

ACTION AND RELATION:
THE SPINOZIAN AND HUMEAN FOUNDATIONS OF DELEUZE AND GUATTARI'S
THEORY OF AFFECT

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald Bogue)

ABSTRACT

In the past decade, scholarly attention to the theory of affect has been exponentially increasing, as it is applied to a growing number of themes and disciplines. Many analysts have made reference to Deleuze in developing their theories, but the engagement with Deleuze in affect theory has yet to be fully and systematically explored. This thesis offers a vigorous examination of the development of the concept of affect in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical works. I argue that there is a clear difference between affect as Deleuze articulates it in his readings of Spinoza and affect as he develops it with Guattari in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and hence that there is no single theory of affect in Deleuze. To show the relation between these two notions of affect, I will adopt a classical approach—the genealogy of concepts—to the study of this new field of affect theory.

INDEX WORDS: Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, affect theory, Spinoza, Hume, relation, becoming, rhizome, flow

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DEDICATION

To my parents

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INTRODUCTION

THE RECCURENCE OF THEORY

In *After Theory*, when Terry Eagleton elegiacally lists the theorists who represent the passing of a “golden age of cultural theory,” he makes no mention of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Eagleton predicts a pessimistic future for theory at the beginning of the twenty-first century and defines our time as “the aftermath of what one might call high theory, in an age which, having grown rich on the insights of thinkers like Althusser, Barthes and Derrida, has also in some ways moved beyond them.”¹ New theorists are no longer capable of producing “path-breaking” theoretical inventions, he argues, though original ideas emerge at times as a result of “what generations which follow after usually do.”²

This apocalyptic forecast has not been borne out if one considers the impact Deleuze and Guattari’s rich panoply of philosophical concepts has had on contemporary thought. Rather, it would seem that Foucault’s prediction that “Perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian,”³ should be extended from the twentieth to the twentieth-first century as well. Theory continues to thrive, and Deleuze’s works remain an active force in the development of new theoretical fields, including posthumanism, affect theory and the new materialism. Such developments are not secondary elaborations of a bygone theory but path-breaking movements in their own right, made possible by the lines of inquiry Deleuze’s thought has opened up. Theory,

¹ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 1998), p. 343.

thus, continues to ignore Eagleton's forecast: it recurs constantly, each time with a new and strong impetus to extend into unexplored territory.

This thesis stems from my interest in participating in the philosophical conversation about affect as a new approach to the study of emotion. In the past decade, scholarly attention to the theory of affect—however one understands it—has been exponentially increasing, as it is applied to a growing number of themes and disciplines.⁴ Many analysts in the field have made

⁴ Marta Figlerowicz's provides an excellent overview of historical and contemporary studies of affect in "Affect Theory Dossier: An Introduction," her introduction to the important collection of essays *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2012). She contends that in the most general sense, affect theory can be classified into two ways, both as a theme enabling conversations between humanities and neuro-/biological sciences and as a metaphysical attempt to understand the enigma of subjectivity: "In one of its incarnations affect theory builds bridges between the humanities and biology or neuroscience. In another it looks back to Søren Kierkegaard and Baruch Spinoza (among others) to refresh our definitions of subjectivity" (p. 3). But in more recent years, however, affect theory has flourished primarily in the social sciences and cultural studies, rather than in the empirical sciences and metaphysics. Hence, one finds Donovan O. Schaefer, in "It's Not What You Think: Affect Theory and Power Take to the Stage," *Duke University Press News*, n.p., 08 Feb. 2016, stating that "Affect theory is an approach to culture, history, and politics that focuses on the role of prelinguistic or nonlinguistic forces, or affects." In light of this updated definition of affect studies, I here provide a basic list of works essential to this "turn of the affective turn," with an awareness of the impossibility of providing an exhaustive bibliography of the scholarship in this now perhaps over-developed field. The pioneering work on affect, Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) lays out several foundational philosophical questions that help establish the discipline. With the hope of restoring a reading of "movement, sensation, and qualities of experiences" (p. 4) in a most literal way, as pure components of the senses, Massumi advocates a return to the study of the body as material but at the same time as virtual and incorporeal, drawing on the works of Spinoza, Bergson, Deleuze, Leibniz, and others. Several important anthologies and collections of essays, including the ambitious *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Clough and Jean Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), and *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), attempt to conduct radical experiments in the extension of affect theory as a key to decoding human emotions and their political and ideological frameworks. Several other literary and cultural studies scholars have contributed to the advancement of the field with important monographs. Especially noteworthy are the studies of Sianne Ngai and Lauren Berlant. In *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Ngai argues that affect approaches feelings from a third-person perspective, as opposed to emotion, which centers on the first person position, and from that perspective she offers an affective reading of works of classical literature, movies and psychoanalytical texts that deal with

reference to Deleuze in developing their theories, and some have claimed to ground their studies in Deleuze's thought.⁵ However, the engagement with Deleuze in affect theory has yet to be fully and systematically explored. Deleuze's thought on affect is quite complex, and a rigorous examination of the development of the concept in his thought has the promise of significantly

"ugly feelings," including envy, irritation, anxiety, paranoia, and so on. Ngai's aim is not simply to offer a new approach to literary criticism; rather, her intention is to cultivate "an ambivalence" through a thorough exposure of the production of these negative affects, in a highly repressive capitalist society, that "will enable them to resist, on the one hand, their reduction to mere expressions of class *ressentiment*, and on the other, their counter-valorization as therapeutic 'solutions' to the problems they highlight and condense" (p. 3). Lauren Berlant, in her influential *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), provides an analysis of the seemingly positive aspect of affect, "attachment." Optimism, the mental and social incentive that moves one to pursue fulfillment from things outside oneself, writes Berlant, "is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation" (p. 4).

⁵ It is scarcely possible to find a work labeled "affect theory" that does not make reference to Spinoza and Deleuze's theory of affect, but one may differentiate the many works that allude in passing to Deleuze from those that engage his thought in a serious and detailed fashion. An outstanding translator of Deleuze and a faithful Deleuzian, Brian Massumi applies a Deleuzian theory of affect, movement, and the virtual throughout *Parables of The Virtual*. To materialize the body in a virtual sense and discover corresponding resonances, Massumi conditions his theory on Deleuze central concept of the "transcendental" as a real but not yet realized event, in contrast to the metaphysical transcendental (p. 33). Deleuze and Guattari's last collaborative book inspired Lauren Berlant to start her project of inquiring into the phenomenon of attachment and optimism, with a historical and political approach: "Gilles Deleuze writes, after all, that affects act in the nervous system not of persons but of worlds," which leads to her argument that "affective atmospheres are shared, not solitary, and that bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmosphere in which they find themselves" (*Cruel Optimism*, p. 14-15). There are also those who mention Deleuze and then claim to go beyond his limited understanding of affect. Exemplary of this phenomenon is media scholar Eugenie Brinkema's *The Forms of Affect* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2014), in which she says that, "While his definition of affect is an important precursor to the intervention made in this book, Deleuze loses the subject only to hold tight to the body—or, rather, following the pluralizing impulse of a figure such as Nietzsche, *bodies*. Thus, Deleuze and Deleuzian criticism retain—and, in fact, insist on—the role of bodies in thinking affectivity after the subject [...] Affect, as I theorize it here, has fully shed the subject, but my argument goes a step further and also loses for affects the body and bodies." (p. 24-25). Since Brinkema's focus is on Deleuze's cinema books and not his metaphysics, her arguments are not germane to this thesis.

enriching affect theory as a whole. Specifically, Deleuze's early concentration on the externality of relations in Hume and his analysis of affect as a component of parallel attributes in Spinoza, and his later elaboration of affect in such concepts as desiring-production, becoming, and the plane of consistency in works written with Guattari, offer means of understanding affect that have not been considered by others in the field. The primary problem in the use of Deleuzian theory in contemporary studies of affect is that Deleuze's concept of affect is treated as something that is static and unchanging. In this thesis, I argue that there is a clear difference between affect as Deleuze articulates it in his readings of Spinoza and affect as he develops it with Guattari in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and hence that there is no single theory of affect in Deleuze. To show the relation between these two notions of affect, I will adopt a classical approach—the genealogy of concepts—to the study of this new field of affect theory.

Chapter 1 offers an overview of Deleuze's engagement with Spinozian metaphysics and consequently with Spinoza's understanding of affect as existing in a corresponding order between attributes. Perhaps due to his studies of Nietzsche and his interest in the concept of active and positive power, in *Expressionism of Philosophy: Spinoza* Deleuze directs his attention to the variations of powers or affects in modes. Such an understanding, I contend, rests upon Deleuze's reading of the Spinozian system as essentially parallelistic as regards attributes, to which all modes and affects are subject.

One particular sentence in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza is especially intriguing: "affect works on relations." To explore the implications of this statement, in the second chapter I examine the theory of relation in Deleuze's philosophy, which is central to his early study of the British empiricist David Hume. There Deleuze argues that relations are external to their terms,

and I argue that treating relation as external should serve as the very foundation of affect theory, since if one does not do so, there is nothing affects can act upon. For Hume, relations are not innate in the mind, which for him is nothing but a manifold of disordered ideas which together constitute a sort of madness. The principle of human nature functions upon the human mind and generates relations in accordance with the laws of Nature in such a way that ideas become ordered and reason emerges. As important as Hume is for Deleuze's conception of relation, however, there is another empiricist philosopher who plays an equally important role on this theoretical question: William James. Although Deleuze's direct references to James are few, the impact of James on Deleuze is indubitable. As recent Deleuze scholarship has shown, Deleuze's basic understanding of empiricism comes from his teacher Jean Wahl, who emphasized the exteriority of relations in his writings on empiricism and held up James's "radical empiricism" as an exemplary development of this line of thought.⁶ Thus, in the final portion of the second chapter, I examine James's radical empiricism and show how James moves beyond Hume. Hume's "ordinary" empiricism maintains a division between the mind and the world, whereas James's radical empiricism identifies experience as a unificatory "pure stuff" in which the dualistic mind-world problem no longer pertains.

The last chapter begins with a differentiation of the thought of Deleuze and James. Even though James holds a metaphysical vision similar to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of flow and rhizome, James's approach to the temporality of the individuation of particular entities sets him apart from Deleuze and Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari propose a theory of rhizome and flow that

⁶ On Deleuze, Jean Wahl and William James, see the Introduction to *Deleuze and Pragmatism*, ed. Sean Bowden, Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-17, and the essays by Gregory Flaxman (pp. 55-72), Jon Roffe (pp. 73-88) and Stéphane Madelrieux (pp. 89-104) in the same volume.

is more radical than James's empiricism: whereas James presupposes a temporality in which an originary "pure stuff" is succeeded by a world of discrete subjects and objects, Deleuze and Guattari dispense with any sense of beginning or ending in their conception of heterogeneity, arguing that in flows and rhizomes everything is always "in the middle," and hence independent of the temporality James posits. After contrasting James and Deleuze and Guattari, I offer an interpretation of three complex concepts central to *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: rhizome, flow and becoming. The concept of the rhizome, I show, represents a transformation of the Humean and Jamesian notion of external relations; the concept of flow a transformation of Jamesian "pure stuff" and Spinozian attributes; and becoming a transformation of Spinozian affect. Besides detailing the features of each of these three concepts, I also consider their mutual interrelations and presuppositions. I conclude the chapter by arguing that Deleuze and Guattari valorize active over passive affects, and that such valorization is central to their vitalism and to their philosophical practice of experimentation and the invention of concepts.

The grounding principle of this thesis is the belief that what affect theorists generally hold—that there is a single theory of affect in Deleuze and Guattari—is essentially false and incompatible with Deleuze's lifelong endeavor to overcome the dialectic of the One and the Multiple and affirm irreducible multiplicity. In Deleuze's writings on affect we find many versions and many transformations of the concept, each an instance of an abiding vitalism, which serves as the power of an infinite recurrence of theory.

CHAPTER 1

DELEUZE'S SPINOZA AND THE PARALLELISTIC THEORY OF AFFECT

“After experience had taught me that all the things which regularly occur in ordinary life are empty and futile, and I saw that all the things which were the cause or object of my fear had nothing of good or bad in themselves, except insofar as [my] mind was moved by them, I resolved at last to find out whether there was anything which would be the true good, capable of communicating itself, and which alone would affect the mind, all others being rejected—whether there was something which, once found and acquired, would continuously give me the greatest joy, to eternity.”

--Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*⁷

Deleuze's philosophical career starts with a series of brilliant readings of minor philosophers—ones generally ignored or denigrated in college curricula—such as David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Baruch Spinoza. Many concepts he develops in his early years serve as sources for his later philosophical contemplations, including the idea of affect that I will be concerned with in this thesis.

⁷ Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. I*, trans. Edwin Curley (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 7.

In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968), Deleuze identifies a Spinozian theory of affect that is grounded in a parallelistic metaphysics of attributes. In what form does affect appear in Spinoza's parallelistic system? I contend that to understand the dynamism of Deleuze's account of Spinozian affect, one must regard his readings of Nietzsche and Spinoza as closely interrelated. What connects them is the idea of power or force.⁸ Deleuze's early studies of individual philosophers do not involve overturning them all; rather, as Michael Hardt claims, "it is a process of accumulation and constitution [...] each step, each new terrain of investigation, is a construction that never abandons or negates, but rather repropose the terms of its predecessors. Deleuze carries his baggage with him."⁹ Nietzsche inspires Deleuze through his formulation of an anti-Kantian critique of slave mentalities—ressentiment, bad conscience and the ascetic ideal—and through his support of a "noble" power that is essentially active and self-affirming. It is Nietzsche's concept of *puissance*¹⁰ that allows Deleuze to conceive of Spinoza's metaphysical

⁸ In *Dialogues*, Deleuze says that the philosophers he is interested in, including Lucretius, Bergson, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, all share a fragility of life and yet endure life with a joy or affirmative life: "These thinkers have few relationships with each other—apart from Nietzsche and Spinoza—and yet they do have them. One might say that something happens between them, at different speeds and with different intensities, which is not in one or other, but truly in an ideal space, which is no longer a part of history, still less a dialogue among the dead, but an inter-stellar conversation, between very irregular stars, whose different becomings form a mobile bloc which it would be a case of capturing, an inter-light, light-years. Then, I had paid off my debts, Nietzsche and Spinoza had released me." Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 15-16.

⁹ Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 57.

¹⁰ Deleuze, like most French philosophers, distinguishes *puissance* from *pouvoir*, both of which are translated into English as power. *Puissance* is the immanent power to act and to be acted upon, whereas *pouvoir* is the transcendent power that involves enslavement or domination of the other. See Daniel Smith and John Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/deleuze/> (accessed February 15, 2017), and Ronald Bogue, "Nomadology's Trial by Proxy," in *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007) p. 163.

system as one in which modes gradually become capable of generating affirmative powers. This thesis, therefore, endeavors to reconstruct the Spinozian system with an emphasis on the particular role of affect. And the parallelistic image I try to depict is this: the modes of the attribute of extension and the attribute of thought exist in a parallel fashion, and within each attribute, there exists an order that corresponds accordingly. Affects are exercised as active or reactive forces that alter the orders of modes that are either within the same attribute or within parallel ones. The significance of parallelism is that body and mind are of equal reality and capability of affecting and being affected. But the process generating active affections (affecting rather than being affected) involves a very complicated transformation. For Spinoza, all modes are by nature finite and unable to be adequate or *causas suis*; but parallelism provides us with a condition for transforming passive affects into active *contatus*, the tendency to move. I believe that the Deleuzian theory of affect is deeply rooted in such parallelism; applying affect theory without a parallelistic frame is fundamentally mistaken in its oversimplification.

Deleuze's Spinoza: The Parallelistic Structure of the World

What is Spinoza's influence on Deleuze? It would not be too great an exaggeration to claim that Deleuze's entire philosophical system has its origin in Spinozian metaphysics. In *Dialogues*, he expresses his reverence for and modesty in regard to Spinoza, a decade after the publication of his monograph on Spinoza: "We have not yet begun to understand Spinoza, and I myself no more than others."¹¹ Spinoza is Deleuze's lifelong philosophical interlocutor. One may, through

¹¹ *Dialogues II*, p. 15.

a close analysis of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, consider Deleuze and Guattari's model of the plane of consistency and the plane of organization as an intensified version of the parallelistic model of attributes. And their concept of the "body without organs" can be seen as a radicalized version of the Spinozian body composed of malleable relations instead of static strata and organs.

In this section, I try to reconstruct the parallelistic frame of metaphysics in Spinoza's philosophy, which, as mentioned earlier, is echoed in Deleuze and Guattari's postulate that elements in the flow are non-hierarchical.

Like most Spinoza scholars, Deleuze stresses the importance of parallelism in Spinoza's thought, both in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970; rev. and aug. 1981). Parallelism refers to the status of modes that belong to different attributes and at the same time correspond with each other in a certain order; as a consequence, attributes themselves become paralleled by maintaining the corresponding order of modes. As Spinoza affirms with a proposition in the second chapter of *Ethics*, "P7: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."¹² It is necessary to point out that parallelism applies to all attributes, formed according to the infinite and expressive nature of substance. The reason that Spinoza only discusses two attributes—the attribute of Extension and that of Thought—is due to the limitations of human beings whose understanding and capabilities are finite.

To reconstruct parallelism, Deleuze distils the central themes in Spinozian philosophy and summarizes them in the form of three triads. Deleuze sees Spinoza's parallelism as a rebuttal of Cartesian dualism, which presupposes the priority of the attribute of mind over that of body.

¹² *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, p. 453.

