

Triangulation

Being the record of a discussion of comics theory conducted on 2nd May 2018, transcribed into words and then comics in the period since.

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Abstract

Doctors John, Thierry and Paul planned to record a conversation about the comics theories they had explored in the course of pursuing their respective PhDs, to see whether these were consistent - with plans to co-created a “verbatim comic” based on the recordings.

To keep things manageable each composed five questions, from which two were chosen to answer, for a strict one minute each - with a little chance for comments, questions and responses after.

This was still a lot of text to fit into a comic!

Each transcribed the questions asked, and of the comic that follows is a result of the subsequent editing and drawing.

Thierry passed away in the months following the recording but his self-drawings are re-used here, and his partner Sharon provided a splash image.

Keywords: Comics jam, sketchnoting, Deleuze, Halliday, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, practice-based research, verbatim comic

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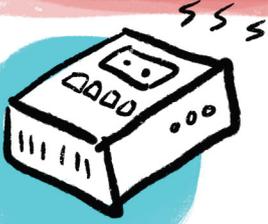
Biographical Notes

John Miers completed his PhD at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, in 2018. That year he began a postdoctoral residency at in UAL’s Archives and Special Collections Centre, during which he began applying his theoretical work on visual metaphor and depiction to the production of autobiographical comics dealing with his experience of multiple sclerosis. He currently works as lecturer in illustration at Kingston School of Art, and associate lecturer at Central Saint Martins.

Thierry Chessum completed his PhD in 2015 in the department of social sciences at the Open University. This article is dedicated to his memory.

Paul Fisher Davies gained his Ph.D. in 2017 in the school of English at University of Sussex. His monograph *Comics as Communication: A Functional Approach* was published by Palgrave in December 2019. He has published in *Studies in Comics*, the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, and *The Comics Grid* amongst others, including academic work in comics form. He teaches English Language at East Sussex College in Lewes, UK.

TRIANGULATION



BEING the RECORD of a DISCUSSION
of COMICS THEORY conducted on
2nd MAY 2018, transcribed into WORDS
and then COMICS in the period since.



EVENT



WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

AFFECT

observation

STREAM OF IDEAS

FERTILE
GROUND

RIVER OF POSSIBILITIES

IMMERSED IN
POSSIBILITIES

With...

DR. JOHN MIERS



DR. THIERRY
CHESJUM



And...

DR. PAUL F DAVIES



In HONOUR and FOND MEMORY of THIERRY.

With the support of, and cover art by, Sharon Finmark.



DRS JOHN, PAUL & THIERRY planned to RECORD a conversation about the COMICS THEORIES they had explored in the course of pursuing their respective PhDs, to see whether these were CONSISTENT - with the PLAN to co-create a "VERBATIM COMIC" based on the recordings.

To keep things manageable, each composed ⑤ QUESTIONS, from which ② were chosen to answer, for a strict ① minute each - with a little chance for comment, questions and RESPONSES after.

This was still a LOT of text to fit into a COMIC!

Each TRANSCRIBED the questions asked, and the COMIC that follows is a result of the subsequent EDITING and DRAWING.

THIERRY passed away in the months following the recording, but his SELF-DRAWINGS are re-used here, and his partner SHARON provided a SPLASH IMAGE.

WHY DO WE NEED THEORY AT ALL? OF WHAT USE IS IT?

Can I go with 3: WHY do we need THEORY at all?



It's perfectly EASY to understand ANALYSES without getting into DETAIL of EMBODIMENT in METAPHOR THEORY...
HOWEVER, I myself would not have ARRIVED at those insights without my EXPLORATION of conceptual metaphor THEORY.

THEORY can be a METHOD - a set of FOCUSES that REVEAL PATTERNS, new things to THINK.

There's INTERPRETING - i.e., you SEE what something MEANS...



...and then, a level above that, there's ANALYSING it:

Saying not just WHAT does it mean, but HOW does it mean?



Then the NEXT step up would be to say that theory then has to be JUSTIFIED...



