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What can Economists Learn from Deleuze?

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Abstract

Listening, seeing and reading Gilles Deleuze has had an influence on my thinking more than most of the economic writings I have consulted over the past quarter of a century. This discovery and furtherance of knowledge enriched my reflection and also allowed me to go beyond the general philosopher, as a philosopher opening the way to new horizons. It makes the researcher aware that the most important thing is not the philosopher man but the man philosopher, i.e. the one who writes something that touches a human being at his deepest level and concerns him in his life every day. New generations of economists should meditate on this by going beyond the chapel quarrels coming from the Schumpeterian dichotomy 'science versus ideology'. To quote one of Deleuze's main ideas, no thinking *against* anything has been important over a long period; what counts are thoughts *for* something new that affect people's lives, and which are produced with rigor. This opens the way to a thought for life and not against life, which is in line with the progress of research in methodology, where it is a question of giving more importance to social ontology as a level of analysis and not focusing solely on epistemology in the narrowest sense.

Keywords: Philosophy, economics, knowledge interaction, Deleuze

JEL codes: A12, Z0

Introduction

My meeting, as an economist, with Gilles Deleuze was through *L'Abécédaire (The Primer)*, a French TV movie produced and directed by Pierre-André Boutang in 1988. Its first broadcast was on Arte in 1996, in the program entitled *Metropolis*. Composed of eight hours of interviews, *The Primer* is the only movie devoted to this thinker who has always refused to appear on television. For this one time only, he agreed to be interviewed by a television crew, provided that the film took the form of conversations between him and his former student and friend Claire Parnet and that it was broadcast after his death. After having followed most of the interviews when the weather allowed it, I was able to meditate over the years on the meaning of Michel Foucault's (1970, p. 885) lucid affirmation stating: 'Perhaps one day, the century will be Deleuzian'. Deleuze reconciled me with philosophy because he had invented another way of doing philosophy, he gave the impression of thinking by speaking and speaking by thinking. He did not go through intermediaries – *les maîtres d'hier* – he did not give himself the image of a philosopher, he did not make a show like the new philosophers (Deleuze, 1977), who are not really philosophers and bring nothing new. Television does not promote the expression of thought because there is a link between thought and time, and a negative link between urgency and thought (Bourdieu, 1996). The media coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic has only confirmed this trend.

Philosophy, Deleuze emphasises, is not the confrontation of opinions. Philosophy constitutes concepts that deal with life's problems (Deleuze, 1983). There was something

quite magical about him that made the learner feel the double will to both define his thoughts through words as closely as possible, and at the same time to be understood. This reconciliation has gradually led me to take an interest in other disciplines outside the field of specialisation itself, in the first place the philosophy of science and knowledge, epistemology, the history of science and technology, sociology of knowledge and archaeology of knowledge which has given a new turn to my doctoral thesis at the School of Higher Studies in Social Sciences. The reading of Deleuze could only lead to Foucault: they were bound by a philosophical friendship. This is evidenced by the above-mentioned statement of Foucault on Deleuze. For his part, Deleuze admired Foucault very deeply (Dosse, 2009, p. 364) and considered that the questions raised by the latter came to form one of the greatest philosophies of the 20th century, opening up a future of language and life (Deleuze, 2004).

The purpose of this paper is not to deal with purely economic issues from a philosophical point of view or to focus on a philosophy of economics. In other words, it is not a question of how Deleuze approached or could help to better understand certain economic issues, concepts, or systems such as capitalism (Deleuze, Gattari, 1972; 1980). Rather, it is a question of inviting the economist to read outside the field of the specialty itself, to think by himself, to emancipate himself from economic concepts, the key words, and the resulting indicators, which constitute a smokescreen that prevents the fundamental questions that face human societies in their daily life (Belabes, 2001). In what way can Deleuze's philosophy be used by economists, even and especially when it does not speak about economics? This is the subject of this paper, which is not a matter of circumstances, but touches on the constitutive relationship of non-philosophy with philosophy – no longer considered as the mother of science. In this sense, it remains useful to the economist but also literature, art, semiology, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, law...

1. Literature Revue and Epistemological Posture

The writings that have examined the interactions between Deleuze's thinking and economics seem to confirm the idea that Deleuze's philosophy has crossed the border between philosopher and non-philosopher (Le Garrec, 2010). What is striking at first glance is the following:

- i. Most of the authors are Anglo-Saxon.
- ii. They only referred to written material.
- iii. The references are translated from the language of Molière to that of Shakespeare.