Deleuze provides a lucid definition of the harmonious parallelism of infinite attributes in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, where he writes,

[O]ne of the most famous theoretical theses of Spinoza is known by the name of *parallelism*; it does not consist merely in denying any real causality between the mind and the body, it disallows any primacy of the one over the other. If Spinoza rejects any superiority of the mind over the body, this is not in order to establish a superiority of the body over the mind, which would be no more intelligible than the converse [...] It was said that when the body acted, the mind was acted upon in turn (the rule of the inverse relation, cf. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, articles 1 and 2). According to the *Ethics*, on the contrary, what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind. There is no primacy of one series over the other.¹³

It should be noted that Spinoza never uses the term “parallelism” in any of his work. Deleuze finds the descriptor useful, however, since it calls attention to Spinoza’s effort to overturn the Leibnizian model that presupposes a preeminence of principles (the mechanistic laws that determine the movement of modes). As Deleuze states, Spinoza “does not use the word ‘parallelism,’ yet the word suits his system, as he does suppose the equality of the principles from which independent and corresponding series follow.”¹⁴

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans., Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988) p. 18.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990) pp. 108-109.

1. *Tri-triads Reanimated*

In the beginning of *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Deleuze summarizes the Spinozian system by introducing three triads: the modal triad, pertaining to the expressive nature of substance and attributes; the absolute triad, which reveals the absolute existence and form of substance; and the power triad, focusing on the production of affections by substance. The rest of the book elaborates on the function and mechanism of these triads. To put it in another way, there is a logical thread in the structure, making the book a well-organized and logically developed work. Thus, I find it difficult to agree with Michael Hardt's argument that "*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* appears as a set of working notes that do not present a completed interpretation, but rather propose a series of interpretative strategies in the process of development."¹⁵ To reveal that structure, it is necessary to reclassify the information within the three triads in order to present the entire picture of the Spinozian parallelistic theory of affect.

2. *The Modal Triad: Expression as Life*

Deleuze begins his book with the modal triad, whose thesis centers on expression. "Substance expresses itself, attributes are expressions, and essence is expressed."¹⁶ How should we understand, intuitively, the relation between substance and attributes? The difficulty of disentangling the quotation lies in Deleuze's implicit reference to and direct use of the concept of pantheism, without which his further illustrations at the beginning would hardly be

¹⁵ Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprentice in Philosophy*, p. 56.

¹⁶ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 27.

understandable. Pantheism entails God's necessary enclosure of his productions and expressions within himself, and hence substance and attributes—though Deleuze consistently emphasizes the real distinction between them—may not be thought heterogeneously. The distinction between substance and attributes means that each of the infinite attributes contains one specific essence of substance. Their connection, if one tries to draw a picture, is not hierarchical; rather, attributes are encircled by substance, whose form of existence is immanent: “expression is inherent in substance, insofar as substance is absolutely infinite.”¹⁷ Substance's process of expressing, therefore, is always within substance's power of acting and knowing, and ongoing through mediums/expressions—that is, through attributes. Such an understanding of the nature of expression in substance is a typical exemplification of Deleuze's immanentist reading of the Spinozian system (and it significantly influences Deleuze's later concept of the plane of immanence), a method that originates from Spinoza's key proposition, “P18: *God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.*”¹⁸

How should we understand attributes and the way they function? Spinoza claims that attributes are not quantities but qualities of substance. Each of them represents a specific and unlimited substantial quality. Attributes qualify substance and simultaneously qualify the finite modes that exist within substance, by implying the essence expressed by the substance.¹⁹ Deleuze entitles this process the “two levels of expression,”²⁰ the first one involving “being produced” or explication; the second relating to “producing” or implication. The expressionist function is summarized by Deleuze with two terms: it is “a mirror” that “reflects or reflects upon

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁸ *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, 428.

¹⁹ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

an image” (referring to the first level); and “a seed” that “‘expresses’ the tree as a whole”²¹ (referring to the process of distributing and diversifying the essences of the substance within productions). To me, the two levels of expression are the abstract model of affect: two kinds of power, being acted upon and acting, within one creature. Only God can be both the subject and object of such dualistic power himself, considering Spinoza’s demonstration that there is only one substance, and that it produces everything within itself. Modes, on the contrary, must bear the power of being acted upon by others in order to preserve themselves. Affects condition the existence of modes.

“Essence is expressed.” This sentence itself raises many questions. What is essence? Why express at all? In the Spinozian context, substance contains infinite powers or intensities of acting and knowing, and essences are the portions of such infinite and perfect qualities. The definition can be traced to Spinoza’s early work *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, and the meaning remains consistent from that point on in his work. However, Spinoza begins by offering an epistemological Socratic paradox that in order for an essence-knower to know what she knows about the objective essence, that is, to obtain certainty, the knower must know the essence already. Hence Spinoza solves this dilemma by drawing an equation between certainty and essence. He asserts, “it is clear that no one can know what the highest certainty is unless he has an adequate idea or objective essence of some thing. For certainty and objective essence are the same thing.”²² As Deleuze nicely summarizes in his “Index of the Main Concepts of the *Ethics*” in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, “The essences [...] are parts of power, that is, degrees of physical intensity. They have no parts but are themselves parts, parts of power, like intensive

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²² *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, p. 18.

quantities that are composed of smaller quantities.”²³ For Spinoza, the phrase “intensive quantities” bears no numerical meaning, and this is a major disagreement between Spinoza and Descartes. As Deleuze points out, the power of substance is identical to the capacity of being affected by substance’s productions, in an absolutely affirmative way. “The more power a thing has, the more it can be affected in a great number of ways; but we have proved either *a posteriori* or *a priori*, that God has an absolutely infinite power of existence. God, therefore, has the ability to be affected in an infinity of ways, a *potestas* that corresponds to his power or *potentia*.”²⁴

As *natura naturans* (naturing nature), substance expresses God’s essence and produces its creatures, necessarily. Expressing is his nature and the way that he maintains his own existence: “expression is not simply manifestation, but is also the constitution of God himself. Life, that is, expressivity, is carried into the absolute.”²⁵ In addition, since God is *causa sui*, his entire act of production is automatic and natural, which denies any possibility of regarding him as *natura naturata*, that is, nature created.

Expression is, in God, his very life. So, one cannot say God produces the world, universe or *natura naturata*, in order to express himself. God expresses himself in himself, in his own nature, in the attributes that constitute him. He has no ‘need’ to produce, lacking nothing. We must take literally a metaphor used by Spinoza to show that the world he produces adds nothing to God’s essence: when a workman sculpts heads and chests, and then joins a chest to a head, this addition adds nothing to the essence of the head.²⁶

²³ Spinoza: *Practical Philosophy*, p. 65.

²⁴ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 102.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80-81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

3. *The Absolute Triad: the Spinoza-Descartes Encounter*

To further explain the nature and power of substance, and illustrate the relations among substance, attributes and modes, Deleuze presents the second Spinozian triad, which establishes the foundation of parallelism: perfect-infinite-absolute:

(1) All forms of being are equal and equally perfect, and there is no inequality of perfection between attributes; (2) Every form is thus unlimited, and each attribute expresses an infinite essence; (3) All forms thus belong to one and the same substance, and all attributes are equally affirmed, without limitation, of an absolutely infinite substance.²⁷

What is a form? For Spinoza, the attributive attributes which constitute the essence of God are “the dynamic and active forms.”²⁸ Each attribute expresses one quality or essence of substance and at the same time attributes the essence to the substance. It is expression, as stated in the first triad, that enables God’s expressive nature, but in no way *is* it the essence of God. All the essences only inherently belong to God and attributes seem only to actualize them by being the mediums of expression.

Due to the infinite essences in the substance, there are necessarily infinite attributes, each of which exemplifies one qualitative essence. However, Spinoza reminds us that human beings are only capable of perceiving and understanding two attributes: those of Extension and of Thought. Nevertheless, he invites us to think parallelistically in terms of attributes and conceive of the existence of infinite attributes, with infinite modes within each, which express without the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

overlapping of any two attributes. To a certain extent, there is a sense of pre-established harmony in Spinoza's philosophical system, one that precedes the monadology of Leibniz.

Throughout *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, we see that Deleuze is to a great extent inspired by Spinoza's critiques of Descartes. The formation of parallelism originates from Descartes' *a posteriori* proof of the existence of God. Descartes contends that the existence of God is caused by the idea we have of him in our minds; and the fact that we exist. He maintains that a cause should have at least as much objective reality as the effect. Similarly, regarding our existence, Descartes offers this principle: "what can do more can do less."²⁹ Since we have the idea of God which is infinitely perfect, we are able to produce our own existence, as partial properties of God, of limited quantities of reality. Hence, the idea of God—the cause—is superior to his actual existence. Spinoza takes issue with Descartes' proofs and argues that the infinitely perfect is only relative and quantitative. Therefore, he proposes to replace quantity of reality with power.³⁰

Spinoza attacks Descartes by questioning the meaning of knowing an idea. How can we have the idea of any specific thing ("this or that"³¹) without the knowledge of its existence? "An idea that was not the idea of some existing thing would not be distinct at all, would not be the idea of this or that."³² However, by no means does Spinoza endeavor to suggest a reverse order in which existence would precede the idea—such a view would be existentialistic. Rather, he is contending that existence and idea are equally perfect and correlative. There is no superiority of one attribute over the other. "There is no thing of which there is not an idea in the thinking thing,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

and no idea can exist unless the thing exists.”³³ Various places in Spinoza’s early *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* provide sufficient proofs of his belief in the equal status and interdependence of attributes; for illustration, Spinoza very explicitly states, while explaining the nature of the human soul, “there is no inequality at all in the attributes, nor in the essences of the modes.”³⁴ This parallelistic principle Deleuze regards as “basic to all of Spinozism.”³⁵

4. *The Power Triad: Nature on the Move*

If the modal triad is the content of parallelism, the absolute triad the status of the content, then the last one, the power triad, is the generative power that enables parallelism to function. Affect is introduced by Deleuze through the third triad, in two senses. Affect is the affection or moderation of substance, or the affections from modes on either substance or modes. We can see that Deleuze’s theory of affect is essentially (maybe strictly) parallelistic and metaphysical. Practicing affect theory without accepting the structure and condition of Spinozian parallelism would be a meaningless attempt.

As we recall, Descartes holds that we are able to create and preserve our existence because of the idea of the absolutely perfect God in our mind. Lacking reality without mind, existence can be produced only by an idea that contains more reality. This is the Cartesian principle “What can do more can do less.”³⁶ Spinoza, however, points out that a being has no power to produce or maintain itself, unless it is part of substance. As I noted while explaining the

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁴ *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, p. 155.

³⁵ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 86.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

first triad, substance in Spinoza's system has all the power in itself. In order to avoid contradicting the singularity of substance, it is important to ensure that no power lies outside substance. Spinoza agrees that every mode has a finite power of existing, acting and preserving itself, but each mode should be aware of the source of such power—God. Though distinct, the limited power of a mode is necessarily part of an infinite whole through its participation in God's power. As Deleuze phrases Spinoza's thought: "my power remains my own essence, God's power remains his own essence, while my power is at the same time part of the power of God."³⁷

Deleuze continues his discussion of the place of power in the Spinozian system by underlining the two-fold characteristic of power. He argues that essence is equal to the power of affecting and being affected. There are two historical aspects, theological and materialistic, to endorse this equation. The identity of power and act in both God and Nature has long been asserted in the theological tradition. The other tradition of materialism, by contrast, locates this power in physical creatures themselves. Deleuze appreciates the meeting of the two currents in Spinoza's philosophy. However, it seems that Deleuze favors Spinoza's incorporation of the materialistic and actual tradition in characterizing the essence of modes. As he writes, "for the distinction of power and act, potentiality, and actuality, was substituted the correlation of a power of acting and a power of being acted on or suffering action, both actual."³⁸ How can we interpret the last term, "actual"? To me, this term points to Spinoza's principal contribution to the development of philosophy: that of balancing the claims of religion and materialism.

For Spinoza, a power, be it of God or modes, is always a power of acting in an active sense. At the same time, a power implies a passive power of acting: the capability of being affected.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

The passive and active powers are applicable to both modes and substance. Though modes share the same quality of essence as substance by participating in the power of God, there is a difference and a consequence that result from it. Substance, or God, exercises his power of acting through the process of creating infinite things within himself: “God produces an infinity of things by virtue of the same power by which he exists. He thus produces them by existing.”³⁹ Hence, Deleuze adds, this power is necessarily active: every affect is created by him and belongs to his power. For God, the power of acting and suffering affect are identical—he is capable of creating infinite things, and at the same time he is capable of being affected by his creations in finite ways. Modes, however, only contain a finite portion of the essence and power of God. Thus, even though modes are also capable of exercising the power of acting and being acted upon, they can only actualize these capabilities in “a great many ways.” And these capacities vary, based on the amount of reality or perfection the modes have. “A thing has the greater reality or perfection, the greater the number of ways in which it can be affected: the quantity of reality is always grounded in a power identical to an essence.”⁴⁰

Developing the thoughts of Spinoza as presented above, Deleuze says that the third triad has these components:

The essence of substance as an absolutely infinite power of existing; substance as *ens realissimum* existing of itself; a capacity to be affected in an *infinity of ways*, corresponding to this power, and necessarily exercised in affections of which substance is itself the active cause.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

From Creator to Creations: Tri-principles of Parallelism

In the preceding section, I tried to reconstruct the three triads in Spinoza's philosophy, in order to demonstrate that affect theory is, ideally, applicable only within the macro-structure of parallelism. It seems that an agreement on the expressive nature of substance and our participation in its power of acting and being acted upon is important to ensure our affectability. Spinoza's purpose in laying out these three triads, I believe, is not exclusively to prove the nature of God. His deeper motivation is to secure the encompassing status of God in nature and the mode's necessary subordination to infinite power.

As has been pointed out earlier, God's essence is infinite and adequate so that his powers of affecting and being affected are always active and within himself. Modes, however, share only a portion of God's essence. Hence their powers of affecting and being affected are limited. After introducing the triads of parallelism with a focus on substance, Deleuze continues to illustrate three formulations of parallelism in relation to modes. The tri-triads and tri-formulations together form a complete Deleuzian theory of affect, pertaining to both the macro and micro levels. One notable characteristic of the micro-level parallelism regarding modes is the corresponding relations between modes within different attributes.

1. First Formulation of Parallelism: The Order of Modes

God has infinite essences, each of which is expressed through one of the infinite attributes. For each attribute, there are infinite modes of finite essence within it. There are only two perceivable attributes: Extension and Thought. But Spinoza leaves room for the existence of

other attributes by emphasizing the limitations of human understanding. Thus, the parallelism of Extension and Thought in this context is dualistic, but its pattern remains applicable to infinite unconceivable attributes.

This is one fundamental difference between Descartes and Spinoza: for Descartes, Extension and Thought are the only two attributes. The other difference, which will be discussed here, concerns the interactions between mind and body. Descartes asserts the heterogeneity between mind and body; and claims that through the actions of God mind is capable of intervening with body, occasionally. Spinoza, by contrast, believes that there is an ordered correspondence between an idea and a physical body. Hence, we have the first “formulation of parallelism” as Deleuze summarizes it: “there is *an identity of order or correspondence* between modes of different attributes.”⁴² Such a correspondence denotes a Spinozian sense of the mind-body relation, which deeply influenced Deleuze. In *Dialogue II*, he echoes his appreciation of Spinoza’s philosophy of body and mind—reflecting his later perspective of the conjunctive rhizome—by saying, “The soul AND the body; no one has ever had such an original feeling for the conjunction 'and'.”⁴³

2. Second Formulation: Equality of Attributes

Considering Spinoza’s critiques of Cartesian dualism, we may say that parallelistic philosophy is radical in that Spinoza aims at a complete equalization of attributes and the status of modes. The first formulation, the identity of order, endeavors to attack Descartes’ claim that

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴³ *Dialogues II*, p. 59.

the mind only occasionally works on the body. The second formulation, the “equality of principle,”⁴⁴ serves to grant equality to all attributes; thus, no attribute can overpower others. The second formulation has two implications. First, it entails the autonomy of corresponding series: each string of modes should not depend on any other attributes. Every attribute is part of substance and is equal to other parts in terms of its degree of perfection and power, which are infinite. Second, this formulation reveals the attributes’ equality in terms of the principle of causation, which Deleuze identifies as “isonomy”⁴⁵—no action should presuppose any preeminence of one series over another.⁴⁶

3. Third Formulation: Equality of Being of Modes

Parallelism not only relates to the parallel status of attributes but also concerns the equality of being among all modes. This leads to Spinoza’s last formulation of parallelism: the identity of being. It can be regarded as a further development of the second formulation, but at the same time it reveals the radical ambition of Spinoza in asserting the absolute equality of all beings in nature.

How should one interpret the differences among modes? Spinoza contends that only the attributes in which the modes reside can serve as the criteria for their differentiation. Modes strictly correspond with each other, and their only difference is the attributes they belong to, because each attribute represents one unique essence of God. In the Spinozian system, everything, including substance, attributes, and modes, is expressive due to the identical being in

⁴⁴ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 107.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

substance that all things share. Deleuze thus names Spinoza's last formulation "identity of being or ontological unity."⁴⁷

By presenting the three formulations of parallelism, Deleuze shows us the polemical endeavor of Spinoza: to construct an absolute equality among attributes and modes, conditioned by the all-encompassing substance.

Affects of Modes

"Parallelism characterizes modes, and modes alone," Deleuze informs us, "but it is grounded in substance and the attributes of substance."⁴⁸ So far, I have tried to demonstrate that an affect theory of modes cannot be comprehended separately from a Spinozian system as a whole. The way in which Spinoza arrives at his concept of affect is by making deductions. First there is the expressive God of infinite power and essence, then within substance's first process of expression emerge infinite attributes; then on the second level, each attribute produces an infinite number of modes, each of which is of identical being and contains finite power.

