

## Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: **STRATEGIES**

### **CONCEPTUAL PERSONAS:** *Create a fictional character and give them a role (the Superhero, the Trickster, the Idiot...)*

Conceptual personae are figures of thought, imaginary roles that we can draw upon to produce new ideas. The idiot, the parasite, the trickster, the animist are examples of conceptual personae that signpost routes through which we can become more exposed to and affected by ideas that are not reachable or doable through other means of traditional research. This means to be nudged to question the existent, in so doing shaping the very objects of study and investigation, and our own position implicated in the process. Their role is to make us see the present with different eyes, and to make us question what it is that we take for granted. They have the purpose to create some space, the distance from us to the future and in this space, they operate like hinges, or picklocks. In *What is Philosophy* Deleuze and Guattari make clear the connection between diagram and conceptual personae – whose role is “to show thought’s territories” (WIP 69) as pure potential in all directions; conceptual personae are “intercessors, crystals, or seeds of thought” (WIP 69). In an evocative passage that reads almost as a vivid how-to-technique to foster what did not exist before they write how the conceptual persona on one hand plunges into the chaos from which it extracts the determinations with which it produces the diagrammatic features of a plane of immanence: it is as if it seizes a handful of dice from chance-chaos so as to throw them on a table. On the other hand, the persona establishes a correspondence between each throw of the dice and the intensive features of a concept that will occupy this or that region of the table, as if the table were split according to the combinations (WIP 75).

Deleuze’s own personas whilst teaching: the rogue (not interested in philosophy), the clown (making fun of repetitions), the dying man (agonizing, almost at death door), the charmer (enchancing his audience). For Deleuze and Guattari conceptual persona are a way to answer to the questions: what is philosophy? and who is the philosopher? Neither an individual, specific individual, nor the intentional production of the philosopher, nor their representative, the conceptual persona is the hinge between concept-making (creation, invention) and the problem that makes one think. The conceptual persona is a way to orient ourselves through the process of thinking. As philosopher Anne Sauvagnargues writes: “we can list its pathetic traits (the Idiot, the Doubter); its relational traits (the Friend, the Waiter in the café); its dynamic traits (marching, climbing, flying, gliding); or its juridical traits: thought claiming what belongs to it by right, from the Claimant or Plaintiff in a Greek tribunal to the Lawyer (Leibniz), the Empirical Investigator (Hume), or the Judge at the tribunal of revolutionary Reason (Kant). It also includes existential traits, which evoke vital anecdotes from *The Logic of Sense*: Empedocles and his volcano or Spinoza and his spider fights” (2016: 35).

#### READINGS

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### **COUNTERFACTUALS:** *Swap your storyline for what could have happened but didn’t.*

Counterfactuals are an exploration into events that could have happened but didn’t – moments of potential not realized. Counterfactuals can be described as “the (many) possible futures of the past”.

By thinking through Counterfactuals we cast a light on all those paths that were not taken. This can illuminate established historical narratives, assumptions and bias in how history is conventionally represented by questioning the historic superiority of the West, or the events that brought the ‘inevitability’ of Empire through the Industrial Revolution. For instance: looking at how to read colonialism through a very different angle, a Counterfactual question would be:

What would Britain’s level of development be today if millions of British people had been enslaved outside their homeland for over four centuries?

Counterfactuals allow us to examine history as something that is not fixed in stone, but instead accept its uncertain epistemological status. As a type of knowledge that is gained through traces, documents, and archives and their ongoing interpretation, history becomes located almost in between science and fiction. Counterfactuals are routinely used by ordinary people and policymakers to work through problems, progress with decisions, deal with uncertainty and reach normative judgments. Counterfactual scenarios are effectively proxy experiments of what could/might have been. By imagining alternative worlds different outcomes are generated to better probe and understand the present and inform possible courses of action.

#### READINGS

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### **DIAGRAM/METAMODELING: Map it out as it happens.**

Metamodelling is a method of building a model (aesthetically rather than scientifically) by bringing together a number of existing models, even inserting a model inside a different one, in order to understand other models. Metamodelling is, in other words, a proliferation, maybe even a cacophony of models not necessarily assumed to be compatible. Metamodeling created transversal connections among a multiplicity of models bringing them together to capture the (very) slippery virtuality they express. As the virtual cannot be captured, models too cannot be applied. Instead, they have to be enacted, in a real work and process. Metamodelling does not aim to reduce or simplify, but on the contrary to amplify and complexify. It is a process of enrichment not diminution, that produces a new kind of relation: relations of relations. It is a bit like producing science fiction: producing worlds that do not yet exist, "producing worlds beyond this one and inventing new terms with which to articulate and describe them" (O'Sullivan 2010: 276). The 'meta' in metamodeling must be intended in its etymological sense of 'among'. For Brian Massumi, meta-modelling is "a practice that strategically returns its process to the quasi-chaotic field of its own emergence, in order to regenerate itself as it generates new figures, forms, and constructs, for itself and others. So that both the discipline, and its clients and stakeholders, live-in a fullness of potential, as part of a continuing process" (Massumi 2011: 103). Metamodelling is a process of active construction: a map-making (a cartography) that is constantly open to revision, rather than a tracing, constantly identical to what gets traced – i.e. a predetermined given. Ultimately, it is a way of thinking that bypasses language. It is a diagram – of which more below.