...by METAPHYSICAL, at least PHILOSOPHICAL reasoning and concepts which LICENSE the VALIDITY of the theory!



They all somewhere INTERPLAY and RELATE...



And it's not always easy to see the woods for the TREES.



DOES DELEUZE OFFER A 'METHOD' FOR ANALYSIS OF COMICS?

NO. OF COURSE. DELEUZE puts forward a complete system of METAPHYSICS in which ART plays a central role as the CRITIC and CLINICIAN of society...



That's the FUNCTION of ART as he SEES it and if it's to be of any WORTH, that's what it DOES.



What WE can do is to look at COMICS through that LENS, and EVALUATE what they DO when looked at in this way.



Questions then won't be about "HOW COMICS WORK" but "what does THAT particular comic DO?"



And that's why the example of **TANTRUM** I think is a GREAT work of ART...

JULES FEIFFER 1979



It's really a theory of ART embedded in the METAPHYSICS through which to view COMICS.

This is what I LOVE about DELEUZE and find FASCINATING about your work....

So theory is a METHOD, a way of guiding ENGAGEMENT, instead of a set of DIKTATS.

The THEORY, then, poses the EMPIRICAL questions to be looked at, and they PRE-STRUCTURE the different levels of LOOKING at things.



Your THEORY is RESTING on something!

TIMELESS PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM... SELF, REALITY...

So you've got to ARGUE that!



AFFECT IS BEYOND LANGUAGE: PRE-PERSONAL, NON-CONSCIOUS - HOW CAN WE ACCOMMODATE IT TO THEORIES OF LANGUAGE?

FOR DELEUZE there is no process of meaning-making that can be ANALYSED OBJECTIVELY.



Meaning either falls back on the MAJORITARIAN, habit, power, or through the CONTORTIONS of MEMORISATION... and that is where the POLITICAL COMES in...



"HAECEITIES" ↑CRYSTALLISATION and PROCESSES of INDIVIDUATION

We can't really go into all this because it's INCREDIBLY complex. Sometimes I think I have it and sometimes I DON'T.



And UNDERLYING this is the difference between "ARE WE DOING SCIENCE or are we doing METAPHYSICS?"

How can we STITCH those two TOGETHER?



MY answer to this is: What are you DOING with theory of LANGUAGE?

For me, LINGUISTICS is an ONGOING endeavour of trying to DESCRIBE what we are DOING SOCIALLY.



It's always SUBJECT to CHANGE.

Creating a linguistics IS a power act... there are some good reasons to create a GRAMMAR...

It's quite another power thing to TEACH those rules!

What RULES can we PROPOSE for this language?



We'll always be CHASING it, always RE-THEORISING.

So for you linguistics is neither a THEORETICAL nor EMPIRICAL discipline, it's a process of ANALYSIS...?

DATA PRACTICE ← THEORY



For me, those are not EXCLUSIVE.

What it ISN'T is a claim to THE TRUTH, a fixed and ABSOLUTE 'science' - which I would also reject - it doesn't mean you throw away LINGUISTICS!



We're finding COMMON GROUND.



THERE IS ALWAYS A DEFICIT IN LANGUAGE (LECERCLE). DO WE, SHOULD WE, TACKLE THE DIMENSION BEYOND LANGUAGE?

Yes we DO and we SHOULD. Having identified things beyond language we can bring them INTO language

There is a DEFICIT, yes. But THAT'S OKAY. And it's ALWAYS going to be true.

So you're saying we can always "CATCH UP"?

You've BOTH said that in a way. That we're CHASING the deficit, and we can...

by naming them
in order to be able to talk about them

If you fill the DEFICIT, there will still be a deficit.

INTERPRET it
UNDERSTAND it
MAKE SENSE of it.

Language is PHYSICAL, VISUAL, AUDITORY in the sense of MUSK - perhaps there's a FALSE BINARY?

You're NEVER going to FILL IT...
And WHAT IS DEFICIENT is ALWAYS MOVING.

