

THIRTEEN

## From affection to soul

Gregory J. Seigworth

To assume that there was a power of being affected which defined the power of being affected of *the whole universe* is quite possible ...  
(Deleuze 1997c: 9, emphasis added)

What follows is a story of affect as a set or series of encounters: affectionate encounters with enemies and allies, often proximate, sometimes more distant, and quite regularly both at the same time. Although this essay moves, in large part, by proper names (Guattari, Deleuze, Lacan, Lyotard, Foucault), it is simultaneously a story of affect's different modes of existence. Each encounter shifts slightly in its emphasis, while progressively navigating through the chief forms – and un-forms – of affect. It should be remembered that these affectional modes (as points, lines, vaporous atmospheres and planes) are, by their nature, perpetually tangled up in one another. However, it always takes far more than two or three to tangle, even if we begin with and between (seemingly) two: Guattari *and* Deleuze.

Brief prelude: affect as passion, or, when Felix *and* Gilles met

... passion dissolve[s] persons not into something undifferentiated but into a field of various persisting and mutually interdependent intensities ... Love's a state of, and a relation between, persons, subjects. But passion is a subpersonal event that may last as long as a lifetime ... It is very difficult to express, to convey – a new distinction between affective states. (N: 116)

In endeavouring to understand what may have first drawn Guattari and Deleuze to each other in the summer of 1969, one could do infinitely worse than begin by wondering about the role played by "affect". After all, Guattari proposed (first in 1964) his conception of psychoanalytical practice as "transversality" – by enlarging the milieu of encounter to include affective qualities that went beyond, not only the psychically interpersonal, but also beyond the altogether too narrow realm of the human – to serve as a rather deliberate alternative to Jacques Lacan's focus upon the processes of "transference" between analyst and analysand. Meanwhile, Deleuze – whose *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* was published in 1968 – had set himself the task of retrieving affect from Spinoza's *Ethics* where it had long been mutilated and reduced in translation as "affection" or "emotion". But Deleuze's project here was not just a one-for-one replacement of the mistranslated "affection" with affect.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there is not one type of affect in Spinoza but two (*affectio* and *affectus*), and, then, not only two but, before and beneath them both, a third (affect as blessedness–beatitude or soul), and then, in a lightning flash, not just three but a multitudinous affectivity beyond number (a plane of immanence).

Never susceptible to pinning down, affect is that moment of singularity (sometimes Deleuze and Guattari will use the term "haecceity", or thisness) where a universe pours in, flows out – an unlimited One-All, universal-singular. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari: like an egg as it cracks open, affect flees on all of its sides at once. An affection dissolved between two, thereby a multitude (an infinite expanse of desert to be populated): affect as subpersonal event, as passionate line of flight.

### Diverging Spinozan paths

As the color of the human soul as well as the color of human becomings and of cosmic magics, affect remains hazy, atmospheric, and nevertheless perfectly apprehensible to the extent that it is characterized by the existence of threshold effects and reversals in polarity.  
(Guattari 1996a: 158)

Things never pass where you think, nor along the paths you think.  
(D: 4)

When reflecting upon the impulses that guided the writing of their first book together, Guattari remarks that, for both himself and Deleuze, "our objections to Freud in *Anti-Oedipus* were very much bound up

with our objections to Lacanism" (AO: 50). For while Sigmund Freud had, for some time, seriously endeavoured to give an accounting of affect (most especially in his earliest "scientific psychology" up through *The Interpretation of Dreams*), Jacques Lacan regarded any sustained analytical attention to affect as thoroughly misguided. The clearest moment in Lacan's direct assault on affect comes during the last day of his seminars in 1953–54. Following a question from Serge Leclaire about Lacan's ongoing alternation of silence and "direct attacks" in regard to affect, the master declares to his followers: "I believe that is a term ['the affective'] which one must completely expunge from our papers" (1988: 275). And it is with considerably more flourish that, a few weeks earlier in the same seminar, Lacan tells his audience that they must stop pursuing the affective as if it:

were a sort of coloration, a kind of ineffable quality which must be sought out in itself, independently of the eviscerated skin which the purely intellectual realization of a subject's relationship should consist in. This conception, which urges analysis down strange paths, is puerile . . . The affective is not like a special density which would escape an intellectual accounting.  
(*Ibid.*: 57)

But it is precisely down these "strange paths" that Deleuze and Guattari – both together and in their solo writings – chose to tread, although they would agree with Lacan on one point: that "affect escapes intellectual accounting" by *not* passing where you think, or, that is, where there is an image of thought.

