical mysticism (cf. Lovat 2006b)<sup>3</sup> apparent in Deleuze’s philosophical method can be naturalised in terms of Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual that would have provided an unorthodox “foundation” for moral knowledge. Indeed, Deleuze’s philosophy “always speaks of values that are to come. ...[But] the artist and philosopher do not conjure things out of thin air, even if their conceptions and productions appear as utterly fantastical. Their compositions are only possible because they are able to connect, to tap into the virtual and immanent processes of machinic becoming” (Ansell-Pearson 1997: 4). The tapping into such virtual reality means a possibility for it of becoming-actual. Deleuze provides a method of thinking and learning as a practical art of the future-oriented productivity of affect or desire that creative artists, or children for that matter, have in abundance. It is the “*affect of self on self*” (Deleuze 1988a: 101) that enables a process of becoming.

Therefore novelty, creativity and becoming are implicit in the learning process, provided, of course, education is not reduced to formal schooling but is restructured in *critical, clinical, and creative* terms. As such, these three factors – and not the set of preexistent facts transmitted from a generic instructor to a generic student – should be considered to serve as educational objectives. “3C” education would have made learning not a rationally deduced abstraction but a meaningful encounter with difference embedded in students’ own experiences, which would have practically “made sense” to them. Reflecting on his own pedagogical practice, Deleuze used to say that all one should ever do when teaching a course is to explore a question, “play around with the terms, add something, relate it to something else” (Deleuze 1995: 139). He emphasised that students were not required to take in “everything, [yet] everyone took what they needed or wanted, what they could use” (Deleuze 1995: 139). Deleuze used to identify teaching and learning with the research laboratory (Deleuze 1995: 139). The thinking process that takes place in a laboratory is *in actu*, embedded in its very *praxis* – and the pedagogical process, for Deleuze, must be connected with one’s current research work: you will be giving courses on what you are currently investigating and you will have been inventing novel concepts in this process. The pedagogy of concept in the form of the rhizomatic method

of making meaningful connections transforms thinking, as posited by Deleuze, into an open set of *critical tools, artistic creations, as well as ethical evaluations and re-valuations*.

The coalescence of critical and clinical dimensions also appears in current discourse on quality teaching (Lovat 2006a). In the context of the teaching profession, it is only under the conditions of critical and self-reflective ways of knowing that the transformation to new beliefs and behaviors becomes possible. However, the road to self-knowledge is paved with values, so to speak, therefore it requires us to establish “an environment of respect, trust and care” (Lovat 2006a: 3) – that is, being able to develop an ethical (or clinical, as this paper calls it) attitude and a positive teacher-student relationship and rapport. It is precisely self-reflectivity that enables one “to step out of the shadow of one’s...own deep seated comfort zone” (Lovat 2006a: 4) where our old habits reside! Lovat is careful to point out that the transformative aspect (that is, the creative dimension of experience, according to this paper) does not involve any imposition of a new set of values onto others. Just the opposite: we achieve integrity and become our own authentic selves only by stepping into and sharing “the life-worlds of others” (Lovat 2006a: 4); bordering on *becoming-other*, as Deleuze would have said. Conceived as such, values education and quality teaching are of a complementary nature (cf. note 2). In other words, values education represents the often-missing link of formal education. Two corollaries, significant for moral education, do follow. First, a moral subject must embody a creative thinker because she must continuously evaluate new experiences and create new meanings in the process of “making sense” out of problematic, conflicting and baffling situations or moral dilemmas that abound in contemporary life and that comprise subjective, yet always already public, experience. Second, the dynamics of *becoming-other* makes “the other” always already present even if potentially or virtually. The notion of an individual moral agent loses its meaning. What serves as an agency of/for transformation and change is the self~other relation and not a supposedly autonomous agent in the format of a Cartesian subject, forever separated from the world of objects. The analysis of Deleuze’s conception of experience teaches us that we are embedded in the *process* of *becoming-autonomous*, as if always approaching our own ideal limit, as a (dis)continuous function of learning from this very experience. Only functioning as such, we shall be able to make a difference in the practical world of action. Educating for “3C” becomes imperative if we want our children to act virtuously in a world that desperately needs such action.

## Notes

1. Of course, we might remind ourselves that it was precisely the quest for meaning and re-valuation of experience (an examined vs. unexamined life) that cost Socrates his life.
2. “Self-reference” is a cutting-edge concept. As noted by J.A. Scott Kelso and David A. Engstrom in their book “The Complementary Nature” (2006), “sentience and self-reference have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries” (2006: 253). So the Deleuzian uniqueness here is obvious. Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on nonlinear *enfolded* dynamics puts them at the forefront of contemporary developments in the science of complexity. See also Semetsky 2003, 2005.
3. Lovat (2006b) attributes practical mysticism to early Greek philosophy and Neo-Platonic thought, as well as to the spiritual thinking of Aristotle’s follower and founder of the so-called Muslim Gospel, Abu al-Ghazzali, who influenced the Sufi movement of Islam. At the core of practical mysticism lies Aristotelian *phronesis* as an ethical action performed by wise, virtuous person. Aristotelian practical wisdom as an example of virtue includes a special sensitivity and sensibility (cf. Slote 1997) as regards the choice of action; yet how this operates has never been made clear. Deleuze’s triadic relation between affects, percepts and concepts and his experiential pedagogy of the concept addressed in this paper enables a glimpse into the functioning of *phronesis* when indeed “the concept shows itself” to the one who is able to learn from experience, hence she has the potential of *becoming-wise* via self-reflection. Wisdom then as the highest intellectual virtue would be the actualised potentiality, in Aristotelian terms. Once again, I cite Kelso and Engstrom who use the sign “~” to pinpoint the *relation*: “In the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy~matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self~other” (2006: 253). Deleuze’s transformational pragmatics of self-becoming-other (a self~other relation) takes place at the limit, and the limit in the extreme case is a line of horizon, or vanishing line, which becomes – never mind its being just a symbolic concept derived by Deleuze from projective geometry and Poincare’s mathematics – nonetheless visible and accessible to one’s expanded perception. And it is an expanded perception, that is, perceiving an imperceptible, that makes one both wise and virtuous. Quite possibly, what was practical mysticism for the ancients is the very “informationally meaningful, self-organizing coordination dynamics,

a web~weaver” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 253) analogous to a multileveled process-structure (or should I say, process~structure? The nuance is significant!) of a Deleuzian rhizome. This is subject matter for another paper.

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