This confirms the famous proverb 'No one is a prophet in his country'. In other words, the talent is more often recognised abroad than at home.

Beyond the phenomenon of financialism (Barthold et al, 2018; Barthold, 2018; Badaire, 2019) closely linked to resistance and power, which are two major concepts in Deleuze, most of the writings remain embedded in an economo-centric approach that revolves around economic concepts such as labour (Litaker, 2004), price (Roffe, 2004); money (Goodchild; 2010; Kerslake, 2015), debt (Janvier, 2012; Badaire, 2016), innovation (Glezos, 2010), human capital (Janning, 2015), development (Rowe, 2012a, 2012b), microfinance (Retsikas, 2015), economic policy (Juniper, 2006), capitalism (Vandenbergh, 2008; Pfeifer, 2017) and Marxism (Jameson, 1997; Garo, Sauvagnargues, 2012; Mejat, 2012; Holland, 2014).

It should be noted that although Deleuze referred to the 'constitutive relationship of philosophy with non-philosophy' (Deleuze, Gattari, 1991, p. 105), it is striking that he does not

answer exactly in this text the question he raises. He indicates that philosophy can be personally useful to non-philosophers without the philosophical teaching provided being part of a simple general culture. He also notes the importance of resonances between levels and domains of externality (Deleuze, 2003, p. 153) and points out that the discipline taught must take on learner-specific domains.

On the other hand, he says nothing about the actual content of these resonances, about how philosophy can serve thought proper to economists and enrich it through questioning that transcends the limits of the specialty. He does not go into more detail on the subject by distinguishing the case where philosophy talks about economics and the case where it does not. He only points to what might be called the need for philosophy to ensure the possibility of such a service rendered to the economist. It is for him, the essence of philosophy not to lock oneself into purely disciplinary distinctions, to be a thought that takes on other fields and thus to offer non-philosophers the possibility of resonances for themselves.

With regard to what precedes, the problem of the paper is: what are these possible resonances, specifically for an economist, especially when it is no longer a question of philosophy in general but of philosophy as conceived by Deleuze?

2. The Purpose of Research is Not to Please

The economist who undertakes research work worthy of the name must not seek to please, to propose a product that meets the desire of the general public, business world, or public authorities. This is in line with words attributed to Paul Klee: 'You know, the people are missing', often taken up by Deleuze. In fact, the latter quotes the painter from memory. In his book *On Modern Art*, Paul Klee ([1964]1980, p. 33) writes: 'This last force is lacking for want of a people that carries us'. According to Deleuze (1987),

'the people are missing and at the same time, they are not missing. The people are missing, this means that this fundamental affinity between the work of art and a people that does not yet exist is not, will never be clear. There is no work of art that does not call upon a people that does not yet exist'.

This figure of the missing people does not indicate the artist's failure but rather characterises his work and movement. This intrinsic lack permanently reactivates the ability to resist the world as it is. The artist feels, expresses and testifies. His duty, like that of every human being with a creative mind, is the testimony; he knows that he has no influence.

In the same lines under a different formula, Umberto Eco assigns to literature the following mission: 'to produce pessimistic readers; to force them to reflect – to think'. That is why he amuses himself by saying about his book *Numero Zero* where he reveals the wounds of a media world saturated with information: 'After reading my book, I hope you will throw yourself out the window!' (Malsang, 2015). In an interview at Yale University, where he gave a series of lectures, he said: 'A book must be judged a hundred years after the author's death. Before is too early' (Eco, 2013). For his part, the writer and philosopher Malek Bennabi told his wife a few days before his death in 1973: 'I will return in thirty years' time' (Boukrouh, 2016). This posture is antinomical with that of 'to please everyone' where 'it is not a question of saying what is, or what we think, but what we believe will please', as Henry de Montherlant (1959, pp. 1538-1539) notes in his novel *Les Lépreuses* published in 1939. Any original work, which bears the specific mark of its author in agreement with itself, is an act of resistance to

insignificance when everyone thinks the same thing to preserve the acquired advantages. This leads to an exploration of the relationship between resistance and power.

3. Think of Resistance as an Act of Creation and Not as a Reaction to Power

In a course that explores Michel Foucault's notion of power, Deleuze (1986) notes that power took as its object the whole of life. 'When power took life as object, he writes, life turns against power'. If power invests life, to the point of occupying it or appearing to occupy it completely, it is because life is a power that, as such, can and must free itself from it to give free rein to its creative impulse. In other words, resistance is purely and simply the freedom to be oneself, it is not a reaction, unlike power, which takes life as its object and appears as a reaction that tends to exploit the smallest details of life for domination.