1. The Case of the Affect of Understanding: From Substance to Modes

For Spinoza, essence is power and it is of two kinds: the power of thinking and the power of acting/existing: "God's absolute essence is objectively the power of thinking and knowing, as it is formally the power of existing and acting."⁴⁹ Each power partakes of half of God's power,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

and both of them are conditioned by specific attribute(s). For the power of knowing and thinking, it is the attribute of Thought that serves as its sole condition; the power of existing and acting is conditioned by all attributes, including the attribute of Thought. In other words, whenever an actual existence appears in any attribute, there is a corresponding idea from the attribute of Thought tied to its existence. These two powers, secured by the first formulation of parallelism mentioned above, are equal. However, how can an idea be conditioned by both the attribute of Thought and one attribute of Existence? Spinoza answers this question by introducing the “reflexive consciousness” to distinguish two elements of an idea: the existing idea which belongs to the attribute of existence and an idea of an idea which belongs to the attribute of Thought and, more importantly, participates in conditioning the exercises of God’s power of thinking; in other words, idea as mode is different from any other mode in that it is always two-fold—one autonomous objective being in the attribute of Thought and one automaton with formal being in the attribute of existence. As Deleuze puts it, “the idea of an idea is distinct from that idea itself, in so far as the latter is referred in its formal being to the powering of existing, the former in its objective being to the power of thinking.”⁵⁰ In short, what is in the attribute of Thought, an idea of an idea, is the “representative content” of the idea.⁵¹

What is an idea, after all? It is the “production” of God’s thinking: for Spinoza, God not only expresses, but also immediately perceives and understands his acts; thus, an idea is produced through the process of understanding. An idea of a mode, that is, the soul or mind, is a production in God himself. Spinoza is concerned not only with the way God produces ideas, but also with the way to possess and preserve them. The ideas cannot be preserved by themselves;

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

rather, they continue existing by being affected by other ideas. In other words, the affecting ideas are the causes of existence of the affected ideas; the existence of modes always involves their effects on others. However, for God there is no difference: everything is his possession, and hence we may say he is identical to the affecting mode as the cause of the existence of the affected mode.

Having demonstrated the way that God creates and preserves ideas, I will address the question of how modes preserve ideas, considering that they are parts of a whole (substance). Spinoza contends that modes exist in two ways: depending on attributes, they participate in God's powers of existing and thinking; as parts of a whole, they co-exist with other parts. These ways of existing lead to the only two types of affections in understanding modes: the understanding of our bodies through the affections from others and the understanding of our mind or soul from the affections of an idea of an idea.

2. The Case of Bodily Affect: Power Reconsidered

We know that the essence in God is power, and God has two equal, corresponding and simultaneous types of power: thinking and existing. We also know that each attribute conditions God's power by representing one unique and infinite essence. Then the question is, how should we understand the nature of essence in an attribute? Deleuze explains that this essence is composed of "two quantities," considering that the essence of an attribute will be divided by the infinite number of modes that are finite. The first is "intensive quantity," which refers to degrees of power; the second is "extensive quantity," which refers to the exteriority of the body as viewed by others. By quantifying essence, Spinoza is able to explain the meaning of "the parts of

a whole” of modes. However, as I have pointed out earlier, the existence of intensive quantity, that is, idea of an idea, does not belong to modes but to substance. Hence, only the physical and actual extensive quantity is a modal essence. As Deleuze states, “a mode’s essence is not a logical possibility, nor a mathematical structure, nor a metaphysical entity, but a physical reality, a *res physica*.”⁵² For Spinoza, only the physical essence of a mode necessarily entails existence, which distinguishes the mode from other modes. Thus Deleuze concludes, “the essence of a mode is a pure physical reality.”⁵³

But essence in modes as degrees of intensities or power is only an “indication” of modes and exists solely in God himself, either in its expressed/actualized status or in its potential status. What, then, are the causes that bring into existence the bodies of modes in the attribute of Extension? Deleuze points out that the cause of the physical existence of modes is, in fact, other co-existing modes. But Deleuze also furthers our understanding of mode as a part by reminding us that each bodily mode contains a great number of smaller parts, called simple bodies, which, of course, also have corresponding ideas. These simple bodies, in turn, can, in a continuous process of infinite regression, be divided into a great number of simpler bodies, *ad infinitum*. These simple bodies, according to Spinoza, do not simply originate from the mode; rather, the constitution of a mode involves exchanges of simple bodies from other modes; and consequently, the relations between extension and idea are changed. What participates in these changes are affects from external bodies.

How can we account for the differences between the capacities of affect of God and those of modes? There are two distinctions. First, through the second triad, we have already seen that

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

God, as the creator of everything, has the capability of being affected affirmatively in an infinity of ways whereas modes, limited in some sense, can only be affected in a great number of ways. The real difference between them is the limitation of things to which the mode relates. As Deleuze writes, “A great number is indeed an infinity, but one of a special kind: a greater or lesser infinite that relates to something limited.”⁵⁴ Second, the affects that God is suffering are active, since he is the cause of everything and the affects take place *in* him. The affects of modes, however, are passive, since the causes of those affects happen *to* them from outside. The sources of affect, the internal *in* or external *to*, are what determine whether an affect is active or passive.⁵⁵ Both passive and active affections are inevitable, given the expressive nature of everything in Spinoza’s philosophical system, and the function of external affect as a way to maintain the existence of a mode.⁵⁶

The Effect of Affect

1. The Monistic Picture

The obvious difficulty Spinoza’s geometrical method brings to readers is that one has to refer constantly to the definitions, proofs, and scholia for demonstrations and a complete understanding of his thought. That is why an unusually long exposition of his concepts must be

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁶ It seems that Deleuze has no intention of distinguishing affect from affection in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Both affect and affection are used to describe the consequence of an act. What really matters for Deleuze is where the affect comes from. Deleuze characterizes passive affects as “affections produced by external things (those affections called passive)” and active affects as “affections explained by its own essence (called active)” (*Ibid.*, p. 93).

presented before one engages in serious discussion of Spinozian philosophy. We know that an attribute contains one infinite essence of God, and it also contains a series of an infinite number of modes, each of which acts on each other through affects to maintain its existence. I will now attempt to explain the dynamism among the modes in an attribute and the role that affect plays in altering relations among modes.

A mode can be regarded as a whole of infinite related simple bodies which, under extrinsic affects from other modes, constantly changes its degree of power. In the third formulation of parallelism, Deleuze tells us that in the Spinozian system, the beings of all modes are identical, since they all correspond with the being of God. But how does one mode distinguish itself from others? Spinoza contends that the relation among the simple bodies in the whole of a mode is what makes modes different. A direct consequence of such relations is the status of movement or rest. Deleuze states,

Simple bodies are determined from outside to movement or rest *ad infinitum*, and are distinguished by the movement and rest to which they are determined. They are always grouped in infinite wholes, *each whole being defined by a certain relation of movement and rest*. It is through this relation that an infinite whole corresponds to a certain modal essence (that is, to a certain degree of power), and thus constitutes the very existence of that mode of Extension.⁵⁷

Thus, Deleuze shows us an anatomical picture of a single mode: it is a body that later Deleuze would describe as a body without organs.⁵⁸ It is a rather (though not completely) deterritorialized version of a physical body.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

⁵⁸ In fact, Deleuze has already started addressing the problem of organs and the deterritorialization of their structure in this early work. “But what is the meaning of ‘structure’? It

2. The Multiply Picture

How can a mode not exist?

The holistic structure of modes that Deleuze delineates is never constant or stratified. Simple bodies can be detached from a mode and added to another mode and thus establish new relations. Modes function in accordance with laws that determine the relations not only within themselves but also in their interconnection with other modes. Through the extrinsic affects from outside, it is possible for modes to end or create certain relations, which will consequently alter their status of movement or rest. If all of the parts of a mode are reshuffled and join in new relations, we may say that a mode has lost its existence. As Deleuze describes the effect of extrinsic affect on the relations of a mode, “A mode ceases to exist as soon as its parts are determined to enter into another relation, corresponding to another essence. Modes come into existence, and cease to exist, by virtue of laws external to their essences.”⁵⁹ The order and reorder of modes in Spinozian philosophy casts a profound influence on Deleuze’s later collaborative writings with Guattari, especially as revealed in the concepts of flow and cut introduced in *Anti-Oedipus*.⁶⁰

is a system of relations between parts of a body (these parts not being organs, but the anatomical components of those organs)” *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁶⁰ In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari revise the meaning of such Freudian psychoanalytical terms as the unconscious and the nuclear family, and combine them with Marxist materialism to generate a new metaphysically dualistic vision of the world. And we may discern an application of the Spinozian system in their construction of this new metaphysics. What has been changed is that the mode is the order of attribute that has been replaced by the machine, which, according to the authors, “may be defined as a system of interruptions or breaks” (Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983] p. 36). Every object presupposes a flow generated from its essential function of desiring production. When one object tries to connect with another, it interrupts the continuous flow of the other in order to combine with it and thus together form a new flow. This interruption, they add, is neither destructive nor temporal; it always immediately entails a connection with another machine after a break. A repetitive dynamism is operative, such

To some extent we may claim that Spinoza provides us with a radical account of the body: no simple bodies belong to the mode forever. The body constantly changes with the extrinsic affects working on the relations between its parts (which may be seen as an early version of the molar-molecular distinction in Deleuze's work with Guattari).

For Spinoza, the compositions and decompositions of relation are conditioned by mechanical laws, and he identifies them as "the laws of communication of movement."⁶¹ These laws, Deleuze notes, are universally applicable to all modes as a whole. All modes form a whole of extensive quantities, which is infinite and explicates a certain movement that results from the combination of various movements. The laws of communication of movement, which, specifically, include the laws of composition and decomposition, determine whether the relations are actualized or cease to exist.

Modal Powers

Life is the central theme in Deleuze's philosophy throughout his career. He is not so much concerned with such questions as why we live or what is the fundamental meaning of life but how one can live an active and affirmative life. We can discern this interest by considering the philosophers on whose works he has written—Spinoza, Nietzsche and Hume—all of whose philosophies are both theoretical and practical. In the two monographs devoted to Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (especially the chapter

that "every machine is a machine of a machine. The machine produces an interruption of the flow only insofar as it is connected to another machine that supposedly produces this flow" (*Ibid.*, p. 36).

⁶¹ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 210.

“The Letters on Evil”), Deleuze speaks highly of Spinoza’s contributions to our understanding of power and relation, as well as his redefinition of the concepts of good and evil. And, before writing about Spinoza, of course, Deleuze had been fascinated by Nietzsche’s revolutionary work, which deals with these same questions. Like Spinoza, Nietzsche addresses the problems of life. He offers us typological and symptomatic diagnoses of three psychological illnesses that have caused the nihilistic decadence of man: resentment, bad conscience and the ascetic ideal. All of these ways of life are passive reactions against the noble and powerful ways of life, which entail what Nietzsche calls the transvaluation of values and the eternal return.

The similarity between Nietzsche and Spinoza lies in their theory of power: they understand power in two senses, active and passive. They both attempt to excoriate passive power and seek a way of living affectively and affirmatively. But most important for Nietzsche and Spinoza is the affirmation of the possibility of force to become other.

Spinozian Pure Power

1. Adequate and Inadequate Ideas

In the first formulation of parallelism, Spinoza mentions the necessary correspondence between the existence of a mode in the attribute of Extension and the idea in the attribute of Thought. Modes’ ideas about their own bodies are always understood by God when he is exercising the power of thinking, and through the process of thinking and producing he possesses these ideas in himself. Thus, modes themselves do not possess the ideas about themselves. Nor do they have ideas about the causes of other bodies, since the existence of modes is always

maintained through extrinsic affects from the outside. Therefore, Spinoza asserts that modes, initially, do not have ideas about the causes of their existence, neither how they are produced nor the way their existence is maintained. The ideas they have are about their states of existence without any understanding of the causes of their existence, and these ideas are called “inadequate ideas.” These ideas appear at the initial stage of a mode and are directly associated with its capability of self-understanding, which in Spinoza’s rendering of the immanent form of existence, also relates to the understanding of the order of Nature. Since the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza had already begun providing such a vision: “the more the mind knows, the better it understands its own powers and the order of Nature.”⁶² As Deleuze states,

Our knowledge is doubly lacking: we lack knowledge both of ourselves, and of the object that produces in us an affection of which we have an idea. An inadequate idea is thus an idea that involves, both formally and materially, the privation of knowledge of its own cause. So it remains inexpressive: “truncated,” like a conclusion without premises.⁶³

Spinoza perfects his theory of affect by admitting that there is another type of affection relating to the idea of affection of our body: feeling (*affectus*), which is an inadequate idea that denotes an affect based on its flow of previous affects. Feeling is concerned with the changes of body during a certain period of time. “Our feelings are themselves ideas which involve the concrete relation of present and past in a continuous duration: they involve the changes of an existing mode that endures.”⁶⁴ As an affect itself, Deleuze points out, feeling can also be active or passive, due to the qualities of the total amount of affect that a mode has been suffering.

⁶² *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, p. 19.

⁶³ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

Due to the dependence of a mode's existence on external modes, at the very beginning of its existence, feelings are always passive. Feelings are thus inadequate ideas that do not know their causes, entailing that the modes are purely suffering extrinsic affects. Spinoza names these passive feelings "passions."

Spinoza claims that in order to create adequate ideas, that is, ideas that are caused by intrinsic affects of the modes themselves, it is necessary for the minds of modes to conduct certain actions. Then the question arises: "how can we come to produce adequate ideas?"⁶⁵ Deleuze sees this question as a practical one, given that Spinoza's central concern is determining the method by which modes are capable of acting actively.

2. The Capacity Equation and Elasticity

We know that in the Spinozian system, essence is equal to the power of being affected: to maintain existence, everything needs to be constantly affected, intrinsically or extrinsically. Deleuze says that the quality of the capacities of being affected, passive or active, depends on the type of affect that functions as its enabling condition. The capacity will turn into a power of suffering if it is exercised by passive affections. If, however, it is affected by active affections, then the capacity to be affected will exemplify the power of acting.

One notable characteristic that distinguishes Spinoza from other philosophers who addresses the issue of power is that active and passive affections are essentially homogeneous: they are the actualized capacity of being affected, rather than two heterogeneous and contradictory qualities. Every mode has a fixed capacity grounded in the essence it contains, but through acting it is able

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

to adjust its relative proportions of active or passive affections. As Deleuze states, “for a given essence, for a given capacity to be affected, the power of suffering and that of acting should be open to variation in inverse proportion one to the other. Both together, in their varying proportions, constitute the capacity to be affected.”⁶⁶

Spinoza, thus, establishes the following equation regarding affect: capability of being affected (essence) = power of suffering + power of acting; where the power of suffering is always negative and that of acting is necessarily positive. Spinoza indeed suggests the possibility of transitioning from negative to positive power, both of which are of the same kind of essence. Deleuze labels such transmutability between two types of power “elasticity”: “the capacity to be affected does not remain fixed at all times and from all viewpoints [...] the relation that characterizes an existing mode as a whole is endowed with a kind of elasticity.”⁶⁷ Therefore, in the Spinozian theory of affect, it is elasticity between the powers of suffering and acting that conditions the possibility of the transition from passive affections to active ones. Mastering the mechanism of the laws of elasticity is thus the correct path to attain adequate and active ideas. At the initial stage of the existence of a mode, its power of acting is zero, meaning that its capability of being affected is purely exercised by the power of suffering.

3. Relation, Conatus and Common Notions: What Must We Do to Produce Active Affections?

A mode comes into being through extrinsic affects, which entail a change of status, movement or rest. The existence of a mode, according to Spinoza, will be affirmed by its

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

conatus—its tendency towards movement—after existence has already been granted. Deleuze argues that conatus is part of the essence of a mode and its fundamental function is to absorb what is good and joyful. Doubtless conatus is determined by the affections a mode receives, but its function is to clarify the source of affects and the passive affections in the mind of the mode, assisting the body in taking further active actions. Therefore, Deleuze contends that conatus is indeed the power of acting. And the variations of conatus due to the affections indicate the variations of the power of acting.⁶⁸

As has been mentioned earlier, affects work on the relations between simple bodies as well as composite bodies, when bodies constantly decompose and recompose and, at the same time, end and reform corresponding ideas in the attribute of Thought. Apart from maintaining their existence as affected modes, through extrinsic affects modes also become capable of perceiving and understanding others. When two modes encounter, two feelings may result: joy, when others' relations agree with the nature of the mode, and the conatus finds something useful and good; sadness, when the original relations in the mode are decomposed. Passions can be either sad or joyful, but Spinoza points out that the joyful passions alone cannot enable the power of acting. Through the accumulation of the useful and the good by the conatus, the mode will eventually be able to produce active affections. Hence, the question Spinoza bears in mind is the means whereby a mode may switch from passions to actions.

Modes always start with actions that are completely passive and hinder the production of active actions. When in agreement with other relations, the joyful passions are absorbed by the conatus and only then does the power of acting begin to grow. Deleuze also addresses the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

importance of reason for maximizing joyful affections by organizing the way modes meet.

According to his interpretation,

Reason in the first principle of its development, or in its initial aspect, is the effort to organize encounters in such a way that we are affected by a maximum of joyful passions [...] reason is the power of understanding, the power of action belonging to the soul; so joyful passions agree with reason, and lead us to understand, or determine us to become reasonable.⁶⁹

But still, conditioned by passions that are inherently passive and that prohibit them from acting, the modes cannot produce active affections, unless the realization of a common notion takes place. Spinoza contends that if we consider Nature as a whole, there is a certain generality among all modes; that is, some relations are agreeable among all modes, and this is what Spinoza calls common notions. Depending on the degree of generality, common notions may vary. Deleuze concludes, “A common notion is always an idea of a similarity of composition in existing modes [...] common notions may be more or less useful, more or less easily formed and also more or less universal—that is, they are organized in terms of the greater or lesser generality of their viewpoints.”⁷⁰ The commonality between two modes is not only a consequence of the affective process between modes, but also a necessity for the emergence of causal relations in the beginning. As Spinoza declares, “P3: *If things have nothing in common with one another, one of them cannot be the cause of the other.*”⁷¹

For Spinoza, common notions are crucial, because they are the turning points where modes start producing adequate ideas. Recall that an adequate idea is exemplified by the powers of

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276.