Hence, as Deleuze tells the audience of his own seminars: "Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect" (1997c: 1). An affective path cannot be threaded through those places where representations or images of thought are predominant or hold sway. For affect is something more or other than a mode of thought: an affect, first as Spinoza's *affectio*, is the transitive effect undergone by a body (human or otherwise) in a system – a mobile and open system – composed of the various, innumerable forces of existing and the relations between these forces. More succinctly, *affectio* (affection) is the state of a body in as much as it affects or is affected by another body. Affect, then, cannot be converted into or delimited by the discursive, by images or representations, by consciousness or thought. Equally significant too, as we shall see, is the notion that affect has its own autonomy (not only from the intellect but from affectional–corporeal tracings as well), and this was the route that Lacan (and most subsequent Lacanians) refused to accept as viable.

It is intriguing, though, to wonder, as Lacan biographer Elizabeth Roudinesco (1997: 52–6) does, about Lacan's own passionate and idiosyncratic encounter with Spinoza. The walls of Lacan's boyhood bedroom were covered in diagrams and coloured arrows that charted the supple architecture of Spinoza's *Ethics*, while the epigraph of Lacan's thesis is a quote from Book 3 (proposition 57) of *The Ethics*, about how the affects of one individual differ from those of another to the same degree that their essences differ. The main problem for Lacan, as Roudinesco points out, is that he did not realize in his earliest readings of Spinoza (during the early 1930s) that, in *The Ethics* (and in his quoted thesis epigraph in particular), Spinoza had used two words for designating affect: *affectus* and *affectio*. The French translator Charles Appuhn had unfortunately rendered both as "affection", thus collapsing the key distinction for Spinoza between "the state of a body as it affects or is affected by another body" (*affectio*) and "a body's continuous, intensive variation (as increase-diminution) in its capacity for acting" (*affectus*). As Deleuze and Guattari derive from this latter formulation of affect (as *affectus*), a dimension of subjectivity opens up – a lived intensity that is simultaneously neutral, or, impersonal (an intimate exteriority) – that Lacan's work, during this time, could not bring into account.

Roudinesco remarks, then, that it would take Lacan "twenty years" (or, if the seminar of 1953–54 is any indication, a little longer than that!) to start to square Spinoza's affect with "his theoretical revisionism of Freudianism as a whole" (Roudinesco 1997: 55). But, even then, Lacan would invite Deleuze to his apartment a few months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* to ask him (without success) to consider becoming a disciple. Later, he would tell friends that Deleuze and Guattari had plagiarized his seminars, and, further, that they had pilfered his idea of a "desiring machine" (*ibid.*: 348).

### Machining desire, or a general mechanics of the Soul

Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual . . . it was initially the affect, that which we experience in time; then time itself, pure virtuality, which divides itself in two as affector and affected, "the affection of self by self" as definition of time.  
(C2: 82–3)

In the early pages of his *Heidegger and "the Jews"*, Lyotard initiates a discussion of what he says even Freud knew would be widely regarded as "pure nonsense, an affect that does not affect consciousness. How can

one say it affects? What is a feeling that is not felt by anyone?" (1990: 12). More pointedly, *where* in a corporeal topography of the human psyche, with its capacity to affect and be affected, would such an affect reside? The short answer: in lost time. Following Lyotard further, this is what Deleuze finds so incredibly compelling about Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*: "a past located this side of the forgotten, much closer to the present moment than any past, at the same time that it is incapable of being solicited by voluntary and conscious memory – a past Deleuze says that is not past but always there" (Lyotard 1990: 12). And, thus, the oft-repeated mantra that Deleuze extracts from Proust – "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" – that comes to serve as Deleuze's shorthand formula for the virtual.<sup>2</sup>