This reflection provides new insight into the analysis that highlights the predominance of the logic of power over that of profit, contrary to the assertions of neoclassical theory according to which the objective pursued by the firm is the maximisation of profit. As Thomas Coutrot (2018) notes: 'Capitalism is not a system that puts profits above all else, but it is a system of accumulation of power. That is, profit is a means but not an objective.'

If power took as its object the economy, it is because it assimilates all aspects of human life into simple products that are sold and bought, and societies to market areas where everything now has a price. Market values, after subjecting land, money and labour that are fictitious commodities to the extent that they have not been produced for sale (Polanyi, 1983, p. 107), are beginning to invade all aspects of life, from family and personal relationships to transportation, energy, water distribution, health, education, research, culture, politics and civic life. This growing influence is leading to the eviction of human values that should be preserved. Market and money now influence areas of life that were once governed by non-market standards (Sandel, 2014, p. 67). The functioning of firms is not only influenced by the market mechanism – it is determined by it (Polanyi, 2008, p. 525). The relationships between humans themselves and their relationship to the world are changing radically. This inevitably leads to a change in the meaning of the words work, land, money, especially since the creation of money *ex nihilo* fell into the hands of private banks. In this sense, money becomes one of the keys to understanding the contemporary financialized economy and the systemic risks it poses to the whole of humanity.

Moreover, and this is undoubtedly the most important point, Deleuze's reflection invites us to emancipate ourselves from the obsession to criticise in an almost systematic way the power of neoclassical theory. The act of resistance does not result from a reaction to the latter, it is expressed through the creation specific to each author and which inevitably involves a renewal of concepts that best reflect the purpose of the economy in terms of the aspirations and concerns of contemporary societies. Most critics of neoclassical theory profess to be critical rather than creative. Writings against neoclassical theory cannot prevent it from dominating the teaching of economics. As Deleuze (2002, p. 269) rightly notes: 'No book against anything ever matters; only books "for" something new and that know how to produce it count'. The most popular criticisms are those that reinforce the legitimacy of the neoclassical model rather than discredit it. For example, the approach proposed by Joseph Stiglitz in his critique of the market efficiency hypothesis. In his view, there are indeed market failures. They are based on information asymmetries. Markets do not work well because all agents do not have the same information (Rothschild, Stiglitz, 1976; Stiglitz, Weiss, 1981). This type of approach remains trapped within the neoclassical theoretical framework and retains its key concepts.

4. The Art of Making Concepts

In their book *What is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1991, p. 26) write: 'Philosophy is the art of forming, inventing and manufacturing concepts'. This reminds us of Friedrich Nietzsche's words ([1884-1885]1982, p. 215) written more than a century earlier:

'Philosophers must no longer be content to accept the concepts they are given, just to clean them up and make them shine, but they must begin by making them, creating them, asking them and persuading people to use them'. [In this sense, philosophy is more than a] 'system of rational knowledge formed by concepts' (Kant, 1830, p. 2).

Philosophy only uses the concept to abandon it by transcending it (Adhémar, 1905, p. 43). Concepts adopted in the form of dogmas hinder free philosophical thought (Dumesnil, 1892, p. 66).

A concept of a thing is the general idea of its content or object, which is what gives it its character, what constitutes it and distinguishes it. To put it simply, the concept is what reshapes the event to reveal an unknown form. Any concept is positive or negative; although the verbal form does not always indicate the character of the concept it expresses (Goblot, 1918, p. 93). If the concept of competitiveness has a positive connotation, that of social charges, which has gradually replaced the concept of social contributions, it expresses a burden on enterprises. Words are not only symbolic representations of reality; they are also action programs that guide, without being fully aware of it, our perception of reality (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 99). If the essential character of life is to change continuously, concepts are fixed in the sense that their formation fixes something by eliminating what has not been fixed (James, 1910, p. 243). This raises the question of the scope and limits of the concepts.

If philosophy is a discipline that consists of creating concepts as mentioned by several philosophers, concepts, notes Deleuze (1987),

'do not exist ready-made, and concepts are not hanging in the sky waiting for a philosopher to seize them. Concepts must be produced. So, of course, they are not simply made like that; you don't say to yourself one day, "Well, I am going to make this concept – I am going to invent this concept," no more than a painter says to himself one day: "Here, let me make a painting like this." There must be a need, as much in philosophy as elsewhere, just like a filmmaker does not say: "Here, I will make such a film." There must be a necessity, otherwise there is nothing at all.'