⁷¹ *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1*, p. 410.

understanding and acting. When a mode discovers “something common,” the cause of the idea is now in the mode itself. Deleuze writes, “it is distinct from the passive feeling from which we began but distinct only in its cause: its cause is no longer an inadequate idea of an object that agrees with us, but the necessarily adequate idea of what is common to that object and ourselves.”⁷² Hence, we know that common notions now become the cause of the modes’ affections, replacing all extrinsic causes.

Spinoza not only diagnoses the problem of affect but also determines the inner mechanism of affect and provides solutions for switching from passive to active affections. The solution, as Deleuze summarizes, includes four stages: 1) the accumulation of passive joy from finding the agreements of relations of others; 2) the formation of common notions; 3) the formation of an explanation for common notions from the mode itself, thus generating active joy; 4) active joy that partakes of a greater portion of the capacity of being affected, thereby replacing passive joy.⁷³

By fashioning a highly dynamic and complicated plane of affects, conatus, movements and multiplicities (of attributes and modes), Spinoza lays the foundation for the creation of Deleuze’s metaphysics of immanence. Eric Alliez accurately catches this similarity between the Spinozian and Deleuzian planes and notes, “The perfection of Spinoza’s plane of immanence is nothing but the outcome of this *immediate, perpetual, instantaneous exchange*, of this *reversibility* of ‘the immanence of expression in what expresses itself and of what is expressed in its expression.’”⁷⁴

⁷² *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 284.

⁷³ For a detailed summary see *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁷⁴ Eric Alliez, *The Signature of the World, Or, What is Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy?* trans. Eliot Ross Albert and Alberto Toscano (New York and London: Continuum, 2004) p. 14.

Conclusion

Affect theory has recently come to the fore in the field of literary theory, and scholars credit Deleuze for his reanimation of the concept of affect in Spinoza's and Nietzsche's works. However, the term "capabilities of being affected and affecting" is used in a very loose way, as if it were unconditionally applicable to all phenomena.

In this chapter, I have tried to reconstruct and reorganize the central theme of affect as it appears in Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. I argue that the capability of being affected, is, at least in this book, a very cautiously posited concept in that it is true if and only if we accept the parallelism of nature that Spinoza posits. This capability of being affected is due to the nature of expression in both the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension of substance, and modes are the productions of substance, which bear the same being and limited essence as substance. By granting equality to the attributes of Thought and Extension, Spinoza's parallelistic structure of the world generates the possibility of producing active affections, through the process of altering active passions as bodily affects to common notions in mind and eventually to active affections as *causas suis*. I conclude, therefore, that in this Spinozian theory of affect, it is all or nothing: bodies must be understood only in terms of Spinozian metaphysics, in order for the capability/essence of modes to be both affecting and being affected.

CHAPTER 2

IN SEARCH OF AN EMPIRICIST THEORY OF RELATION: HUME AND WILLIAM JAMES ACCORDING TO DELEUZE

Deleuze situates his entire philosophical system within empiricism: in experience the affective capability of body processes unfolds; in experience differences exist as qualitative intensities prior to the establishment of forms and universals; only in experience can the potentiality or virtuality of one entity be discerned; in experience, there is life. As he states in *Difference and Repetition*, “The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism. This empiricism teaches us a strange ‘reason,’ that of the multiple, chaos and difference.”⁷⁵ This “superior empiricism” Deleuze also refers to as a “transcendental empiricism.” Later, Deleuze develops a counterpart of transcendental empiricism in the formulation of a parallelistic mode of existence on a plane of organization where one finds already-formed static and molar matter, enclosed by a plane of consistency in which molecular becomings take flight in the opposite direction of the dominant and powerful.

Clearly, Deleuze’s studies of such empiricist philosophers as David Hume and William James contribute to the formation of his later thought, and my aim is to examine the influence of their ideas on Deleuze’s concept of relation. In direct opposition to the contention of rationalists and idealists that relations are contained in the mind of the subjective ego *a priori*, Hume and

⁷⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 57.

James emphasize the externality or even materiality of relations: relations are always outside the *tabula rasa* as part of concrete experience or reality; only through certain processes—either being affected by the principle of association for Hume or undergoing repetitive perceptions of “sensuous nature” for James’s radical empiricism—do we encounter relations and consequently, given time, form habits. The empiricist theory of external relation clearly influences Deleuze’s later formulations of the concepts of flow and movement; and—more closely related to the endeavor of this paper—provides a necessary component of Deleuze’s modification of Spinoza’s theory of affect in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Hume after Spinoza: The Exigency of a Reverse Chronology of Reading

Deleuze’s first monograph, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature* (1953), has an essential position in his thought that has gone largely unrecognized.⁷⁶ Perhaps Hume is not included with Nietzsche, Bergson and Spinoza as one of Deleuze’s primary influences because of Hume’s emphasis on the role of intuition and government in extending the sympathies of citizens, a theme that is fundamentally incompatible with Deleuze’s politics, especially as articulated later in the concept of nomadology in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Hume is nonetheless important for Deleuze, and one may easily discern in Deleuze’s later works traces of Humean themes and arguments explicated in this book, such as

⁷⁶ Notable exceptions include Jeffrey A. Bell’s *Deleuze Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), and Jon Roffe’s *Gilles Deleuze’s Empiricism and Subjectivity: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

subjectivity, movement, and affect. Deleuze obviously affirms Hume's idea of the externality of relation and furthers Hume's account by exploring William James's radical empiricism.

Deleuze's theory of affect revealed in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* can be summarized, though insufficiently, in one sentence: affects work upon relations between bodies. In fact, the radical argument Spinoza makes is that a body is nothing but relations. But why does Spinoza even bother to philosophize on the metaphysical, if not anatomical, structure of the body? It is because, as Deleuze explains, Spinoza must do so in order to disentangle the mystery of movement: how can a mode acquire *conatus* and begin to act *adequately*?⁷⁷ The relations of a mode need to be modulated and shaped by the affects from outside, until the common notions are formed in the mind. This entire process involves communication among modes, and only by considering relation as something external that can be affected directly can the Spinozian project be achieved. In other words, the internal theory of relation, exemplified by Leibniz, which contends that relations are already inside the substance, automatically blocks the possible communication among modes and generates an absolute isolation among all the modes. Therefore, according to the logic of rationalists, affects are impossible because there is no way/window for one mode to act upon another.

The question of whether relations are eternal or internal is timely and valid only when affect and movement are simultaneously taken into consideration. A thought about relation

⁷⁷ The concept of the adequate is explicitly stated by Spinoza in *Ethics*: "I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, that is, when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause." Benedictus de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 154. Adequate actions, which are what modes aim to achieve, contain the causes in themselves, instead of passively reacting to some causes from outside.

always comes after the experience of an encounter, though relations surely exist before the encountering experience and ground the life of the subject. Relations must be external to the mind in order that the mind may be affected and gradually begin to affect others. Thus, Hume's empiricist account of the nature of essence only gains its full significance after one becomes clear about Spinoza's reason for bringing up the subject of affect in the first place. Relations must be affected to be introduced and understood. As Deleuze clearly states in *Dialogues*,

Blue-eyed boy: a boy, some blue, and eyes—an assemblage. AND . . . AND . . . AND, stammering. Empiricism is nothing other than this. It is each major language, more or less gifted, which *must be broken*, each in its own way, *to introduce this creative AND* which will make language shoot along, and will make us this stranger in our language, in so far as it is our own.⁷⁸

Therefore, there is a certain exigency in discussing Deleuze's reading of Hume after his study of Spinoza, even though the latter book was published fifteen years after the former. Otherwise, the question of the externality of relations would be meaningless. It is worth noting as well that, despite the fifteen years separating the two works, both are organized in a similar fashion: the introduction of affect or the principles of passion follows the explanation of the principles of association that deal primarily with the nature and types of relation.

⁷⁸ *Dialogues II*, p. 59 (emphasis added).

“A Global Brain”: Deleuze’s Humean Project

1. *Beginning to End—Humean Empiricism and The Principle of External Relations in Deleuze*

We may ask, first, which part of Hume’s philosophy appeals to Deleuze? In Deleuze’s late *What Is Philosophy?*, we may discern an answer to this question as we trace Hume’s impact in this work. According to Deleuze, Hume provides us with both an innovative understanding of the nature of contraction or passive synthesis—a process in which pure differences become organized in time and generate life—which Hume calls “habit”; and a theory of mind in which the contemplating⁷⁹ imagination functions in the mind, in which the process of contraction can proceed.

Not every organism has a brain, and not all life is organic, but everywhere there are forces that constitute microbrains, or an inorganic life of things. We can dispense with Fechner and Conan Doyle’s splendid hypothesis of a nervous system of the earth only because the force of contracting or of preserving, that is to say, of feeling appears only as a global brain in relation to the elements contracted directly and to the mode of contraction, which differ depending on the domain and constitute precisely irreducible varieties [...] the same ultimate elements and the same withdrawn force constitute a single plane of composition bearing all interpretations [...] This can be seen even in [...]

⁷⁹ Regarding the concept of contemplation, Deleuze takes a Neoplatonic approach: to contemplate is to bear such sensibility that happens simultaneously with the process of contraction and use a power to sense the material, before the formation of any sense organs. As Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*, “perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses which are like the sensibility of the senses; they refer back to a primary sensibility that we are [...] At the level of this primary vital sensibility, the lived present constitutes a past and a future in time” (p. 73).

the formation of habits: although everything seems to take place by active connections and progressive integrations, from one test to another, the tests or cases, the occurrences, must, as Hume showed, be contracted in a contemplating “imagination” while remaining distinct in relation to actions and to knowledge.⁸⁰

Hume constructs a pre-critical philosophy of mind that reveals the possibility for Deleuze’s own concept of the plane of consistency to exist. But his philosophy is established upon the empiricism that regards relations as external. Hence the questions are: What can empiricism do? And how does empiricism contribute to Deleuze’s philosophical endeavors? In *Dialogues* (1977), published twenty-four years after *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze offers remarks about Hume and empiricism that suggest how Deleuze develops the Humean empiricist project. Empiricism, says Deleuze, is “a vital protest against principles,” in particular the first principles (ontology/metaphysics) that endeavor to establish a dualism between the sensible and the intelligible: “whenever one believes in a great first principle, one can no longer produce anything but huge sterile dualisms.”⁸¹ What empiricists have done is to completely switch the question from “does the intelligible come from the sensible?”⁸² to one that concerns the nature of relations. And the answer to such a question is: “relations are external to their terms.”⁸³ There are two traits of this empiricist philosophy: first, unlike Leibniz who considers relation as something already contained in the notion of monads,⁸⁴ relation for empiricists cannot be reduced to the

⁸⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 213. Deleuze makes roughly the same points in *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 72-75.

⁸¹ *Dialogues II*, p. 54-55.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸⁴ A brief explanation of Leibniz’s theory of relation might be helpful to show the crucial distinction between idealism and empiricism. According to Leibniz (as Deleuze reads him), relations between two elements are infinitely small in a mathematical sense: “There are no

terms or the pre-subjects. The theory of external relations in empiricism is especially important to Deleuze, for this allows him to posit that “relations are in the middle, and exist as such,” and hence, eventually, to conclude that we always start from the middle of things, and this “middle” refers to the relation that is external by nature. Hence the relations among everything are conjunctives, “AND,” and extra beings which form multiplicities. This “and” (*et*) replaces the verb “is” (*est*), the verb “to be” functioning in Deleuze’s humorous term as “the judgment of God.” Deleuze’s object is to “substitute the AND for IS. A *and* B. The AND is not even a specific relation of conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations [...] the AND as extra-being, inter-being [...] Thinking *with* AND, instead of thinking IS, instead of thinking *for* IS: empiricism has never had another secret.”⁸⁵

Let us recall Deleuze’s early characterization of affect: it flows from one mode that is more adequate to one that is less so, causing variations of intensity in the relation, with or without changes in the terms themselves. In order for this metaphysical construction to be

infinitely small elements, so an infinitely small element means obviously, we don't need to say it, it means an infinitely small relation between two elements. It is a question of relations, not a question of elements. In other words, an infinitely small relation between elements, what can that be? What have we achieved in saying that it is not a question of infinitely small elements, but of infinitely small relations between two elements.” Gilles Deleuze *DELEUZE / LEIBNIZ Cours Vincennes - 22/04/1980*, trans. Charles Stivale, *Webdeleuze*, <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/50>. Accessed March 15, 2017. But these relations, however minute they may be, are already contained in the notions or the principle of sufficient reason: “Why sufficient reason? Why does he believe himself fully immersed in his very own scream? EVERYTHING MUST SURELY HAVE A REASON. The principle of sufficient reason can be expressed as follows: whatever happens to a subject, be it determinations of space and time, of relation, event, whatever happens to a subject, what happens, that is what one says of it with truth, everything that is said of a subject must be contained in the notion of the subject.” Gilles Deleuze *DELEUZE / LEIBNIZ Cours Vincennes - 15/04/1980*, trans. Charles Stivale, *Webdeleuze*, <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/53>. Accessed March 15, 2017. Leibniz’s account represents the general theory of relation on the rationalist/idealist side.

⁸⁵ *Dialogues II*, p. 57.

possible, the relations mentioned above have to be something that can be acted upon, namely, they must be external and empirical. Hence, Deleuze's theory of affect should be understood from the perspective of empiricism. As he writes in *Dialogues*, "All individuals are in Nature as though on a plane of consistence whose whole figure they form, plane which is variable at each moment. They affect each other in so far as the relationship which constitutes each one forms a degree of power, a capacity to be affected."⁸⁶ What can be concluded from the Deleuzian Hume-Spinoza line is that a mode's gradual process of adequation (gaining the power to act instead of simply being affected) is achieved through the affects of the relations that are essentially external.

1. *The Deleuzian Conflict*

In this section I intend to reconstruct Deleuze's reading of David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, with attention to the influence of Hume on Deleuze's later thought.

In the "Preface to the English-Language Edition" of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, written in 1989, Deleuze—after finishing most of his works, including the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* written in collaboration with Guattari—reflects on Hume's philosophy, and in so doing suggests what Hume's most important influence on him has been—namely, the principle of external relations and the formation of habit:

He created the first great logic of relations, showing in it that all relations (not only "matters of fact" but also relations among ideas) are external to their terms. As a result, he constituted a multifarious world of experience based upon the principle of the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

exteriority of relations. We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, “tendencies,” which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to habits. Isn’t this the answer to the question “what are we?” We are habits, nothing but habits—the habit of saying “I.”⁸⁷

A great deal of information can be gained from this passage regarding the connection between Hume’s and Deleuze’s philosophical systems. Implicit in this passage is a comparison between Deleuze’s plane of immanence and Hume’s “multifarious world of experience,” for the two concepts share many features: both are composed of individual objects and the relations between them which enclose all possible events. Everything is immanent in the sense that there is nothing transcendent, divine or outside/above that makes the rest simply reflected ideas: everything is on the plane (“in the world” for Hume).

The second Humean idea that deeply influenced Deleuze is the concept of habit, which Hume discusses, originally, in order to give an account of his theory of the formation of the self. Deleuze embraces the central idea of habit and develops it fully in *Difference and Repetition* when he articulates his concept of time. The contraction that generates the passive synthesis of the past and projects a future from the perspective of the present, for Deleuze, is habit; the contractile power—as was mentioned earlier—is contemplation. As he writes,

When we say that habit is a contraction we are speaking not of an instantaneous action which combines with another to form an element of repetition, but rather of the fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind. A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests

⁸⁷ *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. x.

its full generality: it concerns not only the sensory-motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed. *It is simultaneously through contraction that we are habits, but through contemplation that we contract.*⁸⁸

According to Deleuze's 1989 remarks on Hume, then, there are two fundamental elements of his philosophy that Deleuze has embraced: the concept of terms and relations, and the concept of habit. We should note, however, that Hume says we are habits, but Deleuze adds that habits are contractions. Yet if one juxtaposes Deleuze's comments on Hume and empiricism in *Dialogues* with those in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, one may discern a possible contradiction between Deleuze's interpretations of Hume in the two different periods, regarding *the nature of external relations*. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze contends that the "exteriority of relations is not a principle, it is a vital protest against principles,"⁸⁹ but in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze speaks repeatedly of the "principles" that inform relations. In order to address this apparent conflict, it is necessary to examine the meaning of "principle" that Deleuze discerns in Hume in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*.

⁸⁸ *Difference and Repetition*, p. 74 (emphasis added).

⁸⁹ *Dialogues II*, p. 57.

Establishing Ground: David Hume and The Coming-into-being of a Transcendental Empiricism

1. *In the Wake of David Hume*

Philosophy always seems to face this dilemma: every concept is uncertain and in need of constant redefinition, and yet the existence of such uncertainty in concepts forms, in turn, a sense of certainty that conditions the act of philosophizing. Jean-Luc Nancy, in a recent interview in the Huffington Post, restates this problem: “In philosophy, nothing is a given. No meaning can be considered obvious [...] The challenge is precisely not to latch on to any acquired identity. For a philosopher, nothing should be taken for granted. Preconceived and established meanings must be constantly reevaluated, and new possibilities opened.”⁹⁰ Deleuze makes the same point in various places of his work. For Deleuze, the task of the philosopher is to invent and fabricate new concepts, and the philosopher is the one who evaluates the status of concepts: “philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts [...] The philosopher is expert in concepts and in the lack of them. He knows which of them are not viable, which are arbitrary or inconsistent, which ones do not hold up for an instant.”⁹¹ Every philosopher Deleuze studies has made contributions to this task of creating concepts. Hume’s new concepts, according to

⁹⁰ Jean Luc-Nancy, Interview by Elena Cué, “There is No West Anymore.” 14 Jul. 2016. *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elena-cue/interview-with-jeanluc-na_b_10964130.html?utm_content=buffer17995&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer. Accessed March 1, 2017.