Only if you believe that language is A thing, A SYSTEM as opposed to developing PRACTICES.

This is about how we UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE. As a LINGUISTIC THING, or with MULTIMODALITY, SOCIAL CONTEXT and so on.

WE FILL IN our DEFICITS and CREATE OTHERS as language DEVELOPS.

Yep, I'm totally with that.

From the DELEZIAN philosophy I'm interested in...

But we can OVERLOOK things with LANGUAGE, so that things remain in...

...is precisely HOW you can make an ACCOUNT for what goes on BEFORE anything is MANIFESTED and can be brought into LANGUAGE.

This seems too SHARP to me a DISTINCTION...

So much of this depends on what we MEAN by language.

And the answer is way too simplistic if we say 'language is this lexical structure, this system'

DELEUZE is going to have the notion of "THE EVENT" ...

which I love!

Yes. We have to go beyond that.

so THESE are the things that interest me - in that sense, PRE LANGUAGE.

A **STRUCTURALIST** sort of linguistics is NOT the **ONLY** linguistics.

When **HALLIDAY** talks of **CHILD LANGUAGE**, how an infant **LEARNS** to **MEAN** - from the **START**, meaning is **BODILY**: "**INTENSITIES**", emotions we can't **HELP** but **MEAN**.



BUT IF THESE THINGS ARE MANIFEST IN ANY WAY AT ALL, THEN THEY CAN - "CAPTURED" IS THE WRONG WORD I THINK, BUT THEY CAN BE...



CRYSTALLISED.

YEAH, CRYSTALLISED; THEY CAN BE MANIFESTED IN A FORM THAT CAN BE REFLECTED ON.



IF I'M EXPERIENCING SOME INTENSE PHYSICAL SENSATION, MAYBE THE IDEA OF SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS IS WAY OUT OF MY CONCERN

BUT IF EITHER OF YOU ARE SEEING THAT I'M SHAKING AND QUIVERING, YOU'RE GOING TO BE OBSERVING THOSE MARKERS AND USING THEM AS SIGNS.



BUT YOU'VE ALREADY BROUGHT IT BACK, YOU SEE, TO OBSERVATION AND LANGUAGE.



WHY NOT LEAVE IT AT THAT DELEUZIAN NOTION THAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AN INTENSITY WHICH *AFFECTS*, AND THE RESPONSE IS *AFFECT*.



BUT THESE THINGS AREN'T MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.

NO, THEY'RE NOT. THE QUESTION IS, DO THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR LINGUISTIC THEORIES ACCORD WITH A DELEUZIAN NOTION OF SELF



OR ARE WE STITCHING THEORIES WHICH AT BOTTOM HAVE DIFFERENT PREMISES?

I think you can't characterise a whole school of theory in that way. There are DIFFERENT APPROACHES to linguistics, that can TACKLE things in different ways.



I TOTALLY AGREE, YES.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO DEFINE affect as the PRE-LINGUISTIC, and as "INEFFABLE", then yes, you can't talk about it, or theorise about it - or it stops being 'IT' if you do.



...and I'M HAPPY with that tension.

(HOW) CAN WORDS AND IMAGES BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE A CONGRUITY OF PURPOSE?

I don't mean to propose an EQUIVALENCE between words and images...



I'm trying to GET ACROSS a MEANING - and I can use ESTABLISHED SYSTEMS within LANGUAGE...

visual

verbal



And I can also INNOVATE and COMBINE things in NEW WAYS!



I just want to MEAN. And that's what I mean by "shared PURPOSES."



LANGUAGE is always GENERATING, always has DEFICITS... ...and we're always FILLING THEM... ...and other making ones...



IN TERMS OF WHAT IS BEING COMMUNICATED, BY THE VERY ACT OF DRAWING WE CANNOT HELP BUT IMBUE THAT THING WITH OTHER PROPERTIES.



This is what I'm trying to GET AT with my idea of this HIERARCHY of PROCESSES...