This means that the creation of concepts responds to a pressing need, to an obstacle that must be overcome. As written by Deleuze:

'Any concept refers to a problem, to problems without which it would not make sense, and which themselves can only be identified or understood as they are solved [...]. In philosophy, concepts are created only on the basis of problems that we consider poorly perceived or posed' (Deleuze, Guattari, 1991, p. 22).

Starting from the fact that the concept does not have the function of saying what would be an objective essence of things, the philosopher constantly redesigns the concepts according to

the problematic variations he has in mind, and according to the contexts, 'to prevent foolishness' (Deleuze, 1988).

Foolishness is the part of us that, looking at each other like a mirror, crosses the world seeking its equal or its reflection. Foolishness is the reduction of the world to the 'I', the other to the same, the difference to the identity. Foolishness. Drowns a person in a group where nothing else distinguishes him and where it is the current that carries him in a specific direction. Hence the need to problematise our relationship to the world by not giving it predetermined content.

The invention of concepts stems from an intuition (Kant, 1843, p. 81) or from an interpretation to think of the eventuality, i.e. the possible still unsuspected, beyond the positivism that has wanted to keep in science only the regularities (Bouleau, 2018), commonly referred to as laws to which one must submit or disappear. It is clear, as Bernard Guerrien (2004: 101) points out, that the word *law* cannot be taken in economics in the same sense given to it in the natural sciences.

5. If we do Not Pose Problems in the Same Way, it is Not Worth Listening to Each Other

'Leave three economists together and you are sure to have at least four opinions on the policy to be followed'. This is the popular stereotype, according to Milton Friedman ([1968]1976, p. 21), which, like most clichés, contains an element of truth. However, he adds, the apparent disagreement between economists is exaggeratedly amplified. It is obvious that when they discuss among themselves, they do not spend their time repeating what they already know; they confront their opinions. The same impulse that pushes a manufacturer to differentiate his product pushes an economist, when he gives a public opinion, to present his point of view in the most original and personal way possible. In addition, economists, when expressing their views to the public, tend to adapt their strictly economic judgments to the requirements of flexibility and political realism that are imposed on them to varying degrees.

For Deleuze (1982), 'people can only listen to each other if they have a minimal level of implicit understanding, i.e. a common way of raising problems'. If the first step of the communication is to listen to each other, the definition mode is essential because it allows people to explicitly ask about the problem they want an answer to. In order for the problem to be fully addressed, the definition of the problem must be developed with a common language. As Jean Rostand wrote: 'We can get along with people who do not speak the same language, but we cannot get along with people for whom words do not have the same meaning'. For Deleuze, thinking also means thinking about style and modes of enunciation.

At the opening of *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet, Deleuze expresses his discomfort with dialogues and interviews. Most of the time, when asked a question, he realises that he has nothing to say. In addition, one should not ask a question, but make a question, because a question is the result of a process of making a problem. The goal, he adds, is not to answer questions, but to get out of questions: in a way to extrapolate – out of philosophy, through philosophy – or to deterritorialise questions, i.e. to solicit elements from elsewhere and from anywhere. Thinking must, in this way, succeed in 'becoming imperceptible', i.e. creating a geography of thought, orientations, directions, 'inputs and outputs' (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996, p. 8). Based on this idea, Deleuze confides that he has never considered that a student was wrong if he did not come to listen to him, believing that the way of posing problems did not suit him. Having this attitude does not mean that the student is against the teacher or shows a lack of respect for him. 'This means, to use a complicated word, that your own problems do not pass through mine' (Deleuze, 1982).

Unlike Milton Friedman who does not tackle the root of the problem and does not elaborate it explicitly, Deleuze (1982) puts his finger on the essential point: 'When we say that two philosophers do not agree, it is never because they give two different answers to the same question. It is because they do not pose the same problem'. The philosopher must not be erudite at all costs at the risk of becoming abstruse to the greatest number of people. On the contrary, he must engage – in a more modest task – a pedagogy that analyses the conditions for creating concepts (Deleuze, Gattari, 1991, p. 17). In other words, what is most important is to understand a concept in concrete terms, in its emergence, in its singularity, and not to make philosophy a science of abstraction, which rejects those who are not familiar with speculative thinking. Pedagogy is used to make the concept an event in itself and to bring out a living thought

Concepts do not appear, in accordance with traditional understanding, as key words that dominate the history of philosophy. On the contrary, they are tools that indicate a direction more than they characterise a circumscribed place in the field of thought. We could say that concepts are the vanishing lines, intensities, rather than programs of intentions. This is reflected in the *Abécédaire* which tends to reveal futures rather than words: futures that are more acts, constructions, than fixed concepts. It is not the words that count – words can always be replaced by other words – but rather the arrangements created from letters or words.