⁹¹ *What Is Philosophy?*, pp. 2-3.

Deleuze, are of two kinds: a new theory of belief which is able to include all knowledge; and the association of ideas.⁹²

Hume's fundamental project in the *Treatise*, Deleuze informs us, is to change the direction of the study of the psychology of mind, which Hume regards as incapable of generating a fixed and universal understanding of the mind, given the ever-present danger of the mind's falling into fictions and delirium. Therefore, a new theory, a psychology of the mind's affections, is invented to replace earlier models. In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze offers a reading of Hume with emphasis on the Humean distinction of what is innate in the mind and what is *a posteriori*, formulated through experience and affections from outside. In order to fully decode the mystery of mind, a series of studies on the affections of mind from outside are necessary; in other words, philosophers should focus on the conditions of the formation of the mind, that is, on affections. Mind, according to Hume, can be affected in two ways—through emotions and through society—which are interrelated and connected with the help of understanding, which extends passions from the individual to collective society.

The question of subjectivity is one of the central puzzles in modern philosophy. Hume provides his account of the subject in the *Treatise* and raises the primary question “how does the mind become human nature/the subject?”⁹³ In other words, Hume attempts to depict the process by which the “given,” or the random collection of crude perceptions and impressions, becomes organized in the human mind. He shows that the qualities of human nature provide external relations that combine individual ideas, and that these qualities are composed of three types of principles: the principle of affectivity; the principle of association; and the principle of causality.

⁹² *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. xi.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

No one of these principles alone is capable of directing the entire system of the mind, the main function of the principles being that of correcting the delirious mess, caused by the fictional construction of the continuity of both objects and ideas in the original state of mind. The subject, or a mind containing a series of ideas that resemble Nature, is formed through a process of transcendence that endows the ideas with constancy and relations so that ideas can move and also project into the future through synthesis. For Deleuze, Hume poses three essential questions, which will prove important in Deleuze's subsequent work: "What are the characteristics of the subject in the case of belief and invention? Secondly, by means of what principles is the subject constituted in this way? Which factors have acted in transforming the mind? Finally, what are the various stages of the synthesis that is brought about in the mind by the subject? What are the stages of the system?"⁹⁴

I will now summarize Deleuze's reading of Hume's philosophy of mind, with particular attention to the external nature of the two kinds of relations, natural and philosophical, and their roles in contributing to the completion of the Humean project of disentangling the mystery of human nature.

2. How Many Natures?

In the beginning, everything is in Nature. Hume places such a claim as the condition of his epistemology. The mind-body problem that drew the attentions of almost all early modern philosophy in search of either a hierarchy or equation of the two seems only secondary in the face of Nature as a whole. The puzzle regarding the possible sources of human knowledge can be

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

centered around one issue: is human knowledge already in the mind before experience, namely, *a priori*; or should the mind be viewed as a *tabula rasa* that becomes imprinted with ideas only after receiving impressions from experience.

Basing his philosophy on the British empiricist tradition pioneered by John Locke, Hume inherits much from the teaching of Locke and regards the original state of mind as “imagination,” which does not contain any nature, but rather a collection of ideas or experience in the form of pure fancy: “The mind is not nature, nor does it have a nature. It is identical with the ideas in the mind. Ideas are given, as given; they are experience.”⁹⁵ What are “ideas,” then? Hume answers that ideas are perceptions or impressions from sense organs and represent real objects. Given the “given” of the flux of ideas, throughout the *Treatise* Hume probes the questions, “*how does the mind become a subject?*” How does the imagination become a faculty?”⁹⁶ Through these questions, Hume intends to discover the way mind, as simply a container of ideas at the beginning, transcends the given and becomes a moving and ordered system. The solution, Deleuze concludes, is through continuous affects under the principles of human nature: passion/society, association, and understanding, among which the principles of association plays the most fundamental role in organizing and combining ideas and generating external relations to form a constant and uniform system out of the passive given. In Deleuze’s reading of Hume, in order for this process to happen, the three principles of human nature must distinguish themselves from the ideas, by which Hume argues that relations should be seen as external to their terms, namely, the atomistic ideas. We may see, therefore, that it is through Hume’s *Treatise* that Deleuze starts to think about the theory of affect, which he henceforth

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

considers throughout his philosophical career, by investigating the passage through which a mind⁹⁷ stops passively suffering affects and starts acting as an active subject: “When Hume speaks of an act of the mind—of a disposition—he does not mean to say that the mind is active but that it is activated and that it has become subject [...] The mind, having been affected by the principles, turns now into a subject.”⁹⁸

Human nature, according to Hume, is composed of three coexisting parts: society/passion, association and understanding, each of which bears its unique role in making the lunatic and original mind constant and functioning. The passion of human nature refers to the “circumstance” from which affects from other objects are generated; understanding extends the passion, which is, at first, always partial, to the community by implementing social institutions. While association—the quality of human nature that connects nature with human nature—creates relations among ideas and thus creates constancy and continuity among ideas and helps the mind become a subject. Hume follows Locke’s analysis of the mind in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which, at the beginning of the book, Locke defines the two sources of human ideas as SENSATION, “this great Source, of most of the *Ideas* we have, depending wholly upon our Senses, and derived by them to the Understanding,”⁹⁹ and REFLECTION, “the Ideas it affords being such only, as the Mind gets by reflecting on its own Operations within it self.”¹⁰⁰ Hume asserts that the primary state of mind consists solely of impressions of sensation and the

⁹⁷ Hume’s concentration is primarily on the human mind, with little or no reference to other living creatures; the homocentrism of Hume’s philosophy is something Deleuze goes beyond in *Difference and Repetition* when speaking of the contemplative souls of various organs, but especially in the development of the concept of becoming in his work with Guattari.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 105.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

ideas that represent impressions through reflections (and this is how Hume criticizes the type of philosophy that builds the relation directly between object and idea through representation).

Then, two modalities of human nature, passion and association, provide affects for the cluster of ideas and form a “parallelism”¹⁰¹ of systems: the system of understanding and that of passion and ethics.¹⁰² The latter pertains to the partial nature of human beings and needs the particular establishment of social institutions to impose an ethics and help people/family reflect the passions in their imagination and thus extend their sympathy. As for association, due to its function, gradually, three effects are created: general ideas (one idea not only represents the impression from which it comes, but also multiple impressions at once), substance (the unity of multiple ideas, namely, a complex idea), and relation (the passage through which one idea introduces another one).¹⁰³ These three effects enable a transcendence of the mind and make it a subject, which, at the same time, redefines the meaning of transcendence as a process completely confined within the mind and the rules of human nature. Deleuze also points out a consequent idea of Hume that demarcates him from the rationalist tradition, which regards reason as the ground for mind. For Hume, reason is the very product of the process of affects put into play by the principles of human nature: “reason is determined immediately by the corresponding principles, without a gradual formation and under the sole influence of human nature.”¹⁰⁴ Such a reading clearly underlines the order of emergence of the faculties of mind: only random ideas exist in the beginning, and through the affects from the principles of human nature, reason

¹⁰¹ *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 32.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 32.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

gradually appears. The rational function is nothing but the confirmation of the order of mind, instead of being the condition of mind as rationalists insist.

3. *From Nature to Mind*

In order for the transcendence of the subject to take place, Hume's philosophy of mind seems to entail one presupposition: Nature must precede human mind, so that the impressions of sensations of objects can be possible. However, the concept of Nature itself needs to be defined. What constitutes Nature? Deleuze explains that Nature, as opposed to mind, is a self-contained and continuous entity composed of individual objects or experience. Once the mind becomes an organized system, it contains individual ideas as well as relations. Then, Deleuze continues, the relations in the mind between ideas are of two kinds due to the relative changes corresponding to ideas, which are "those that [quoting Hume] 'depend entirely on the ideas which we compare together' (resemblance, relations of quantity, degrees of quality, contrariety) and the relations of objects, which 'may be chang'd without any change in any ideas (relations of time and space, identity, causality).'"¹⁰⁵ However, this distinction of two kinds of relations should not infer a correlation or dependence of relations on ideas or objects. Deleuze affirms that in order for the Humean philosophy of mind to be possible, the relations must be external to their terms; in other words, relations are a product of human nature, instead of being inherent components of either objects in Nature or ideas in the mind:

the definition of the relations of ideas, "in the case in which the relations depend entirely on ideas that we compare to one another," *does not mean that association is here, more*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

than elsewhere, a quality of the ideas themselves [...] Whether as relations of ideas or as relations of objects, relations are always external to their terms. What Hume means is this: principles of human nature produce in the mind relations of ideas as they act “on their own” on ideas. ¹⁰⁶

Through ideas and the external relations imposed by the affects of human nature, the mind becomes a sufficient system and thus a knowing subject. What needs to be further explored is the question, how does mind, given ideas and relations, transcend experience and differentiate itself from Nature? Hume believes that two different faculties of mind, which result from the difference between the two types of relations, help it grasp itself and Nature through reflections of repetitive phenomena. The conjunctions of similar objects or experience is termed “repetition,” which alone is incapable of generating the new: “Repetition by itself does not constitute progression, nor does it form anything. The repetition of similar cases does not move us forward, since the only difference between the second case and the first is that the second comes after the first, without displaying a new idea.”¹⁰⁷ Repetition reveals the temporal order of the emergence of cases but does not entail anything more than a fact: it is habit that enable ideas to be formed through impressions and thus form transitions between ideas. Habit differs from repetition in that it creates something new, an idea, rather than displaying a mere representation of objects. Deleuze claims that habit presupposes the existence of experience, and works on it to produce ideas: “The fact is that experience and habit are two different principles; they stand alternatively for the presentation of cases of constant conjunction to the inspecting mind, and for the union of these cases inside the mind which observes them.”¹⁰⁸ Hume’s theory of knowledge,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

thus, is composed of two principles grounded by two different kinds of external relations:

“Because of this, Hume always gives causality two related definitions: causality is the union of similar objects and also a mental inference from one object to another.”¹⁰⁹

4. Empiricism and Subjectivity: The Transcendence of Mind and the Necessity of External Relations

Having provided an outline of the Humean project and the mechanisms of Nature and human nature, in this section I will explain the function of empiricism in Hume’s philosophical system and the importance of the externality of relations for rendering the transcendence of the subject possible.

The most central similarity between Spinoza and Hume, according to Deleuze, is that both philosophers construct a metaphysics that conditions an ethics, a way to explain action. And their project is achieved by delineating the affective process through which the subject, being passive and inadequate at the first stage, starts to move and act self-sufficiently. However, the difference between the Spinozian and Humean practical philosophies is rather clear: for Spinoza, the potentiality of becoming an adequate and affecting subject is already immanently hidden in the modes themselves; for Hume, by contrast, subjectivity is dependent on the principles of human nature, which are never identified with the mind itself. In other words, Hume presents a strict dualism, between Nature and human nature, and though the coming-into-being of the transcendent subject necessarily relies on the sensual input of experience/objects, mind does not

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

directly work upon the objects in nature. This process of transcendence happens with impression as a medium.

Deleuze opens the fifth chapter of *Empiricism and Subjectivity* with this statement: “We thought that we had located the essence of empiricism in the specific problem of subjectivity.”¹¹⁰ Empiricism is the metaphysical ground for the transcendence of the subject, and makes Hume’s thesis of philosophy of mind valid, which Deleuze summarizes as follows: “Hume’s entire critique, especially his critique of the principle of sufficient reason in its denunciations of sophisms and contradictions, amounts to this: if the subject is indeed that which transcends the given, we should not initially attribute to the given the capacity to transcend itself.”¹¹¹ However, these questions remain to be solved: why does the mind need to transcend the given, especially considering that in Nature, there are also objects and relations? What is the meaning of transcendence at all? To answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the result of the mind transcending given experience, which is the emergence of movement in the mind, enabled by the affects of the principle of association. The initial state of empiricism, Deleuze says, is “the experience of a collection, or [...] an animated succession of distinct perceptions.”¹¹² Hence, the original sensual perceptions are in movement, but each of them is not connected with another, so that Hume calls mind in this status fancy. Deleuze also observes that in the Humean context, these impressions or ideas in the mind are not originally complex or a multiplicity; rather, they denote the smallest or indivisible ideas; and, Deleuze adds, these smallest ideas are also sensible. Additionally, for Hume, these ideas are not abstract or conceptual: since they are perceptible, there is a spatial and temporal dimension to them. As Deleuze writes, “We must then define the

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

given by two objective characteristics: indivisibility of an element and distribution of elements; *atom and structure*.”¹¹³ Following Deleuze, we may thus conclude that Hume’s theory of mind is a kind of atomism.

After this explanation of the inner composition of the original state of mind, we need to ask, what is transcendence? And what is the state of mind after it has transcended the given? Deleuze deduces that for Hume, transcendence is a type of synthesis directed by the principles of human nature, through which four transformations appear: imagination, a random collection of perceptions in the beginning, now becomes a faculty of mind; the collection, bestowed with external relations, is now a system; the given, the collection of sensual impressions, obtains a movement; and the mind, at last, becomes human nature.¹¹⁴ Only through the process of transcendence in these four aspects can the subject start to generate affects and “invent.” Deleuze contends that the process whereby the mind becomes human nature “*is a synthesis of the mind*,”¹¹⁵ or we may call it the formation of habit.

Habit, for Hume, does not simply reflect upon what is given, but enables the subject to invent a new succession, through the activity of “anticipation.” This advancement in Hume’s philosophy is of paramount importance, in the sense that synthesis bears a Bergsonian function of contracting past and present and projecting into the future. And it is through this process of anticipation or invention of time that the mind finally transcends the given that only contains mechanistic repetition of the past and the present. Deleuze highly praises Hume’s innovative thought and regards the concept of anticipation as a particularly important contribution: “Hume’s originality lies in the theory of this dynamism. Anticipation is the synthesis of past and present

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

brought about by habit. Anticipation, or the future, is the synthesis of time constituted by the subject inside the mind.”¹¹⁶

The synthesis of mind has a complicated connection with external relations. We know that by “external,” Hume refers to the claim that relations are not included in ideas, and there are two kinds of relations: one is spatial, temporal, and causal, which does not correspond to the variations of ideas; and the other is resembling, qualitative and numerical, which depends on ideas completely.¹¹⁷ As for the first type, Deleuze observes that it is what transcendence is, since the synthesis of time is grounded by the movements of ideas;¹¹⁸ as for the second one, Deleuze counters Kant’s critique of Hume that this kind of relation directly entails its being a part of an idea. Deleuze’s response is this: even though the second kind of relation depends on the variations of ideas, these ideas cannot *explain* the cause of relations, since the cause is not in the mind but in the principles of human nature:

The resemblance between particular ideas does not explain that resemblance is a relation, that is, that an idea can evoke the appearance of a similar idea in the mind. The indivisibility of ideas does not explain that the unities constituted by them can be added, subtracted, made equal, or that they can enter into a system of *operations*. Nor does it explain that the lengths which they compose, in virtue of their arrangement, can be *measured and evaluated*.¹¹⁹

If ideas are not sufficient to give an account of the genesis of the external relation, how can we know this fact? Deleuze goes on to remind us that the sources of relations, namely, the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

principle of association and that of causality, each provides an explanation for one type of relation. The principle of association, by generating relations that harmonize the originally unorganized ideas and condition one idea to move to another, is only able to explain natural relations: “Hume calls that which the association explains a ‘natural relation,’ and that which it does not suffice to explain a ‘philosophical relation.’ He insists heavily on this point: the characteristic of nature is to be natural, easy going, and immediate.”¹²⁰ Clearly, relations coming from the principle of association deal only with the individual mind. In terms of the unnatural relations involving interactions among multiple minds, Hume seeks to base his understanding on the principle of causality. Specifically, to consider the interactions among minds, it is necessary to look at the “circumstance” of affectivity: “If it is true that association is necessary in order to make all relations in general possible, each particular relation is not in the least explained by the association. *Circumstance* gives the relation its sufficient reason.”¹²¹ Only when the subject is considered from the perspective of circumstance, a situation that happens at a given time and space—or to put it in another way, when considered as a member of a collectivity—can it start to acquire individuality. Hence, to conclude, Deleuze regards the principle of association as the “form” that explains the function of relation; but it is through the principle of causality that pertains to a concrete circumstance that relation becomes singular:

If the principles of association explain that ideas are associated, only the principles of the passions can explain that a particular idea, rather than another, is associated at a given moment [...] We see that, in all cases, the subject is presented in the mind under the influence of two kinds of combined principles. Everything takes place as if the principles

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

of association provided the subject with its necessary form, whereas the principles of the passions provided it with its singular content. The latter function as the principle for the individuation of the subject.¹²²

In this section, I have tried to present Hume's philosophy of the transcending mind as grounded necessarily by the theory of external relations central to empiricism. I believe that Hume's theory of relation very closely corresponds with Spinoza's theory of affect in two major aspects: it emphasizes the direct connection between affectivity and relation; and it furthers Spinoza's claim that affect functions on relations in such a fashion as to offer a dualistic way, pertaining to both the principle of association and the principle of causality/circumstance, to fully explain the cause of relations.