... that when you DRAW, you can't just draw THAT THERE IS a tape recorder...

... You are COMMITTED, in a sort of CASCADE of COMMITMENTS, to draw PHYSICAL PROPERTIES of it, to leave your own MARKS.



"CASCADE OF COMMITMENTS", THAT'S A REALLY NICE PHRASE..



IN MY TERMINOLOGY I WOULD TALK ABOUT "ACTIVATING THE SOURCE DOMAIN"

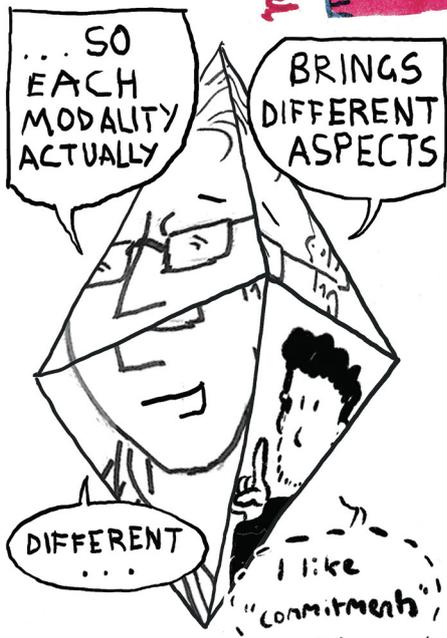


MAKING A GREATER RANGE OF THE CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN BEING CONSIDERED!

AM I RIGHT IN UNDERSTANDING THAT IF WE NAME THIS TAPE RECORDER AS A 'TAPE RECORDER', OR IF WE DRAW THAT TAPE RECORDER ...



... WE'RE IMBUING IT WITH DIFFERENT QUALITIES



... SO EACH MODALITY ACTUALLY

BRINGS DIFFERENT ASPECTS

DIFFERENT ...

I like "commitments"



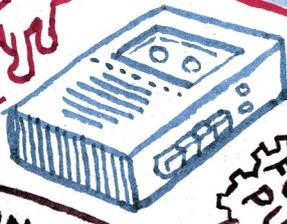
COMMITMENTS, YES.



THE DEICTIC THERE, CALLING IT "THIS" ...

... INCLUDES THE FACT THAT IT'S RECORDING WHAT WE'RE SAYING, THAT IT'S ON

THIS TABLE



IN THIS ROOM

FOR THIS PURPOSE

That's been over a minute on that.



SORRY, I ...

Let's move on?

WHAT A LOVELY MINUTE.

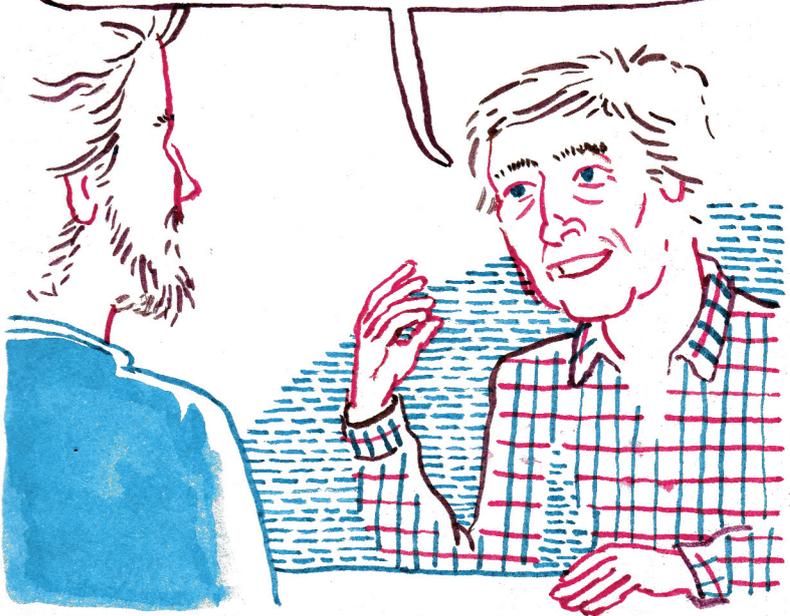


RHIZOMIC CONNECTIONS,
IF YOU WANT TO SAY...