From this approach, Deleuze invites people to invent new ways of reading and writing:

'Good ways of reading today are to treat a book the same way we listen to a record and watch a film or a TV show [...] There is no question of difficulty or understanding: concepts are exactly like sounds, colors or images, they are intensities that suit you or not, that pass or do not pass' (Deleuze, Parnet, 1996, p. 10).

This conception is light years away from the dominant pedagogical practice in the higher educational institutions that provide training in economics, where the excess of mathematical formalism leads to a dramatic uniformity of thought that ends up stifling the diversity of conceptions (Orléan, 2015).

6. A Thought of 'Life' and not of 'No to Life'

Deleuze's main concern is to make thought alive. Philosophy, in his eyes, is about understanding and producing points of view about the world. It is the conceptual art of moments of life. Considered in this way, the task of thought is to free what Man never ceases to imprison, in particular because of his alleged rationality. To move in this direction, philosophy must begin with itself and ensure its autonomy; self-organisation is indeed the hallmark of life. On the other hand, thought can tend towards its own confinement or death. Such is the case of thinking that supports the established order by claiming to be a simple and faithful image of reality. But this is also the case when the concepts bequeathed by our ancestors encourage inertia if they are not used properly with regard to the conditions of possibility.

The question that comes to mind is: how to keep thought alive? Deleuze never directly asks the question for fear, perhaps, of preventing the fulfillment of the requirement that gives rise to it: 'Questions are made up, as anything other. If you are not allowed to make your questions, with elements from everywhere, from anywhere; if they are posed on your

behalf, you don't have much to say' (Deleuze, Parnet, 1977, p. 7). The stakes are high: the gain in autonomy will allow thought to take its responsibility by creating concepts that immunise against the transcendent forces that separate thought from life.

To bring his thoughts to life, Deleuze sets them in motion. He avoids schools, trends, fashions, ready-made answers, and prefers singular and momentary encounters that allow everyone to create in their field. He departs from fixed debates where it is a question of taking a position in order to be readable. He switches from philosophy to cinema, from sports to music, from writing to speaking, from alcohol to work, from grave seriousness to whimsical laughter. This eclecticism allows the thought to be in constant contact with City of the form seen in ancient Greece, i.e. how people live, how they manage to survive. It knows it comes from somewhere and evolves somewhere. By confronting the emergence of the unknown, thought is at the service of life. It opens itself to the multiplicity and changes of the world to avoid falling into the spirit of system and priesthood, which is always a bad sign: 'The weaker the content of thought is, the more important the subject of enunciation becomes' (Deleuze, 1977). This is what separated Deleuze from those who proclaimed themselves 'new philosophers', those who have only the name of philosophy and bring nothing new. He frequents all kinds of activities but has no need to oppose the elders to allow himself to think. On the contrary, he reaffirms that, even if the activity of philosophy is redefined according to the times, the philosopher's primary task is to create ideas and that this happens both through current encounters and in relation to tradition. This is an undeniable matter, and it is necessary to reclaim it to prevent it from continuing to think in our place. It is not a question of sanctifying the old just because it is old, nor the new simply because it is new. As Hannah Arendt ([1961]1972, p. 50) shows, philosophers who have used the categories of tradition to attack it have encountered paradoxes and their revolt has failed, however brilliant it might be.

To understand Deleuze without bias and pre-judgment, one may need to listen, watch and read him to understand that he tackles different themes not only to express a thought and bring it to life, but above all, to encourage people to think and act for themselves. To be seized by Deleuze, the learner needs to go out on his way. It is not a question of agreeing with him, but of living his work as an initiatory journey. He does not define terms to make them work as slogans. What interests him is to produce 'a movement capable of moving the mind outside of representation' (Deleuze, 1968, p. 16), i.e. out of the repetitive past to live fully in the present moment and face what is.