Deleuze's Journey to Radical Empiricism: From Hume to William James

Many a Deleuzian concept changes between its delineation in his early readings of such philosophers as Spinoza, Bergson and Hume and its later articulation within his own system. And empiricism witnesses such a transition, changing from a Humean kind of empiricism to one that resembles the "radical empiricism" of William James. In this section, I argue that Deleuze's later rhizomic metaphysics, elaborated in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is more similar to James's radical version of empiricism than to Hume's, the difference between the two arising from different understandings of the notion of relation.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

James presents his system of metaphysical thought in the collection *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, in which he clearly demonstrates his stance on ontological belief: his is a radical empiricism that homogenizes the primal forms of every material being as “stuff” that contains no specification and individualization, while, at the same time, renders all nonentities as functions. By maintaining this claim, James delineates a metaphysics that is essentially materialistic, and this philosophical blueprint seems a prelude to Deleuze and Guattari’s later vision of the world as material flows caused by desiring productions. In this section I provide an account of the places where James’s empiricism may have influenced Deleuze and Guattari: James’s metaphysical vision that the world is composed of material stuff; and his radical empiricism that regards relations as not only external to their objects but also having existence only when perceived.

1. Empiricism Beyond Hume: On the Pragmatic Turn in Late Deleuze

As argued earlier, from the beginning of his philosophical journey in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze makes empiricism central to his metaphysical vision. Deleuze’s lifelong endeavor is to oppose the rationalist or idealist tradition, which posits the existence of something transcendent above ordinary objects. This same impulse informs his collaborative efforts with Guattari, which produce such concepts as rhizome, regime of signs and flow. However, even though empiricism serves as a guiding light for Deleuze, the concept of empiricism itself changes over time. I argue that this change coincides with Deleuze’s explicit engagement with the meaning and function of language; and that it is this engagement with language that transforms Deleuze’s empiricism from one that is Humean to one that is Jamesian.

In *Dialogues*, Deleuze elucidates many themes that appear later in *A Thousand Plateaus*, including the concept of pragmatics as a component of empiricism. In the chapter titled “The Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” Deleuze ascribes the deterritorializing characteristics of American Literature to the essence of the American language, which bears the tendency of becoming, a term referring to a multiplicity that operates via contagion to efface all taxonomic boundaries. As Deleuze states, “The American language bases its despotic official pretensions, its majoritarian claim to hegemony, only on its extraordinary capacity for being twisted and shattered and for secretly putting itself in the service of minorities who work it from inside, involuntarily, unofficially, nibbling away at that hegemony as it extends itself.”¹²³ The American language, for Deleuze, is essentially bipolar, with a hegemonic tendency and a tendency to move toward minorities through infinite conjunctions (“and,” “and,” “and”). Deleuze adds, “It is a case of making language shift, with words which are increasingly restrained and a syntax which is increasingly subtle. It is not a question of speaking a language as if one was a foreigner, it is a question of being a foreigner in one's own language.”¹²⁴ This function of the English language, for Deleuze, indicates a potentiality to connect with things outside itself, an infinite conjunction AND. Such a function of language is considered pragmatics. What is more surprising, at the end of this chapter, is that Deleuze draws an equation between the pragmatics of language and empiricism. He summarizes, “That is what empiricism is, syntax and experimentation, syntactics and pragmatics.”¹²⁵ Hence, we may conclude that for Deleuze, language is primarily pragmatic, and pragmatics is empirical. Ronald Bogue clarifies the first equation between language and pragmatics: “For Deleuze and Guattari, language is a form of action, and linguistic regularities

¹²³ *Dialogues II*, p. 58.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

are merely partial components of power structures that enforce regular patterns of practice. When writers subvert phonetic, syntactic and semantic conventions, they activate lines of continuous variation that are immanent within language and thereby disrupt the regular functioning of fixed power relations.”¹²⁶ By regarding language as inherently containing power and potentialities to act, Deleuze and Guattari simultaneously enable it to be applicable to reality and politics. Thus, when providing a reading of Kafka, they contend that literature is fundamentally political in the sense that there is always a collective machine that invents new usages and functions of language and creates lines of flight to escape from the power structure of politics.

Having established the relation between language and pragmatics, one question remains to be solved: how can pragmatics be identified with empiricism? To understand this, it is necessary to examine the writings of James, who treats a specific kind of empiricism—radical empiricism—as the foundation of pragmatics.

2. William James: Radical Thinker of Radical Empiricism

In the posthumously published *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, a series of related and continuous articles starting from the ambitious essay, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” published first in 1904, the late James vigorously challenges the rationalist tradition of philosophy, which, since Kant, asserts the existence of such an entity as consciousness that hangs above all objects. James finds the bipolar relation between consciousness and objects in Kantian philosophy problematic, and writes, “the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded.”¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 5.

¹²⁷ William James, “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?,” in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 3.

The solution to this dualism between subject and object, according to James, is to replace rationalism with a revised kind of empiricism. The first step he takes is to reject the concrete form of consciousness as first principle that precedes all materials, as posited by Kantian philosophy. As James writes, “I believe that ‘consciousness,’ when once it has evaporated to this estate of pure diaphaneity, is on the point of disappearing altogether. It is the name of a nonentity, and has no right to a place among first principles.”¹²⁸ However, James adds, this does not mean that consciousness does not exist; rather, consciousness is regarded as a “function.” James continues, “I mean only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function.”¹²⁹ By switching the role of consciousness from entity to function, James undoes the contrast between objects and thoughts in terms of the way they come into being, and, consequently, creates a homogeneous monism by claiming “There is, I mean, no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made.”¹³⁰

After denying the Kantian dualistic model, James then presents his materialistic empiricism that sees the aboriginal world as composed of “pure experience”:

if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff “pure experience,” then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is part of pure

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

experience; one of its “terms” becomes the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the other becomes the object known.¹³¹

James’s thesis provides a full picture of his metaphysics in which several themes can be discovered. First, what there is, is pure experience or stuff, which is essentially material.

Consciousness, then, is nothing but a recording machine that “is only a witness of happenings in time, in which it plays no part [...] Consciousness as such is entirely impersonal—‘self’ and its activities belong to the content.”¹³² By claiming a materialistic empiricism, James locates his metaphysics in the concrete world, a position that anticipates Deleuze and Guattari’s.

Metaphysics, for them, is not grounded in platonic philosophy, which conditions all beings with the ultimate and static form or *idée* that exists transcendentally. Following a Spinozian metaphysics of immanence, Deleuze contends that universals exist in the univocal sense that each mode contains the entirety of the essence of God, part of which exists in a potential or virtual way, until the modes explicate and actualize themselves. Thus, the discussion of the universal is strictly confined within “this world” rather than a transcendent sphere. There is always a “thisness” in their reference to the world.

Secondly, James’s thesis offers no indication of the nature of experience, in other words, he does not confine experience within the scope of human beings. Stuff or pure experience is absolute, shared by all creatures. Last, James sketches a theory of relation that is two-fold: part of relation contributes to the formation of knowledge; the other part composes the object, which presupposes external quality.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

After outlining the fundamental argument of his metaphysical point of view, James provides specific examples of the characteristics of experience as the condition of his pragmatism, and it is in this regard that Deleuze's equation of pragmatics and empiricism can be understood.

For James, pure experience is always a multiplicity that contains immediate sensation of the experience, from which we do not "deduce" anything; rather, we reach a status of multiplicity by the action of adding—it is by nature conjunctive:

Experience, I believe, has no such inner duplicity, and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition—the addition, to a given concrete piece of it, of other sets of experiences, in connection with which severally its use or function may be of two different kinds.¹³³

James's statement is based on his critique of Humean empiricism, which he terms "ordinary empiricism," an empiricism that "has always shown a tendency to do away with the connections of things, and to insist most on the disjunction."¹³⁴ The insistence on the incoherent connections among objects typical of ordinary empiricism, especially those versions articulated by Hume and Mill, distinguishes it from radical empiricism. James proposes a radical version of empiricism to advance the projects of Hume and Mill, defining his empiricism as follows:

I give the name of "radical empiricism" to my *Weltanschauung*. Empiricism is known as the opposite of rationalism. Rationalism tends to emphasize universals and to make wholes prior to parts in the order of logic as well as in that of being. Empiricism, on the contrary, lays the explanatory stress upon the part, the element, the individual, and treats

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the whole as a collection and the universal as an abstraction [...] To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as “real” as anything else in the system.* Elements may indeed be redistributed, the original placing of things getting corrected, but a real place must be found for every kind of thing experienced, whether term or relation, in the final philosophic arrangement.¹³⁵

James’s critical account of Hume revealed in this manifesto of radical empiricism seems especially astute, when seen in the light of Deleuze’s reading of Hume. One particularly ambiguous argument in Hume’s philosophy of mind is his treatment of Nature. The functions of objects depend on the law of nature, but with no specific consideration of whether there are relations among objects themselves. Relations, thus, are presented only in terms of the system of mind, and are rarely treated from the perspective of objects in nature. Deleuze recognizes this fact in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*:

We must give the object of the idea an existence which does not depend on the senses. The objects of knowledge must truly be objects. To that end, the principles of association do not suffice, no more than the vividness of impressions or a mere belief does. The system is complete when “a seeming interruption” of an appearance to the senses is surpassed “by [the] feigning [of] a continu’d being which may fill those intervals, and preserve a perfect and entire identity to our perceptions.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

¹³⁶ *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 80.

Based on James's and Deleuze's writings on Hume, we can conclude that James advances the aims of ordinary empiricism by offering a philosophy that accounts not only for the mind, but also for objects, both of which are grounded by the insistence on the externality of relations. And in fact, only through this move can the concept of pure experience or stuff be possible. We know that James considers pure experience as homogeneous and undistinguished stuff that infinitely connects with others. Such is the primal status of experience: "The instant field of the present is always experience in its 'pure' state, plain unqualified actuality, a simple that, as yet undifferentiated into thing and thought, and only virtually classifiable as objective fact or as some one's opinion about fact."¹³⁷ James synthesizes and homogenizes everything in the world, but it seems that this state, the "unqualified actuality," only refers to the original and actual state of experience. Like Hume, James shares a view that while claiming the sameness of content in the stuff, there are still potentialities of individualization in it: "I have now to say that there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made. There are as many stuffs as there are 'natures' in the things experienced."¹³⁸

James's radical empiricism, therefore, advances ordinary empiricism by reconsidering not only human nature but the rest of nature as well. His endeavor to unify and homogenize everything in order to depict an original condition of the world of experience to some extent anticipates the metaphysics of Deleuze and Guattari more so than does the empiricism of Hume. This being said, James does not give a full account of the nature of relation and that is why Hume's theory of relation still plays a very important role in Deleuze's work with Guattari, especially in his theory of affect. For this reason, it is important, I believe, to consider the

¹³⁷ *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 74.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

empiricism of both Hume and James in understanding Deleuze and Guattari's thought in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Conclusion

From Deleuze's earliest monograph, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, we observe his fascination with the concept of affectivity, and his engagement of this concept with that of relation. In order for affectivity to be possible, Hume contends, it is necessary for relations not to be part of ideas. In this chapter I have provided a reading of the theory of relation in the empiricism of Hume and James. Between Hume/James and Spinoza, we may say that Deleuze has already shown a blueprint not only of his later theory of affect but also of such essential concepts as rhizome, flow and becoming. What needs to be investigated is how and why Deleuze revises those elements he takes from the thought of Spinoza and Hume in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

CHAPTER 3

YEAR 1980: AFFECT UNBOUND – RHIZOME, FLOW, BECOMING

Deleuze's philosophical journey as an individual author temporarily ends in 1970, with the publication of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* and the second, significantly enlarged edition of *Proust and Signs*. These are the last of Deleuze's exegeses of other philosophers and writers before he embarks on the collaborative project with psychoanalyst and social activist Félix Guattari that will eventuate in four jointly authored works, including the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), Deleuze often pushes the limits of conventional philosophical writing, but in his collaboration with Guattari, those limits are thoroughly transgressed. Deleuze and Guattari's collage of idiosyncratic concepts drawn from domains as diverse as biology, metallurgy, geology, linguistics, anthropology, mathematics and the arts represents a genuine departure from standard philosophical practice, inspired as it is by the collaborative process of inventing concepts, which, as Deleuze and Guattari indicate in the opening sentence of *A Thousand Plateaus*, renders the two writers a multiplicity: "The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd."¹³⁹ Yet despite such a creative departure from the conventions of philosophical discourse, Deleuze in his work with Guattari continues to pursue properly philosophical goals. As Jean-Luc Nancy observes in 2003, Deleuze's endeavor throughout his career is not to abandon but to reinvent

¹³⁹ Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 3.

metaphysics: “there is the very large Heideggerian filiation, which must be extended all the way to Deleuze, without any paradox, I believe where the end of metaphysics means the invention, the reinvention of metaphysics.”¹⁴⁰ In the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, that reinvention entails a transformation of the metaphysical systems Deleuze engaged in his earlier studies of other philosophers, especially those of Spinoza, Hume and James.

My effort in this chapter will be to explicate three key concepts in Deleuze and Guattari’s reinvented metaphysics and to trace their antecedents to corresponding concepts in Spinoza, Hume and James. The three concepts and their corresponding counterparts are:

1. Humean/Jamesian external relations \Rightarrow rhizome
2. Jamesian stuff/Spinozian attributes \Rightarrow flow
3. affect \Rightarrow becoming

These conceptual transformations do not represent a mere rhetorical play of words; rather, they are indicative of a development in Deleuze’s thought that emerges steadily in the course of his philosophical inquiries.

In discussing the concepts of rhizome, flow and becoming as they are set forth in of the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and in considering their relation to their antecedents in Spinoza, Hume and James, I make three arguments. First, the Jamesian theory of relation, discussed in the previous chapter, which regards relations as external to their terms and bearing the function of conjunctions, is advanced in *A Thousand Plateaus* with much more intensity, in that the rhizome entails infinite conjunctions that bind all things indifferently. Second, to make possible the rhizome’s power of infinite connection, Deleuze enhances James’s

¹⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 46.

radical empiricism by imbuing it with temporal and kinetic elements, a theoretical move that eventuates in the invention of the concept of flow, which is a hybridity of matter and concepts as a homogeneous moving stream composed of stuff. I argue that by establishing flow as the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's metaphysics in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the original Spinozian metaphysical schema, presented in chapter 1, is changed to such a degree that the attributes of Thought and Extension can no longer be strictly confined to the order of ideas and bodies; rather, they become completely unbound and can be freely connected to any other object, be it body or the associated idea. And third, after transforming the structure of Spinozian attributes, Deleuze releases affect from its constraints as well. Affect is no longer simply a certain combination of body and idea that moves independently among ideas or bodies. In Deleuze and Guattari's metaphysical system, affect can now freely take on the activity of becoming and move—without any biological or structural limitations—towards the minor pole of a power duality. Thus, Deleuze establishes a new meaning of affect: it is the becoming itself that moves between any two entities: "Affects are becomings."¹⁴¹

Rhizome: The $n - 1$ Experiment

As argued in the previous chapter, in his early work Deleuze actively engages the metaphysical debates over whether relations should be considered external to their terms or internal. The kernel of this classical problem concerns the difference between metaphysical empiricism and metaphysical rationalism. Deleuze adopts the former position by elaborating on

¹⁴¹ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 250.

the philosophies of two of its most prominent philosophers, Hume and James, who insist upon the *a posteriori* nature of relation as a ground for the construction of any system. Yet despite sharing this view of relation, Hume and James have rather different perspectives on empiricism in general. Hume believes that given the externality of relation, there are two kinds of relations in accordance with two kinds of Nature—Nature and human nature—and thus such externality is divided into groups. Unlike Hume, James makes no differentiation between Nature and human nature, instead positing the existence of what he calls “pure stuff,” a term he uses to designate experience before its differentiation into specific things or ideas. Thus, the range over which relation applies is broader than in Hume, since it includes connections in both Nature and human nature.

However, in this section, I would argue that neither Hume’s nor James’s philosophy of relation is completely adopted by Deleuze, as may be seen in his later collaborative works with Guattari. We notice that in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the question of relation is no longer explicitly discussed; what replaces it is the new concept of the rhizome. The rhizome, I believe, can be understood as a revision of James’s theory of relations immersed in pure stuff. It seems, however, that Deleuze rejects the view that pure stuff is something that exists only in the beginning, before any division takes place. For Deleuze and Guattari, relation always forms connections between stuff and possesses an impetus to expand and develop. Hence, the concept of the rhizome serves as the central term of Deleuze’s inquiry into the problem of relation and represents the end point of a long philosophical investigation.

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of relation is addressed in the first plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they 1) introduce the method and function whereby a book should be constructed; 2) replace binary and bi-univocal logics with the logic of the rhizome; and 3)

commence the process of writing in a rhizomic fashion as they are composing the chapter. They provide six principles of the rhizome, and these principles mark a new understanding of relation as conjunctive, active and infinite.

1. *Logic of the Book*

To some extent, Deleuze and Guattari are not radical enough: they never deny the legitimacy of the existence of the things they oppose; and that is a consequence of their central practice of never presupposing any beginning or ending: it is always in the middle that anything starts. Or we may say, the *status quo* does not concern them; rather, it is the future that matters most, in that we need to make sure particles of becoming are emitted and lines of flight are moving.

Given this orientation in their thought, Deleuze and Guattari present three types of logic that function in the world: tree/arboreal logic; taproot logic; and rhizomic logic. They then demonstrate that the true logic of the world is one that is able to form an infinite number of conjunctions with no pre-established structures. The first example they offer of these three logics is that of the Book, which is an appropriate topic at the inception of their enterprise, since they are engaged in writing a book and since the question of language is one that bears especially on a central issue of *A Thousand Plateaus*—that of codes and decoding.

