

## Introduction

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This volume brings together a bricolage of essays under the theme of ‘Affect’. As is the work of bricolage, the different essays in this volume hang together while drawing from various disciplinary locations, and making use of the theorization around affect to push their respective conceptual frontiers. We feel that this may be a particularly fertile way in which experiments with cross-disciplinary pollination of ideas may become possible. As we discussed this project, we also wanted to keep in mind the voice of the reader that insisted on a philosophical rigour in which the ‘turn to affect’ can be grounded. We decided, thus, to include a brief overview of the literature that could offer a theoretical distinction between ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’. We found that the literature on ‘affect’ and the ‘turn to affect’ in social sciences sometimes takes these terms to be synonymous, and on other occasions, strongly asserts the distinction between the two.

The confusion that engulfs these terms can be attributed to various reasons: slippages in translations, cross-disciplinary interest which has led to proliferation of meanings and usages, and most significantly, the ongoing research set to clarify (i.e. contribute to the understanding of) these concepts which are in line with the recent neuroscience interventions in the domain of philosophy and psychoanalysis.

The precursor to the work on affect is traced primarily to feminist studies with their focus on the body, and in queer studies, which explore emotions (Hardt, 2007). Located both in body and mind, referring equally to reason and passion, affects suggest a dual causality: “Both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers” (Hardt, 2007: ix).

Philosophically, the question of affect appears centrally in the works of Spinoza, for whom affect illustrates the question of mind-body relationship and the model of

psychophysical parallelism. For him, affects could be actions that are determined by internal causes or passions bound by external causes. To convert passions into actions is the constant endeavour of political and ethical projects. Hardt further suggests that since we do not know in advance what a body can do or a mind can think, the perspective of affects asks us to think and rethink the relation between actions and passions, thus engendering a new ontology of human that is constantly open and constantly renewed.

Adrian Johnston and Catherine Malabou (2013: 3) suggest “[a] new conception of affect is undoubtedly emerging” that is “disturb[ing] disciplinary boundaries and induc[ing] secret networks between sciences (biology and neurobiology) and the humanities (philosophy and psychoanalysis).” Citing Gilles Deleuze, they point out the mistranslations of *affectio* and *affectus* as used by Spinoza in *Ethics*<sup>1</sup>:

I begin with some terminological cautions. 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’s because in principle he has reason to, especially when French easily gives us two words that correspond rigorously to *affectio* and *affectus*, that is “affection” for *affectio* and “affect” for *affectus*. Some translators translate *affectio* as “affection” and *affectus* as “feeling” [sentiment], which is better than translating both by the same word, but I don’t see the necessity of having recourse to the word feeling since French offers the word affect. Thus when I use the word affect it refers to Spinoza’s *affectus*, and when I say the word affection, it refers to *affectio*.

In English, Spinoza’s *affectus* has also been translated as emotion: “By emotion [*affectus*] I understand the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections” (Johnston and Malabou, 2013: 5). This problem of mistranslation explains why the two expressions are used as interchangeable in the work of many scholars. It also tells us that it is not merely the use of this or that expression—emotion or affect—

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Lectures on Spinoza at Vincennes* as cited in Johnston and Malabou (2013:4).

but the depth of analysis that the term contributes to, or how the concept is put to use or operationalised, that determines the meaning we attach to emotion or affect.

For Clough (2007) the affective refers to the bodily responses, often autonomic, which are in excess of consciousness. While referring to the body's capacity to affect and be affected, this does not, however, suggest that affect is presocial. Affects are linked to past actions and contexts, which return, repeat, and are activated autonomically. Here, emotion is the conscious state that can be narrativized, of which affect is the excess, the autonomic residue that is not conscious (Massumi, 2002).

Jonathan Flatley (2008), without insisting on a sharp difference between emotion and affect, brings out the "connotative differences" between the two: "Where emotion suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression,"<sup>2</sup> affect indicates something relational and transformative. "One has emotions; one is affected by people or things" (Flatley, 2008: 5). Affect is linked to acting or acting on. Affect refers to the effect of actions on one, thus concerns how one has been affected. This makes affect "a modification" (Gould, 2005: 9). If one is affected, one is modified, changed, transformed. This modification is brought about by an encounter with others. Flatley (2008:12) says that affect indicates something relational and transformative: "one is affected by people or things".<sup>3</sup> The nature of this modification/change is crucial to the meaning of affect. The change is not understood as a cognitive phenomenon: "the encounter does not trigger any faculty or sense or logical structure; it touches—and thus reveals—the very feeling of existence" (Johnston and Malabou, 2013: 5).