From one (rather human) standpoint, the virtual can be understood, in part, as what has happened: as subsistent past, in full affective-accumulation, on this side of forgetting. However, crucially, the virtual is also always in contact and actively-affectively participating with what is happening and about to happen contemporaneously (as becoming): in excess of consciousness, an affective-accumulation continually pressing toward its differentiated actualization in the future. The virtual is perhaps easiest to consider as what transpires in those passing everyday moments that never really present themselves to our conscious minds, generally because such moments (in their various contexts and variable durations) arrive with insufficient force or otherwise descend with an intensity that is altogether dispersed or atmospheric. As they slip well beneath the thresholds of consciousness, these intensive passages of affect (*affectus*) are, Lyotard writes, "'in excess' like air and earth are in excess of the life of a fish" (1990: 12). In fact, these low-level gradient changes in the passages of intensity are so much in excess that the word "moment" is not entirely adequate. This ongoing process of affective-accumulation (as time lost to time itself) makes up most of our days, as the between-moments (of any-space and any-time-whatevers) that come to constitute "a life".

Lyotard maintains that the soul is always exceeded, even as it is continually constituted and reconstituted by these passages of affective intensity; and he argues that this kind of metaphysics of a system of forces and force-relations "definitely needs a general mechanics" directed "toward the determination of the state of the soul itself" (1990: 12). To which he adds, "Deleuze has, in a sense, done nothing other than investigate and unfold its possibilities" (1990: 12), an assessment that Deleuze would hardly have disputed at all. Spinoza's distinction of *affectio* and *affectus* had provided a way to approach "soul" that departed rather radically from more traditional discourses of eternal

salvation (or damnation). Speaking about Spinoza with Parnet, Deleuze concludes:

the soul is neither above nor inside, it is "with", it is on the road, exposed to all contacts, encounters, in the company of those who follow the same way, "feel with them, seize the vibration of their soul and their body as they pass", the opposite of a morality of salvation, teaching the soul to live its life, not to save it. (D: 62)

A life, and how to live it: through the modification of a body's affects by its contact with bodies outside it (*affectio*) to the melodic variation (*affectus*) that carries a body along "the road", it then moves through and beyond both, to a steady accumulation of affective-encounters (neither above nor inside, but virtually alongside). This accumulation opens no longer to a prescribed and transcendent morality but on to an immanently everyday ethics. It is no surprise, then, that Foucault would enthusiastically proclaim Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* to be read as a "manual or guide to everyday life" (1977: xiii).

#### Flee: affect and power

To flee, but in fleeing to seek a weapon. (D: 136)

Despite the enthusiasms Deleuze and Foucault shared for one another's work, it is relatively easy to mark some key distinctions – around the whole matter of affect – between their writings, and that's for two reasons: first, because there are so few significant differences between them; secondly, because they themselves, at different times, addressed rather directly those few points that separate their work, if often through only the very subtlest of shadings.

For example, they had different means of avoiding too-ready subsumption into the two of the major intellectual currents of their time: phenomenology and structural Freudo-Marxism (or, in many ways, "Lacanian-Althusserism"). In a 1981 interview, Foucault (1991: 31) said that the key sequence of figures in his own awakening and escape were first Blanchot, followed by Bataille and then Nietzsche, while, two years later in another interview (1996: 351), he stated that as he saw it, for Deleuze, it was Hume first, and then Nietzsche (although Foucault probably should also have added, at least, Bergson and Spinoza). Throughout their careers, Foucault and Deleuze were both evidently influenced by the work of Blanchot, Nietzsche and Spinoza. But the more telling

names are those that do not fit particularly well into the other's itinerary: for instance, Bataille for Deleuze or Hume for Foucault. Consider, then, how Foucault attends to the themes of transgression and the violences that regularly circulate in the vicinities of "truth", the intricate, capillary linkages of knowledge and power, and the ethico-aesthetics of limit-experiences. Meanwhile, Deleuze's interests are sustained by matters more closely affiliated with the affective or passional: the ruptures, flows and assemblages of desire, the pragmatics of force, the continual hings and unhings of habits and territories.