Diagram comes from the Greek verb root of diagramma = both something that is traced or marked out by lines, figure or form, as well as something that is crossed out. The connection here is between making figures and making them disappear - a reference to the practice of using wax tablets for writing, erasing and rewriting. Thus, diagram-making is a practice of "figuring, defiguring, refiguring and prefiguring" (Knoespel 2001: 146). In this sense, then, diagrams are entities that are made and remade, equally shape-shifting and shape-shifters. A diagram is a kind of fiction that maps the unformed and the unstable as they feed into change and mutation. In this sense, a diagram is a speculative visualization of what cannot be seen, yet. Making a diagram is a way of probing the possible so to anticipate futures and predict what is to come. Pragmatically, the diagram is way of thinking through a-signifying semiotics – codes, music, economic, finance, maths, numbers and art – which operate by transmitting intensities, ideas, functions and sensations through a direct interaction of form and matter and, crucially, with no need for signification as such.

Diagrams have the capacity to bring together entities, abstractions, practices and ideas so to engender encounters whose outcomes are unpredictable. In this sense what the diagram does is "to move things on". It shakes, it probes, it prompts, it offers an 'otherwise' that - un-rooted from meaningful communication or at least with no signifying semiotics – can be the harbinger of something unexpected. This can generate wonder, paradox, even puzzlement and stalling, offering a "strategy of experimentation that scrambles narrative figuration (everything that is given) in order to allow for something else, at last, to step forward. This is the production of the unknown from within the known, the unseen from within the seen" – "a strategy for sidestepping intention from within intention; it involves the production of something that then "speaks back" to its progenitor" (O'Sullivan 2016: 5).

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### **INTUITION: Trust something beyond your rationality.**

In Bergson's philosophy intuition is a way of thinking, which allows the perception and recognition of processes in their flow. Far from being instinct or feeling, intuition is a particular type of knowledge, a higher form of intelligence that is able to grasp 'spirit, duration and pure change'. Intuition 'turns the mind inward', establishing a 'sympathetic communication' between us and the rest of the world, inviting an expansion of our consciousness into the endlessly continued creation.

Intuition captures the undivided continuity of plurality and diversity, without having to take the detour of the discursive method of the mind. While intuition and intellect have to work together in the right way to gain a holistic understanding of reality, intuition is the faculty that breaks down the barriers – between observer and observed, subject and object – that are instantiated by the intellect. The key is not to ignore rationality and its potentials, but to acknowledge the great possibilities of intuitive experiences, which have to be taken seriously because they allow a glimpse into the processual character of reality. Bergson neither rejects rational sciences nor does he want to replace them completely by an intuitive approach or method. However, he indicates that we are in constant danger of overestimating our rationality and of underestimating our intuitive traits. For 17th century philosopher Spinoza there are three different forms of knowledge which are all embodied and correspond to different modes of being: imagination, reason, intuition. Imagination is a positive force in the development of knowledge, the increase of awareness, and the refinement of affective intelligence so to each what for Spinoza is the highest form of knowledge: intuition or 'scientia intuitiva' (EIIIP40n2:69). Spinoza's scholar Genevieve Lloyd points out that, although superior to reason, intuitive knowledge does not imply a rejection or a by-passing of rational knowledge. Rather, intuition is affective knowledge capable of

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apprehending things in relation to the life-force they express (Lloyd, 1996:109). This point reoccurs in Deleuze and Guattari for whom the embodied, affective apprehension of the flow of matter (that can only be followed) is "intuition in action" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988:409). Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz connects intuition to creativity when she writes: "intuition is our nonpragmatic, noneffective, nonexpedient, noninstrumental relation to the world, the capacity we have to live in the world in excess of our needs, and in excess of the self-presentation or immanence of materiality, to collapse ourselves, as things, back into the world. Our "artisticness", as Nietzsche puts it, our creativity, in Bergsonian terms, consists in nothing else than the continuous experimentation with the world of things to produce new things from the fluidity or flux which eludes everyday needs, or use-value" (Grosz 2005: 136).

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