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<sup>2</sup> He uses the word affect in his work because he is interested in the relational and not the expressive. He largely follows Silvan Tomkins's theory of affects. The distinction between affect and emotion charted above may be contrasted with Sara Ahmed's framework. She critiques the "inside out" model (according to which 'I' have emotions which then move out) as "emotions should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices." Similarly, "the 'outside in' model is problematic precisely because it assumes that emotions are something that 'we have'. The crowd becomes like the individual, the one who 'has feelings'. Feelings become a form of social presence rather than self-presence." In her model of sociality of emotions, she suggest[s] that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" Ahmed (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Affects (unlike moods, but like emotions) are intentional. They are experiences in relation to an object. In case of intentionality of emotions, see Solomon and Nussbaum.

While Johnston and Malabou adopt a Deleuzian meaning<sup>4</sup> in their explanation of affect<sup>5</sup>, Silvan Tomkins's theory of affects is based on the Aristotelian understanding of emotion, and thus can be distinguished from the Spinozian/Deleuzian tradition. For Tomkins, affects are "a kind of irreducible motivation system" or "assembly," one that inevitably interacts with but is different from the drives, from strictly physiological factors, from perception, and from elements of "cognition" such as belief, thought, and choice. Like visual perception or the reasoning mind, affects have an internal logic—"a systematicity"—on their own. According to him, affects, and not drives and instincts, are primary sources of human motivation. Tomkins rejects the cognitivist view of emotions that suggests that it is the interpretation we attach to underlying patterns of arousal (which are similar) which makes up for the differences in felt emotion.

Flatley building on Tomkins's theory of affect marks the distinction between affect and emotion in the following terms: "emotions [are] the result of the inevitable interaction of affects with thoughts, ideas, beliefs, habits, instincts, and other affects. If affects are not reducible, emotions are, and it is emotions that vary from context to context, person to person" (2008: 16). Joy and interest, he marks as affects, while love is an emotion since it includes these affects; there are certain social/cultural ideas about what love is, how it is to be expressed etc.

Paul Ekman and Carroll Izard have argued (like Tomkins) that there are some basic affects linked to facial expressions/ bodily movements universally, though there may be cross-cultural variations in the "display rules". While cultures teach when and how to smile, a smile is a smile. Similarly, the objects of affects vary according to cultural differences – what should make one feel ashamed and what should make one angry. This means that the theory of some innate, basic affects – where "there are elements of invariable, autonomic affective response that we all share" – does not contradict the anthropological/ sociological understanding of "constructedness and diversity of emotions and emotional experience" (Flatley, 2008: 15).

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<sup>4</sup> In Deleuze's words: "I would say that for Spinoza there is a continuous variation- and this is what it means to exist- of the force existing or of the power of acting...Affectus in Spinoza is variation (he is speaking through my mouth; he didn't say it this way because he dies too young...), continuous variation of the force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas one has". Deleuze, *Lectures on Spinoza at Vincennes* cited in Johnston and Malabou (2013: 5).

<sup>5</sup> "An affect is thus always related to the feeling of existence itself through the changing of objects. We may call affect every kind of modification produced by the feeling of a difference." (Johnston and Malabou, 2013: 5).

It could be said then that affect refers to “nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless, registered experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body” (Gould, 2009: 19). It is ‘unfixed, unstructured and non-linguistic’, while emotion is “one’s personal expression of what one is feeling in a given moment, an expression that is structured by social convention, by culture” (20). In order to figure out the feeling of affect and translate it into expression, “we necessarily draw from our storehouse of knowledge, habit, and experience, as well as from culturally available labels and meanings, through which a gesture or linguistic naming that “expresses” what we are feeling emerges”(21). In transformation of affect to emotion, on one hand there is a ‘capture’ of the feeling of affect into a linguistically describable frame, on the other, there is an ‘escape’ of affect—the nonconscious, linguistically inexpressible aspect of it; in other words, there is a dialectic between the represented (i.e. emotion) and the unrepresented (i.e. affect).

If appraisal theorists view emotions as embodied intentional states that are governed by our beliefs, cognitions and desires, for affect theorists, explanations for fear, rage, joy are unrelated to the objects which evoke these emotions; objects are, at best, “tripwires for an inbuilt behavioral-physiological response” (Leys, 2011: 438). As far as the relationship of affect theory to psychoanalysis is concerned, Leys (2011) observes, “The new affect theorists’ tendency to reject psychoanalysis or to try to reconceptualize it in materialist-technological terms plays a role in this development. In the process of revising and amending and materializing Freud, they end up abandoning the notion of the psychological unconscious. On this post-psychoanalytic model, what is not fully conscious must necessarily be corporeal or material.”

The essays in this volume are not anti-psychoanalytic in their inflection. Rather the affective turn offers for us a move away from “paradigms of crude social constructivism to psychoanalytically informed and Foucault-inspired poststructuralist re-appropriations of the discursive closure” (Athanasίου, 2008). They suggest an emphasis on subjectivity and on flows, as opposed to closures and certitude, while locating affect within the sociocultural, political, and historical, and their disavowals. They evoke the body as material, temporal and dynamic all at once. The experiential realm is made of multiple ruptured temporalities, not always conscious, yet operating through bodily effects.

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