When Deleuze registers some of the fundamental differences between himself and Foucault, he does so, as ever, by making these differences productive: most immediately, through the affects and ethics of Spinoza. In a succinct set of notes entitled "Desire and Pleasure" from 1977 (written with the intention of being privately passed to Foucault), but not published until 1994 in France, Deleuze sketched out several of the points along which he and Foucault coincided and, even more revealingly, those relatively few but significant points where they diverged. This essay also provides some useful elaboration of a small but critical endnote about Foucault located in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (ATP: 530–31, n.39).

In both this minor footnote and the notes in "Desire and Pleasure", Deleuze and Guattari lodged two primary disagreements with Foucault. First, assemblages are – for them – assemblages of desire before they are assemblages of power.

If I speak, with Félix, of the desiring-assemblages, it's that I am not sure that micro-systems can be described in terms of power. For me, the desiring-assemblage marks the fact that desire is never a "natural" nor a "spontaneous" determination ... Systems of power would thus be a component of assemblages ... [However] systems of power would never motivate, nor constitute, but rather desiring-assemblages would swarm among the formations of power according to their dimensions. (Deleuze 1997a: n.p.)

Power, thus, is the stratified dimensions of an assemblage; power arrives as the coming-to-formation and sedimentations that follow in the temporary arresting of an assemblage. Power is something like a coagulation or scabbing on the skin or surface of the social rather than the immanent breaks, flows and movements of desire.

This perspective brings us to the corollary: in any critical analysis of the social field that links various of these assemblages with their discursive and non-discursive elements, "lines of flight ... are primary",

that is, they are “not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization” (ATP: 531). The first rule of the social is that it flees on all sides at once: “the first given of a society is that everything flees” (Deleuze 1997a). In Deleuze and Guattari’s view, any critical discourse that focuses on power in its initial move will, nearly by default, call up an attendant and too-symmetrical posture from acts of resistance as the occasion and site of their joint, interlocking exercise, even as Foucault himself gamely tries to circumvent this state of affairs in his essay “The Subject and Power” (2000). Resistance falls, almost inevitably, into a “reactive” role as block and/or friction, and, further, such a conception only hastens a romantic anthropomorphization of power’s possibilities. Hence, Deleuze’s refusal to simply trumpet, unproblematically, the programmes and protestations of “the marginals” (D: 139): a real point of disagreement with Foucault.

Here, then, is where Deleuze’s notion of the immanence and perpetual flowings and fleings of the social field can be more fully grasped, again, through his reading of Spinoza’s affect. Against dialectical reasoning and various structuralist dualisms, Deleuze discovers a “narrow gorge like a border or frontier” where a multiplicity can be divulged. Casting, then, both “power” and “desire” in relation to affect, Deleuze makes a concise but illuminating equation between these terms, claiming that the “first difference would thus be that, for me, power is an affection of desire” (1997a: n.p.). That is, power is the *affectio* of the encounter between two (or more) bodies, whether collective or individual. As outlined above, this affection (as *affectio*) is the most basic of affect’s three primary modes as found in the Spinozan undercurrents of Deleuze’s philosophical thought. When one is able to trace out in this way how Deleuze draws distinctions and connections between these three modes of affect, we can follow a similar trajectory across nearly all of his writings on other philosophers and their philosophical planes, as well as those books written in his own voice. It is an implicit (and sometimes explicit) movement through the vicissitudes of affect that continually guides Deleuze’s thought.

To summarize:

- *Affectio* An affection of a body by or upon another; actualization as the “state of a thing”, that is, affect turned “effect”. Thus, to say that “power is an affection of desire” is, indeed, to say that power is an effect of desire, one of its (desire’s) arrested, although resonating, modes of existence
- *Affectus* Affect as a line of continuous variation in the passage of intensities or forces of existence; affect as “becoming”, a continual

inclining or declining slope or greater or lesser degrees of intensity or potentiality

- *Affect* as entirely active or as absolute survey. Pure immanence at its most concrete abstraction from all becomings and states of things. The autonomy of affect as outside any distinction of interiority or exteriority. In Deleuze’s view, this is affect as virtuality, “soul” or “a life”.