SO MEANING-MAKING IN
COMICS IS GOING TO BE DIFFERENT
FOR EVERY COMIC PRODUCTION

AND FOR EVERY COMIC
CREATOR, EVEN IN COMMERCIAL
PRODUCTIONS.





SO THAT IS ANOTHER APPROACH TO IT, WHICH I

DON'T THINK INVALIDATES WHAT YOU GUYS ARE TRYING TO DO,

COMING AT IT FROM A POSTMODERNIST METAPHYSICS, IF YOU LIKE, COMMITS YOU TO A DIFFERENT-

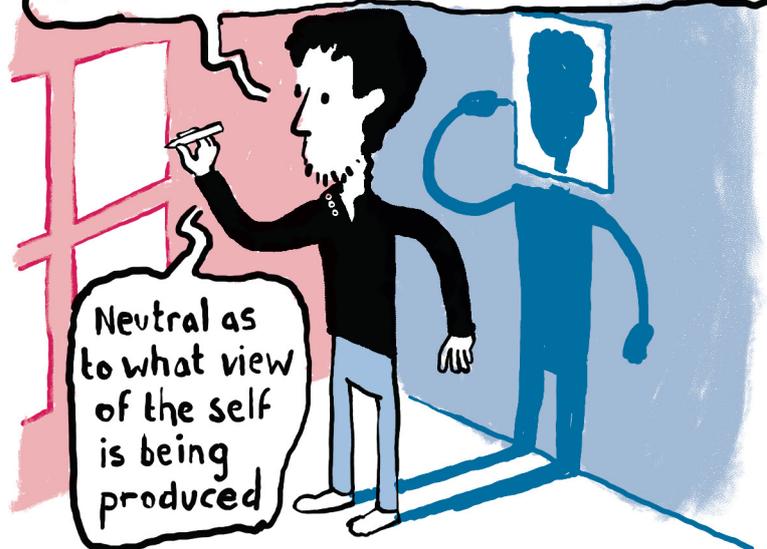
-TALK ABOUT commitments

BUT IT'S ANOTHER WAY ...

THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY, REALLY.

I want my approach to describing what seems to be going on in comics to be neutral to whether it's one creator, many creators

I certainly feel that when I'm creating, I'm sometimes acting like my own scriptwriter, sometimes I'm my own inker of my pencils, and I'm fairly conscious of taking on those roles.



Neutral as to what view of the self is being produced



Other times, it will just sort of - yeah, I'm jumping around and I'm making marks,

AND THERE'S NOT A SENSE OF COHERENT

NO, QUITE.



SELF, or of playing different ROLES.



I wonder whether the idea of inker and penciller and so on,

IT SEEMS UNCONTROVERSIAL TO SAY THAT'S INFLUENCED BY OUR KNOWLEDGE OF PRODUCTION LINE TECHNIQUES,



BUT I THINK THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE TASKS

whether that's just because we're aware of that cultural history of how those jobs were divided -