Platonic logic, the unitary vision of Ideas that dominant all beings, is termed “the classical book.”¹⁴² It signifies the logic of one eternal form that hovers over and haunts all matter, and thus generates a hierarchy of the spirit, with inert matter passively waiting for the

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

moment of life-giving light. Platonic logic is a tree whose trunk determines the fundamental process of its development. The most important characteristic—and also the foremost problematic—is that even though it produces representations built upon the content of nature, it affirms a simultaneous differentiation and distinction from nature, which serves as the key to the execution of its power: “The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do.”¹⁴³ The law that such classical logic relies on, according to the authors, is the binary logic that develops from one to two, two to four, *ad infinitum*. It is the necessary consequence of the Socratic *elenchus* that generates the crude version of dialectic through the form of dialogue.

Deleuze and Guattari then turn to a modified form of binary logic, that of “the radicle-system, or fascicular root,” in which “the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed.”¹⁴⁴ In the radicle-system, “an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development.”¹⁴⁵ Yet, even though such a logic is able to avoid the limitation of two and develop from the one to the multiple, for Deleuze and Guattari, it still does not reach the level of pure multiplicity, since a trunk still controls the multiple. The radicle-system is finally informed by the formula $n + 1$: there is always a One—the Platonic Idea, the Freudian father, and so on—that stratifies the multiple and places it under the dominance of the signifier. Hence, “The binary logic of dichotomy has simply been replaced by **biunivocal** relationships between successive circles. The pivotal taproot provides no better understanding of multiplicity than the dichotomous root.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5, emphasis added.

The problematic of binary logic, we may conclude, lies not in the multiple, but the static and dominating ONE that comes from nature but at the same time detaches itself from nature due to its human construction. In the quote above, the word “biunivocal” directly refers back to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, which is primarily grounded in the notion of the univocal.¹⁴⁷ But more than a decade later, as we see here, the concept of the univocal is no longer satisfactory, because of Spinoza’s doctrine of the existence of a single substance. What Deleuze and Guattari seek is a pure multiplicity that absolutely excludes any primary and dominant oneness. The term biunivocal is now associated with structuralism, Freudian psychoanalysis and linguistics. It becomes an imperfect concept that needs to be improved. And thus, Deleuze and Guattari introduce rhizomic logic.

The model that Deleuze and Guattari propose is a rhizome that freely develops in all dimensions and each of whose elements is able to connect to any other. The rhizome breaks the priority of structural limitations and demonstrates the rhizomic logic of the world. The central

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault considers the parting between Spinoza/Don Scotus and Deleuze even earlier. In his essay on Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, “*Theatricum Philosophicum*,” he contends that what marks such a division of thoughts lies in the different concentrations in multiplicity or univocity. For Scotus and Spinoza, substance or identity serves as the final point, whereas Deleuze employs the concept of univocity in order to manifest the irreducibility of difference. As Foucault puts it, “It is present in Deleuze’s texts—springing forth, dancing before us, in our midst; genital thought, intensive thought, affirmative thought, acategorical thought—each of these an unrecognizable face, a mask we have never seen before; differences we had no reason to expect but which nevertheless lead to the return, as masks of their masks, of Plato, Duns Scotus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, and all other philosophers. This is philosophy not as thought but as theater—a theater of mime with multiple, fugitive, and instantaneous scenes in which blind gestures signal to each other.” In Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, p. 367. Gary Gutting provides an astute commentary on this passage: “Foucault notes that, unlike Scotus and Spinoza, for whom univocity is a way of maintaining the fundamental unity (sameness) of being, Deleuze identifies being with difference. As a result, he cannot reduce the univocity of being to, say, Scotus’s general concept of being or Spinoza’s unity of substance.” Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 97.

theme is to develop a fundamental definition of nature that does not presuppose any subject, strata, or signification. Nonetheless, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is an undeniable fact that entities, be they concepts, things or logic, do exist in the world, and in their philosophical system, this status is tolerable; the key problem is how to situate these unsatisfactory existences in a suitable place where becomings, lines of flight, and affects are not hindered.

As far as the model of the rhizome is concerned—that of infinite unbounded relation—Deleuze and Guattari do have a special place reserved for it, with a reversal of order: instead of having the trunk or binary logic dominate the multiplicity, they suggest situating the ungrounded and free rhizomic multiplicity before the formation of the trunk. By such a reversal, Deleuze and Guattari maintain the factual aspect of the world and at the same time cancel the solemn power of the One. Multiplicity without One, that is the central definition of Deleuze and Guattari's new theory of relation, which can be expressed with the formula: $n-1$. Deleuze and Guattari remark, "the multiple *must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, but dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available—always $n-1$. Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted."¹⁴⁸ The italicized emphasis of "*must be made*" points toward Deleuze and Guattari's new adaptation of and concentration on pragmatics: the rhizome is always in the making so that the true nature of reality can be shown. The intentional move of subtracting the man-made or spiritual One marks the difference between the theory of relation outlined in Deleuze's studies of Spinoza and Hume and the theory of relation developed in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. And only by making relations in such a rhizomic way can we arrive at the true rhizome: "A system of this kind could

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

be called a rhizome. A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles.”¹⁴⁹

2. *How Does Relation Become Rhizome?*

In the empiricist theories of relation, especially the Humean model discussed in the previous chapter, relations, though bearing the characteristic of externality, remain, to some extent, passive. Recall that for Hume, relations of ideas come into being only after being acted upon by the principles of human nature, and this activity is indeed the primary function of such principles. The passivity of relations, if one considers the central themes of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical system as a whole, is incompatible with the positive power or force they adopt (and which Deleuze had already embraced in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*). And we can discern a revision of the notion of relation in *A Thousand Plateaus*: relation, or rhizome, is now endowed with an active power to reach out to the external world and form connections to all kinds of entities. Deleuze and Guattari list six principles, organized in four categories, by which the rhizome engages in an active deployment of power. These principles, I contend, can be regarded as an extension and improvement of the ordinary empiricist theory of relation.

The first two principles of the rhizome are presented together, the principles of connection and heterogeneity. The rhizome constantly extends its roots to others, and forms a powerful and non-structural map: “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.”¹⁵⁰ The notion of “anything other” stands out as an essential term in that it suggests

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the possibility that things belonging to any category can be included in the map. Deleuze and Guattari provide some examples: “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.”¹⁵¹

The third principle of the rhizome is multiplicity, and Deleuze and Guattari make explicit the difference between the multiple and multiplicity, or—to express it via formulas—between $n + 1$ and $n - 1$. The principle addresses the question of whether there should be a transcendental One that governs and rules the manifold, the plethora and the multiple. The number “ n ” in Deleuze and Guattari’s formulas refers to the mathematical polynomial degree n that denotes a degree unknown. What matters is whether, after the emergence of a multiplicity of unknown dimensionality, an *invention* of an ultimate transcendental One, by human beings, comes into being in accordance with the natural process of multiplicity formation. The task of the writer, consequently, should be to generate such a multiplicity with the highest dimensions of intensity and the least effort to establish a monarchical One. They adopt as a pragmatic slogan for writers, “Write to the n th power, the $n - 1$ power, write with slogans: make rhizomes, roots, never plant! Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point!”¹⁵² Forming a multiplicity is the necessary consequence of a rhizomic conjunction. It entails a dynamic interaction between the rhizome and the outside: “the wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else—with the wind, an animal, human beings.”¹⁵³ A rhizomic multiplicity powerfully forms a towards-the-infinite movement of expansion and connection, but also of disconnection.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

This disconnection is the “cut,” that which naturally leads to the fourth principle, that of assignifying rupture. The excoriation of the subjectifying and signifying One directly fosters the possibility of the free detachment and connection of parts. Each component of a rhizomic multiplicity can be joined or cut with no impact on the entirety. To explain further, the rhizomic multiplicity is a two-directional composite that is capable of both increasing and decreasing segments. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari seem to incorporate into their model the Spinozian sense of plasticity that varies based on the affects acted and acting:

A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines [...] Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees.¹⁵⁴

A marked vitalism informs Deleuze and Guattari’s depiction of rhizomic multiplicity. The tips of roots constantly reach out to the outside, the “anything other” without distinctions, and indefinitely put the border in variation, either by extension or subtraction. The authors also discuss the ideal shape of a multiplicity: a plane. All multiplicities, according to Deleuze and Guattari, should be placed on a plane that is able to contain all rhizomic relations and non-differentiated things, so that the *n* dimensions of a rhizome can be enclosed: “All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this ‘plane’ increase with the number of connections that are made on it.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The plane of consistency is among the most difficult ideas in Deleuze and Guattari's work. It is an abstract plane that includes all multiplicities, affects and becomings, which are of the highest intensity. For Deleuze and Guattari, the plane should function as a map or as a surrealist work of art produced via the process of "decalcomania" (a technique that involves pressing paint between sheets of paper). The fifth and sixth principles, cartography and decalcomania, then, together, elucidate the characteristics of the rhizome as a plane. These two principles intersect with the preceding theme of reversing the hierarchical power between the dominant One and the dominated multiple. The One, bearing the functions of determining, tracing and stratifying, exists not as the foundation of the multiple, but as a secondary procedure that finds its necessity of existence in nature. Tracing, or the trunk of the tree, presupposes something already made, coded, ready-made, and simply uses certain reproductive powers to generate identical things; the map or decalcomania, by contrast, does not suppose any fixed lines. The makers of such devices or artworks only engage in experimentation: "what distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious."¹⁵⁶ The coding process, the correction or cancellation of difference or errors, for Deleuze and Guattari, should appear only after the experiment: "the tracing should always be put back on the map."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. *Experimenting Experiments*

How should one conceive of the temporal dimension of a rhizome? Or, where should one begin?

For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomic thinking should involve no subjectified beginning or ending, for it will necessarily lead to a hierarchical view—from top to bottom, from left to right, and so on. On the contrary, the point at which we jump into the flow of things is already in the middle of the process of infinite and rhizomic connection, through which assemblages are formed via a process of addition. Deleuze and Guattari liken the function of the rhizome to the formation of a plateau, as described by Gregory Bateson: “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word ‘plateau’ to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end.”¹⁵⁸ A plateau, thus, always starts in the middle, and proceeds at an accelerating speed not towards a totality or an end, but toward another place that is always a middle, *ad infinitum*. The temporality functioning in this mechanism is infinite and all-encompassing, marking every possible beginning or ending as “ongoing.”

Not only do the two philosophers lay out the metaphysical meaning of rhizomic conjunctions, but they also incorporate this mechanism in their own writings. Writing, they state, should not proceed in the pattern of history, which entails “a sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus.”¹⁵⁹ They contrast the kind of writing exemplified by such

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

authors as Marcel Schwob (*The Children's Crusade*), Andrzejewski (*The Gates of Paradise*), along with Kleist, Lenz, and certain Anglo-American writers, with the writings of History, which they contend are "always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads."¹⁶⁰ The styles of Marcel Schwob's and Jerzy Andrzejewski's fictions have one characteristic in common: their language is in a constant flow, and always moves towards an "immense outside," and such a flow, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is a result of the collaboration of two machines, "a collective assemblage of enunciation, [and] a machinic assemblage of desire,"¹⁶¹ which are intertwined with each other and together generate the movement of writing.

In addition to describing this way of writing, Deleuze and Guattari provide us lively examples of it, not by quoting from the writings of other writers, but by directly providing pragmatic evidence of this kind of writing in their own text. One explicit example concerns the way they display the six principles of the rhizome. They are:

1 and 2. Principles of connection and heterogeneity.

3. Principle of multiplicity.

4. Principle of asignifying rupture.

5 and 6. Principle of cartography and decalcomania.

Deleuze scholars generally concentrate only on the meanings of these six principles, without paying attention to the way in which the principles are presented. Why 1 *and* 2, 5 *and* 6, at the beginning and end of the list? I argue the two "ands" are Deleuze and Guattari's intentional presentation of the rhizome: they are already combining heterogeneous bits of

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

“anything other,” which include everything, even in the six principles of the rhizome. Writing in *A Thousand Plateaus*, thus, has a two-fold meaning: first, it is an endeavor to make explicit the rhizomic logic of the world; second, it is an experiment in such logic that displays its functionality as pure experimentation.

Flow: Finding a Vision

The rhizome, then, exemplifies the logic of a multiplicity that infinitely connects everything with everything, regardless of its nature or quality, so that a tree can be joined to an idea, or a hammer may be conjoined with a concept. What is behind this new perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, I argue, is a reevaluation of the ontology of relation. While maintaining the externality of relations, as proposed by the empiricists Hume and James, Deleuze and Guattari see limitations in those philosophies—specifically, in the boundary Hume draws between mental ideas and things in nature; and in the temporality of stuff in James. Hence, in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of relation, the rhizomic relation can connect everything with everything (a response to Hume) and it is always ongoing, in the middle of an infinite process (a response to the Jamesian problem of temporality).

The problem I address in this section is that of developing a vision of the concrete shape of a world functioning under the logic of the rhizome. Near the end of the introduction of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write, “It’s not easy to see things in the middle [...] try it, you’ll see that everything changes. It is not easy to see the grass in things and in words.”¹⁶² Given the invisible and virtual characteristics of the rhizome, what are we supposed to see? In

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

this section, I intend to establish a bridge between rhizomic logic and the rhizomic world, by introducing Deleuze and Guattari's vision of this world as "flow."

Deleuze had been interested in the concept of flow since his early years, but he starts to develop it fully only after collaborating with Guattari. It appears at the beginning of the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Anti-Oedipus*, which establishes the tone of their entire project of replacing traditional Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis with schizoanalysis, the function of which is to unify everything as a rhizome and treat everything else as materials. This is the way in which Deleuze and Guattari *see*, and in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they invite the reader to see everything through the rhizomic logic of the unitary flow.

In addition to focusing on this often-neglected concept of flow, I will draw a connection between Deleuze's studies of the Spinozian metaphysical system, which I examined in the first chapter, and the concept of flow, in order to show how Deleuze transforms Spinoza's metaphysics in his work with Guattari. I argue that Deleuze and Guattari overturn the Spinozian system which clearly establishes a hierarchy, though one that remains immanent. Deleuze and Guattari are particularly dissatisfied with the existence of attributes or the qualities of God, which categorize and thus demarcate things, so that the connections among them are related in the structural form of associations, instead of conjunctions. Flow, thus, represents an effort to break free of the constraints of Spinoza's metaphysics so that everything can freely join with every other thing without limitations. This is the ultimate function and spirit of the rhizome.

1. Retrieving *Anti-Oedipus*

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari outline a universalism of desiring production functioning as an ontological prelude to *A Thousand Plateaus*; under the dominance of capitalism, everything necessarily becomes subject to a process of unification in which productions are immediately consumed and recorded. Thus, the traditional Marxist cycle of production, distribution, exchange and consumption now appears to have accelerated to such an extent that these processes merge in a single process of production that transforms the entire logic of classical capitalism. This phenomenon, according to the authors, echoes schizophrenic experience: the demarcations between self and other, outside and inside, nature and society no longer exist.

Anti-Oedipus begins with a direct expression of Deleuze and Guattari's project: to determine how a machine works. They open the book with this sentence: "Everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones."¹⁶³ This statement is grounded in Deleuze's rejection of metaphors. For him, there are no metaphors, only inexact terms used to combine with other words in order to describe something real. The equation drawn between two objects, Deleuze and Guattari remind us, denotes homogeneous functions between them, rather than a transcendent identity or representation. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze clarifies the seemingly metaphorical uses of words in his own writings: "There are no literal words, neither are there metaphors (all metaphors are sullied words, or else make them so). There are only inexact words to designate something exactly. Let us create extraordinary words, on condition that they be put to the most

¹⁶³ *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 1.

ordinary use and that the entity they designate be made to exist in the same way as the most common object.”¹⁶⁴

So, what is a “real” machine? According to Deleuze and Guattari, “a machine may be defined as a system of interruptions or breaks.”¹⁶⁵ For them, every object presupposes a flow generated by its essential function of desiring production. When one object tries to connect with another one, it interrupts the continuous flow of the other in order to combine with it and thus together form a new flow. This interruption, they add, is neither destructive nor temporal; it always immediately entails a connection with another machine after a break. There is a repetitive dynamism such that “every machine is a machine of a machine. The machine produces an interruption of the flow only insofar as it is connected to another machine that supposedly produces this flow.”¹⁶⁶

Implicit in this description of the machine as something that produces flows and interruptions, is that flows precede interruptions. As the authors affirm, “Every ‘object’ presupposes the continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object.”¹⁶⁷ Flow is the original and ideal status of the world. Flow is the process of production, which is not based on the Freudian or Lacanian principle that identifies desire as essentially a lack: “Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces. Lack is a countereffect of desire; it is deposited, distributed, vacuolized within a real that is natural and social.”¹⁶⁸ Desire, in Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis, always reveals itself as an excess in search of an exit. Every machine has

¹⁶⁴ *Dialogues II*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

its specific name based on what it is, but at the same time all machines share one and the same name: desiring-machine. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is the fuel of the machines that makes possible the processes of producing flows and interruptions. Within the desiring-machines, there is an inherent tendency to connect, and such tendency drives a machine to cut a functioning flow and link itself to other flows. Thus, they write, “there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow [...] Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows.”¹⁶⁹

It is not difficult to understand desire as the drive of production in living creatures. However, how can one conceive of lifeless objects as machines that produce flows fueled by desire? In other words, how can objects have desires at all? These questions invite us to reconsider the definition of desire in Deleuze and Guattari’s vocabulary. For them, especially for Deleuze who had been influenced by the thoughts of Spinoza throughout his philosophical career, the genesis of desire depends on one’s capabilities of affecting and being affected. In the Spinozian system, all traditional classifications of being are invalid; the only criterion for determining being is the plasticity of body and mind. Desire, or *conatus*, is gradually formed as a mode is constantly affected by other modes and thus comes to realize certain commonalities between itself and others. Hence, in the Spinozian metaphysical picture, everything, regardless of categorization, inherently contains the potential of experiencing affects from the outside, and consequently the potential of forming desire. Deleuze lucidly demonstrates the connection between affect and desire in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, where he writes, “Any affection whatever is said to determine our *conatus* or essence. *Conatus*, as determined by an affection or feeling we actually experience, is called ‘desire’; as such it is necessarily

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

accompanied by consciousness [...] As long as our capacity to be affected remains exercised by passive affections, our *conatus* is determined by passions, or, as Spinoza puts it, our desires themselves ‘are born’ from passion.”¹⁷⁰ The assimilation of Spinozian metaphysics serves as the foundation of the monism in *Anti-Oedipus* that regards everything capable of undergoing affects as machines of desiring production.