The reader, the viewer, the listener will have every interest in being embraced by multiplicity and following risky paths that make the movement of ideas possible. However, there is no risk of getting lost if he agrees to see the fulfillment of Deleuze's major requirement: to make thought alive. He will have plenty of time to animate his thoughts, to find a source of fulfillment, by recreating in his own way the meaning. He will not necessarily have knowledge that answers his current questions. On the other hand, he will be stimulated to work from outside his field of interest. The Deleuzian experience is a story of nomadism which is a form of thought following a line of flight that does not get caught in the mesh of institutional forces. It evolves in a smooth and unchecked space (Deleuze, Gattari, 1980, pp. 438-528).

It should be noted that every human being has interests that he pursues throughout his life regardless of the field of predilection. As for literature, Umberto Eco confesses to one of his French translators: 'we only have a few real ideas and these few ideas we pursue all our lives' (Gayard, 2016). In his documentary *Derrière les Portes* devoted to Umberto Eco, Teri Wehn Damisch (2012) says: 'the wrong is central to his thinking'. The few real ideas to which Eco alludes thus converge towards the same 'central idea', as his Ph.D supervisor

Luigi Pareysón confided to him one day. This means that there are three levels of reading human works as follows:

- The first level deals with the question: what is the work about?
- The second: how did the author work?
- The third: which center is the work converging on?

This presupposes a careful analysis of the author's production, which undermines the book review industry as it has been generally practiced until now.

Conclusion

If reading Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote* makes the reader aware that what gives long-term importance to writings is their capacity to touch the human being in a most profound sense: the man writer takes over the writer man. Listening and reading Deleuze reinforces this feeling in the sense that the most important thing is not the philosopher man but the man philosopher who keeps his feet on the ground and does not take itself seriously. Unfortunately, in a time when economics has become a dismal science, most higher education institutions only produce 'economist men' who glorify business in the narrower sense of the term that quantifies all aspects of life in terms of money. However, the important things in life are not quantifiable.

Economics has also become a hard science in the true sense of the word: it has no feelings towards human beings although it was originally embedded in social relationships (Polanyi, [1944]1983, p. 88). Under these conditions, it is difficult to envisage an equivalent of Foucault's sentence 'this century will be Deleuzian' in the orthodox school, i.e. a new way of doing economics, even in heterodox schools that tend to construct their identity, in an almost systematic way, in reaction to the neoclassical school. However, no writing against anything is worthwhile. The only thing that matters is the writing for something new in a rigorous way.

For Deleuze, it was not a question of engaging in a thoughtful construction, in the rational organisation of a meaningful structure, but rather of bringing out new creative vanishing lines. It is not a question of looking for whether the idea we are about to say is right and true, but rather of looking for an idea elsewhere, far from the suggested field. In the same way that new words are constructed by assembling letters in a new fashion, Deleuze invites us to a philosophy that assembles concepts in a new way. Thinking is built according to new arrangements. It is operative when it is in motion and generating interactions. There is something about him that can immediately be perceived as extremely bright and of a particular brilliance. For him, being a philosopher is not a role but a state. Hence the need to revitalise philosophy to preserve life by constantly inventing concepts. Deleuze's thought is a thought of 'life' not of the 'no life'.

Starting from the fact that a theory is based on a set of concepts, the role of a theory is not to provide an encompassing framework, a totalising basis or a unified speech. The role of theory is to function as a piece that interacts with other pieces in order to stage the vital forces of life. This reflects a way of justifying the plurality of text readings and an ability to generate effects that philosophy itself has not provided. Such an approach is similar to that of the engineer who designs products as systems composed of parts that interact. This is evidenced by his statement: 'what counts in a multiplicity are not the terms or the elements, but what is "entre", the between, a set of relationships that cannot be separated from each other' (Deleuze, 2003, p. 285). Applied to economics, this means that thinking does not emanate from a single school but results from a construction of problems through interaction,

i.e. an interpersonal relationship in which the behaviours of the actors involved influence each other and change each other accordingly.

Economists, whatever their school of thought, have every interest in meditating on this philosophy to work together and meet the challenges of the 21st century in an increasingly interdependent world facing the collapse of human civilisation. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that economics is not everything in life. Money can buy a house, but not a home. It can buy a bed, but not sleep. It can buy a clock, but not time. It can buy food, but not appetite. It can buy medicine, but not health. It can buy tranquilizers, but not peace. Life must take over so that we will each do – not business – but what we have to do to build together a world that is more resilient, more sober, more united. This illustrates the philosophy in practice, and not just in the register of ideas as it appears on TV shows.

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