THE MARKS I CAN MAKE WITH A BRUSH ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE I CAN MAKE WITH A PENCIL

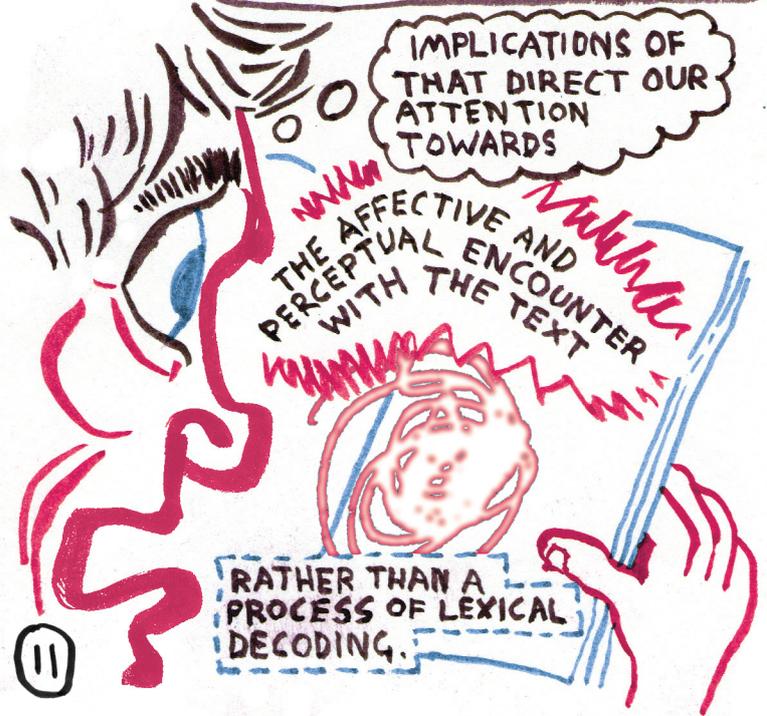
SO IT'S NOT ARBITRARY TO SEE THEM AS DISTINCT PARTS OF A RELATED SET OF EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES



I'D SAY THAT COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS DOES NOT INCLUDE A SPECIFIC NOTION OF WHAT THE SELF IS,

HOWEVER IT DOES EMPHASISE THAT OUR CONCEPTIONS OF "SELF" ARE THEMSELVES METAPHORICALLY

AND THAT MEANS THAT AT ROOT THEY ARE BASED IN BODILY EXPERIENCE



IMPLICATIONS OF THAT DIRECT OUR ATTENTION TOWARDS

THE AFFECTIVE AND PERCEPTUAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE TEXT

RATHER THAN A PROCESS OF LEXICAL DECODING.



IT SEEMS TO ME, THEN, THAT THESE THINGS ARE COMPATIBLE.

I THINK SO, YES.

THEY'RE JUST DIFFERENT ... PARTS OF A MACHINE.



After Thierry, with apologies. PFD.

Triangulation: Notes

Page 1

Underlying Paul's account of linguistics throughout is M.A.K. Halliday's perspective, outlined in several essays collected in Vol. 3 of his works (Halliday, 2006). Useful summaries of this view of linguistics as an ongoing project of enquiry can be found in Chapter 1 (p36), reprinting 1964's 'Syntax and the consumer'; Chapter 3 'The context of linguistics' from 1975; and Chapter 4 'Ideas about language' from 1977. These view linguistics as efforts to be rigorous, to be sure, but not as fixed or certain; and as a socially-embedded practice, as language itself is. See also Chapter 9 in the same volume for a 1992 discussion of linguistics as a scientific endeavour.

Panel 2:

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) was proposed by linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). It proposes a cognitivist account of metaphor use and comprehension in which the cognitive topology of embodied concepts and experiences is used to structure understanding of more abstract concepts.

An entailment of its central claim that "metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 153) is that metaphoric thought should be present in all human communicative modalities. Charles Forceville (1996) provided the first detailed application of CMT to pictorial images, and it has since been frequently employed in comic studies. Common applications include the analysis of formal features such as emanata (Forceville, 2005, 2011; Shinohara and Matsunaka, 2009), speech and thought balloons (Forceville, Veale and Feytaerts, 2010), as well as in the examination of representational tropes common to genres such as action comics (Potsch and Williams, 2012) and graphic medicine (El Refaie, 2019). John's application of these perspectives to questions of depiction and graphic style inform his research (Miers, 2018) and cartooning practice (Oliver, 2020).

Panel 9: The concept and image of the 'rhizome' underlies Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013) and serves as the title for its introductory chapter (p1).