Returning more immediately to Deleuze’s conceptualization of power as seen now in the light of affect, Deleuze’s influential 1962 re-reading of Nietzsche in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* relies, in part, on drawing an affectual distinction between power as *pouvoir* (power acted out in reaction, reversal and ressentiment, i.e. power separated from what it can do) and power as *puissance* (potential, the power to act, the sensibility of force). There is also a great deal of affinity to be discovered between this pair of terms and similar dualities (with their own unique gorges) such as Bergson’s virtual-actual and Spinoza’s *potestas-potentia*.<sup>3</sup>

Because there is a Spinozan system of expression subtending the way that each of these concept pairs is split or shifted like a load, a third element circulates between potential and its actualization, between what expresses and what is expressed, be it Nietzsche’s eternal return, Bergson’s *élan vital*, Spinoza’s beatitude, Leibniz’s *vinculum* or Deleuze’s “a life”. This element serves not to close up potential and its actualization, but to leave them perpetually open to the Outside. In this regard, Pierre Macherey describes the perpetually mobile-architecture of Deleuze’s philosophy quite effectively when he writes that what

Deleuze finds in Spinoza is a logic of univocity, where things are thought in their being, since the act of thinking something is the same act that produces it, by which it comes to be. So that expression is nothing to do with designating or representing anything... [and hence] the act of expression that permits a synthesis of what is expressed and what expresses it is by definition the altogether positive affirmation of a power... [O]ne might even say [here is] a logic of life or a logic of movement, essentially different from the traditional logics of representation that, in their quest for static identity, are constantly threatened by negativity, and therefore dependent on a transcendent principle. (1996: 146–7)

Affect (in the encountering of bodies as *affectio*), movement (in the melodious intensive variation of *affectus*), *immanence* or soul as

revealed in the myriad virtualities of (a) life: what one discovers, then, in Deleuze and Guattari's work is the attempt to grasp power positively not only as an effect or in its effects. More crucially, however, the task is to take account of power in its affectivity and producibility, in its expressibility.

Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, nothing much is advanced by finding everywhere the effects of power; something more is at stake when the task is, rather, to understand the virtual machine(s) and immanent assemblages that make the effects of power our actuality. The "world," Deleuze said, "does not exist outside of its expressions" (FLD: 132). Power, even at its most circumscribed and insistent (as either *pouvoir* or *puissance*), cannot begin to cover the full range of world-as-expression. With affect, Deleuze and Guattari seek a means to address the "whole" universe of expression in a way that no other logic allows.

In their last book together, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari practically tick off, in sequential fashion, these progressive variations of affect: "The affect goes beyond affections [*affectio*] no less than the percept goes beyond perceptions. The affect is not the passage from one lived state to another [that is, *affectus*] but man's non-human becoming [*affect as expressive world*]" (WIP: 173). We may liken this series of beyondings – from *affectio* to *affectus* to immanently expressive world (soul) – to an increasing expansion or widening out: from the affective capacity of bodies (corporeal or incorporeal) to interval (as place of passage between intensive states or continuous variation) and, finally, to plane of immanence: as "the absolute ground of philosophy" (WIP: 41). The plane of immanence is

A LIFE and nothing else . . . A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss . . . A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects . . . A life contains only virtuals. It is made up of virtualities, events, singularities.

(PI: 27–31, original emphasis)

Locating the plane of immanence is not unlike discovering the intricate weave and meshings of a whole fabric of cloth, constantly moving, folding and curling back upon itself even as it stretches beyond and below the horizon of the social field (without ever separating from it or departing it). Trace out the story of affect and its encounters, and you will arrive at this plane of immanence: always there, always to be made,

never still. It is affectionately yours, and, through it, the *whole* of the universe.

## Notes

1. In a 1978 lecture on Spinoza, Deleuze says: "In Spinoza's principal book, which is called *The Ethics* and which is written in Latin, one finds two words: *affectio* and *affectus*. Some translators, quite strangely, translate both in the same way. This is a disaster. They translate both terms, *affectio* and *affectus*, by affection. I call this a disaster because when a philosopher employs two words, it is in principle because he has a reason to" (1997c: 1).
2. In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze writes: "This ideal reality, this virtuality, is essence, which is realized or incarnated in involuntary memory" (PS: 60). See also Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, where essence and soul are intimately linked.
3. On the distinction *potestas*–*potentia* see Kenneth Surin's essay in this volume.