Page 2

Panel 5: *Tantrum* was first published by Jules Feiffer in 1979. (Feiffer, 1979)

Page 3

In addition to Halliday's accounts of linguistics as a developing 'science' (Halliday, 2006), there has been some debate about the status of a scientific 'visual linguistics' of comics. Miodrag (2013) challenges Cohn's (2013a) claims to such a science, which he counter-challenges in a web review of her book (Cohn, 2013b).

Page 4

Thierry in his thesis (Chessum, 2015, p. 76) offers this blockquote from Lecerle:

"At the heart of language there is a deficiency, an exiguity, there are fewer words than there are things waiting to be named. Reality is always in excess of language." (Lecerle, 1985, p. 37)

Panels 1 to 4: Filling or resolving deficits in language has frequently been identified as one of metaphor's core functions. Philosopher Max Black, whose "interactionist" view of metaphor (Black, 1954, 1977) was an important influence on Forceville's development of a theory of pictorial metaphor, observes that metaphor can function as a species of catachresis, or "the use of a word in some new sense in order to remedy a gap in the vocabulary" (Black, 1954, p. 280).

Panels 5-9: "Language is one semiotic system among several and art relies on a system of signs not reducible to language. The 'real' lies beyond language; as Patton (2000, p. 22) puts it, 'language (for Deleuze) is a means of intervention *in* rather than a representation *of* the world'." (Chessum, 2015, p. 68)

Page 5

Panel 6:

"Deleuze's (1968, 1988) work on affect is derived from Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. Spinoza distinguishes between 'affectio', translated as 'affection', and 'affectus', translated as 'affect', in accounting for how bodies affect and are affected in an encounter. Bodies are materially changed, resulting in an increase or decrease of that body's power to act in mind and body (mind and body being two aspects of the same substance).

[...]

"*Affect* differs from *affections* in that, whereas *affections* refers to states and ideas/ images of those states, *affect* refers to the passage between those states. They are 'durations through which we pass to greater or lesser perfection. These continual durations or variations of perfection are called 'affects' or feelings (affectus)' (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 48–9)." (Chessum, 2015, p. 64)

Page 6

Panel 6: The triangle diagram lower left is a simplification of Paul's 'stack of processes' expressed simultaneously in comics drawing; the idea that drawing certain processes commits one to representing others is explained and explored more fully in Chapter 3 of *Comics as Communication* (Davies, 2019, pp. 81–85).

Page 7

Panel 1: In CMT, metaphorical thought is characterised as a process of mapping properties from a source conceptual domain to a target conceptual domain. A conceptual domain is "any coherent organisation of experience" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). The "mind is a machine" conceptual metaphor on which the illustration in the right-hand half of this panel is based "gives us a conception of the mind as having an on-off state, a level of efficiency, a productive capacity, an internal mechanism, a source of energy, and an operating condition" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 29). Metaphorical mappings are always partial: in this illustration, the properties of having an on-off state, an internal mechanism, and an operating condition are mapped from the "machine" source domain to the "mind" target domain, but the other items are left relatively unspecified.

Page 8

"I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996, p. 64)

“Deleuze and Guattari replace reason and motive as determiners of action with the notion of ‘assemblage’, that is to say a selection from the variety of factors both personal and social that have shaped our lives, which in turn guide our choice through the multiplicity of choices at every moment. Free action, for Deleuze and Guattari, involves experimenting and creativity: a pragmatic approach in which we make new connections and see if they work for us and for others” (Chessum, 2015, p. 30)

Page 11

Panel 4: In keeping with the Deleuzian rejection of essentialist views of the self invoked by Thierry on page 8, Lakoff and Johnson argue that self-understanding involves recognising the metaphors that we unconsciously employ in making sense of our experiences, not for the purpose of dissolving those metaphors in order to reveal an underlying true self, but “[e]ngaging in an unending process of viewing your life through new alternative metaphors” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 234). The use of the visual metaphor of a tree in this panel is inspired by the discussion of Shakespeare’s sonnet 73 in Lakoff and Turner (2009, pp. 39–42).

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