2. Searching for a Definition of Flow

Having outlined the function of machines as producing flows and interruptions, and the nature of desire as the power that conditions that function, I now provide a definition of flow, which is not explicitly given in *Anti-Oedipus*. There are two angles to consider in the concept of flow: as homogeneous reality produced by desiring machines; and as linear *hyle* (an Aristotelian term often loosely translated as “matter”).

Deleuze and Guattari contend that everything produced is real, by which they mean a unification of both the conceptual and the material; the productions are non-differentiable in terms of quality: “If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product.”¹⁷¹ The question regarding flow is not “what is it,” but rather “is it produced,” thus the nature of the flow is a unified hybrid of all kinds of production, be it conceptual or material. Every element in a flow maintains a non-hierarchical and

¹⁷⁰ *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 231.

¹⁷¹ *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 26.

undistinguished status with regard to all other elements. And Deleuze and Guattari draw this conclusion by viewing the world through a schizophrenic lens.

The primary theme of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, as indicated in the subtitles of the two volumes, is “capitalism and schizophrenia,” and their object is to show that these two seemingly unrelated phenomena share the same functions. Unlike Freud who, after analyzing the writings of the paranoiac and schizophrenic Judge Daniel Schreber, concluded that psychotics are not analyzable, Deleuze and Guattari invite us to consider schizophrenia as a means of understanding our world. In their view, capitalism is a schizophrenic type of production: in capitalism, there is no longer any distinction between man and nature, industry and nature, and so on. All things are created as if they were homogeneous: “there is no specifically schizophrenic phenomenon or entity; schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines, universal primary production as ‘the essential reality of man and nature.’”¹⁷²

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, we see an extension of this view of flow as a plethora of everything that exists, whether concrete or abstract, which can be discerned in the series of examples given by the authors: “lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations.”¹⁷³ Hence I conclude that the vision of flow articulated in *Anti-Oedipus* persists in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where it functions as the ground of the concept of the rhizome.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷³ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 9.

Affect, After All

1. *Fear and Unpopularity*

“‘It has to go,’ Gregor’s sister cries out, ‘that’s the only way, Father. You just have to try to let go of the notion that this thing is Gregor. The real disaster is that we believed this for so long. But how could it be Gregor? If it were Gregor, it would have realized a long time ago that it just isn’t possible for human beings to live beside such a creature, and it would have gone away on its own. We still would have been lacking a brother but we could have been able to go on living and honoring his memory. But now we have this beast tormenting us; it drives away our lodgers and apparently intends to take over the entire apartment and have us sleep in the gutter.’”¹⁷⁴

Near the end of *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor emerges from his room, drawn to the sound of his sister’s violin playing. His sister stops playing and expresses her long-repressed feelings in these cruel words. Gregor’s physical transformation into an insect has created a “real disaster” for the family that keeps “tormenting us.” What is surprising is his sister’s hidden fear of Gregor. She condemns Gregor to death solely in order that the family may “go on living.”

Metamorphosis, we realize at the end of the novella, can generate great terror, and such a fear of becoming-other finds a comprehensive solution in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of minoritarian becoming. For them, every entity in the rhizomic flow necessarily bears a qualitative potentiality of transforming the powerful, static, and hierarchical into the minor other

¹⁷⁴ Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, trans. Susan Bernovsky, ed. Mark M. Anderson (New York: Norton, 2016), p. 42.

under dominance and oppression. Such a process in no way follows the trace of semiotic structures, political institutions, family relations, and so on; rather, it is completely random and heterogeneous, due to the rhizomic logic it puts into effect. In a becoming-minor, whether voluntary or involuntary, one always takes flight by moving away from the strata of dominant forms of power on both individual and social levels, and as a result, such a becoming-minor is feared and opposed by majoritarian powers. This fear, so evident in *The Metamorphosis*, is also evident in the film *Willard*, an analysis of which Deleuze and Guattari open their plateau on becoming. “I recall the fine film *Willard* (1972, Daniel Mann). A ‘B’ movie perhaps, but a fine unpopular film: unpopular because the heroes are rats.”¹⁷⁵ The film’s unpopularity stems from the same fear exhibited by Gregor’s sister: the majority’s fear of being with and embarking on becoming, a fear that induces disgust, alienation and despair. The film’s unpopularity, for Deleuze and Guattari, has nothing to do with any aesthetic judgement: it is simply an instance of fear, a resistance to the call of the inner quality of every being, and at the same time an affirmation of the happening in the middle of an ongoing process of becoming the heterogeneous.

The intriguing concept of becoming deserves careful consideration, and in this section, I will outline the principal features of becoming, with specific attention directed to the function of affect in the process of becoming. As I will show, affect is ultimately to be understood as the degree of intensity of any subject. It is a recording of becoming at any point in the middle of the process.

¹⁷⁵ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 233.

2. *Ways of Repression, Ways of Becoming*

The phenomena of becoming, especially becoming-animal, have long been recognized, and the fear of becoming has led to numerous ways of explaining and inhibiting it. In the plateau on becoming, Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate the failings of these theories (specifically, those of naturalism, structuralism, and psychoanalysis) and insist on every entity's becoming minoritarian. Becoming, they argue, rather than following arboreal logic and developing according to a series of arbitrary significations and determinations, always takes place via involution—the process in which both the opposing poles involved in a becoming tend towards the molecular and imperceptible. Becoming does not presuppose any blueprint or structural plan; it is a purely random phenomenon whose potentiality is triggered by any circumstance.

Very early in this plateau, Deleuze and Guattari indirectly hint that the study of becoming between two heterogeneous species is a study of relation, and such an endeavor is possible only if relation can be studied; in other words, as I showed in the previous chapter, relation should be detachable from the terms it connects; it should be treated as external. Regarding the mysterious relationships between different species, Deleuze and Guattari first present the naturalist and evolutionist traditions. The fundamental deficiency in those theories lies in their attachments to a philosophical ground that “defined itself in terms of genealogy, kinship, descent, and filiation.”¹⁷⁶ The direct and detrimental consequence of this biological model of filiation, is the incapability of accounting for inter-structural or inter-kingdom cases of heterogeneous becomings. This model is implicit in traditional natural history and Darwinian evolution, both of which emphasize the identity of entities and their conceptualization in terms of representation

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

and analogy. As regards the traditional domain of natural history that precedes the modern discipline of biology formulated in the nineteenth century, Deleuze and Guattari assert that: “natural history conceives of the relationships between animals in two ways: series and structure.”¹⁷⁷ A series always evaluates relationships based on degrees of perfection through the method of resemblance, or the degree to which a given animal bears resemblance to the fundamental principle governing its species. Deleuze and Guattari term this approach “analogy of proportion.”¹⁷⁸ As for the second type, structure is developed in order to solve the mysterious relations between different species, based on which different species are evaluated in terms of the degree of similarity, and thus Deleuze and Guattari call it “analogy of proportionality.”¹⁷⁹ Although the mechanisms of series and structure are most evident in natural history and significantly modified in Darwinian evolution, in both domains the final result is that “Nature is conceived as an enormous *mimesis*.”¹⁸⁰ And although it might be thought that the fundamentals of natural history have long been superseded, Deleuze and Guattari show that the mechanisms of series and structure endure in Jungian psychoanalysis and the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. In Jung, the theory of the archetype engages an analogical series linking animals in a relation of “a resembles b, b resembles c,” and so on, whereas in Lévi-Strauss, relations between animals are established through homology (“a is to b as c is to d”).

The Lévi-Straussian theory of homological relation, for Deleuze and Guattari, though it points out the defect in the Jungian series, which situates the entire process of becoming solely in the imagination, still presupposes the reality or fixed identity of the terms of the two parties as

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

two components of a relation. Instead of asserting the real existence of such terms as man and animals, Deleuze and Guattari associate reality with the relation: it is becoming, not the participants of a becoming, that is real. The terms are always subject to infinite deterritorialization and can never maintain a static and fixed meaning: “Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become.”¹⁸¹

3. A Biography of Becoming

Becoming represents Deleuze and Guattari’s reflection on the Spinozian concept of modes. Their effort is to reframe the Spinozian triad of substance, attributes and modes in terms of one unitary and all-encompassing plane. Hence, even though they devote considerable space to introducing the Spinozian concepts of mode and speed, such an introduction is by no means rudimentary; rather, it is a reintroduction of the central schema of Spinozian philosophy, after a thorough elimination of all structural, theological and conceptual limitations. Eventually, Deleuze and Guattari, in a radical fashion, demolish every concrete entity and establish a new *vision* in which only affect persists. Becoming bears the essential function of deterritorializing the qualitative, molar and static forms of existence, translating and transmitting everything into a single domain of affect.

There are always two or three elements in a becoming, depending on the degree of abstraction of the terms: a molar or powerful pole, a minor or dominated pole towards which the other one becomes, and a relation—external and independent of these terms—which designates

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

this process. Several examples are provided by Deleuze and Guattari: (man-) becoming-woman, (human-) becoming-animal, (adult-) becoming-child, (substance-) becoming-imperceptible, and so on. Each pole of a becoming, though always appearing as a singular noun, is a multiplicity without a transcendental signifier, the “*n-I*” discussed earlier. Deleuze and Guattari oppose the reductionist, psychoanalytic interpretation of animals, in which animals, no matter what their number, always represent the lone figure of the father or mother, and argue that one should never treat the number of any animal as singular—the number always denotes the qualitative dimensions of the rhizome. Hence, Freud’s notorious reduction of the seven wolves in the wolf-man’s dream, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “was already decided from the very beginning that animals could serve only to represent coitus between parents, or, conversely, be represented by coitus between parents.”¹⁸² The fundamental failing of the psychoanalytic understanding of neurosis lies in its refusal to recognize that wolves travel in packs, and thus one wolf necessarily involves a multiplicity composed of other wolves of the pack.

When we move from the “One or Many Wolves” plateau to the plateau on becoming, we can easily notice a broad expansion of the objects subject to becoming: not only wolves and animals, but everything exists as a multiplicity, functioning in the mode of an animal pack. But such a pack should not be understood as homogeneous, as one might construe a group composed simply of wolves; in the ideal function, the pack is a heterogeneous group of completely heterogeneous species or beings, a cut of a flow. Deleuze and Guattari consistently remind us that the mechanism of such heterogeneous combination is not one of filiations: to be completely heterogeneous, to exist as the metaphysical flow, a rhizomic conjunction should be so powerful that it constitutes not a sexual reproduction, but a “symbiosis,” which conditions the infinite

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

connections through contagious alliance: “Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance.”¹⁸³

Each member of such a contagious multiplicity, thus, is quantitatively irreducible and functions as a dimension of power or affect. For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming always contains a certain magnetic or magic power that forcibly enables the movement from strata to molecules, from the powerful to the powerless. This power is essentially contagious, and fueled by the number of dimensions of a pack: “Schools, bands, herds, populations are not inferior social forms; they are affects and powers, involutions that grip every animal in a becoming just as powerful as that of the human being with the animal.”¹⁸⁴ In addition, the power of becoming, the contagious attractiveness of the pack, is now termed “affect,” but with a definition of affect that differs from that of the Spinozian metaphysical system: “the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic: it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel.”¹⁸⁵ Multiplicity is in contrast to the one, the subject, the ascribable person, and thus cannot be traced to and located within any particular entity (the father, the transcendental signifier). It cancels the possibility of positing the question of “which one?” Affect is now only the recording of the qualitative force that constantly changes and marks the variations of the dimensionality of the population, increasing or decreasing via the mechanism of contagion and epidemic.

Belonging to the group of French philosophers who refuse to privilege identity over difference, Deleuze and Guattari delineate another principle of becoming that ensures difference within each multiplicity. They propose the concept of demonology: a monstrous or demonic

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

creature always steers the movement of a pack/multiplicity, as the anomalous that bears the uttermost power or affect. They state, “where there is multiplicity, you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with that individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal.”¹⁸⁶ The core of this principle lies in the condition that a multiplicity must be given, so that the “exceptional individual” can stand out by comparing its qualitative power to that of others. Hence for Deleuze and Guattari, the way the lone wolf exists is not through a psychoanalytic reduction, but by leading the population “on the sidelines of the pack,” because of “the higher Power (Puissance) of the band.”¹⁸⁷

Being situated on the sidelines, the authors clarify, by no means entails “abnormality,” or deviation from the common and identical, for such a construal posits the demon as individual, specific, and endowed with fixed characteristics; rather, the higher affects within the demonic entity constitute the rhizomic power with which it breaks the liminality of two or more multiplicities and generates a new flow of heterogeneous things. It is essentially anomalous, a term that designates the very virtual potentialities and groundings of any future deterritorialization: “*an-omalie*, a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization.”¹⁸⁸ As Deleuze says in *Dialogues*, “Demons are different from gods, because gods have fixed attributes, properties and functions, territories and codes: they have to do with rails, boundaries and surveys. What demons do is jump across intervals, and from one interval to another. ‘Which demon has leapt the longest leap?’ asks Oedipus.”¹⁸⁹ Here Deleuze obviates any possible confusion regarding the source of

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁸⁹ *Dialogues II*, p. 40.

the power of rhizomic infinite conjunctions: it originates from the excessive affects of the anomalous. Or, we should understand the anomalous as affects: “The anomalous is neither familiar or subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics; it has only affects.”¹⁹⁰

Becoming is rhizome, rhizome changing dimensions, dimensions crossing borders, borders inhabited by the anomalous, but ultimately, all such entities are affects—the impersonal pure power that grounds the conjunctive logic of the world.

4. *Problematics of Becoming; or, New Spinoza, New Affect*

In what sphere do Deleuze and Guattari analyze becoming and affect? It is true that they begin their philosophical project with a series of reflections on literary and cinematic figures, such as Ahab of *Moby-Dick*, Willard in *Willard*, and so on, but if the story were to end there, we would find no real difference between Deleuze’s early discussion of affect in Spinoza and the theory of affect in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this section, I underscore two “problematics” in the theory of becoming and affect in *A Thousand Plateaus* that seemingly contradict the early interpretations of affect, demonstrated in Chapters One and Two. First, Deleuze and Guattari discern a tendency among all becomings to move from the most basic becomings that function within the plane of organization, to purely abstract becomings, molecular and imperceptible, on the plane of consistency. This valorization of the plane of consistency over the plane of organization represents a departure from Spinoza’s theory of attributes and modes. Second, Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of a one-directional movement of becomings toward the imperceptible undermines Spinoza’s two-directional model of affect as the power of affecting

¹⁹⁰ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 244.

and being affected. Doubtless Spinoza figures prominently in the discussion of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but by no means do Deleuze and Guattari embrace the entirety of Spinozian metaphysics. Affect, in short, becomes one-directional, positive, and eventually unbound.

a. How Many Becomings?

Even though Deleuze and Guattari begin the chapter on becoming with the becoming-rat of Willard, they declare that becoming animal is not the most important form of becoming: “Exclusive importance should not be attached to becomings-animal. Rather, they are segments occupying a median region.”¹⁹¹ Rather, they posit a hierarchical progression of becomings, from becoming-woman to becoming-imperceptible: “On the near side, we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child [...] On the far side, we find becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible.”¹⁹² As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the anomalous or demonic individual is the excessive affect that conditions and enables transgressions of borderlines of multiplicities and becomings, and such affects are by definition impersonal and without fixed characteristics. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari term the affects moving between multiplicities “Universal fiber” that is “strung across borderlines” and that “constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization.”¹⁹³ The mere activity of crossing borders and generating deterritorializations, however, is not the only function of Universal fiber; while taking on the flights of deterritorialization, Universal fiber simultaneously begins an escalating process of turning the molar or strata into molecular elements. In other words, each becoming,

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

whichever direction it moves to in itself, heads towards the final destination of the imperceptible, and thus we read, “not only does it [fiber] border each multiplicity [...] but it also carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always farther down the line of flight.”¹⁹⁴

The spectrum of becomings from the molar to the molecular not only underlines the physical or sensual transitions between multiplicities, regarding the location where becomings take place, it also highlights a variation between the plane of organization and the plane of consistency. Deleuze and Guattari reflect on the question of the symbiosis of multiplicities, and create a “container” in which every multiplicity of a particular number of affective dimensions maintains a compatible relationship with others, and such harmony can only be achieved on the plane of consistency, whose fundamental attribute lies in the uttermost deterritorializations and hyper-abstractions of all significations, subjectifications, and static strata. As they depict the process with specific emphasis on the transition from the plane of organization to the plane of consistency: “Everything becomes imperceptible, everything is becoming-imperceptible on the plane of consistency, which is nevertheless precisely where the imperceptible is seen and heard.”¹⁹⁵ The process of becoming-imperceptible is ensured by the “abstract machine,” whose primary function is to connect “a multiplicity, a becoming, a segment, a vibration.”¹⁹⁶ During each becoming process, the abstract machine generates a series of intersections that enable smooth transitions between the concrete and the abstract. In a sense, the abstract machine serves as the overlapping area between the plane of organization and the plane of consistency.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

b. Spinoza's New Face

As I argued in the first chapter, Deleuze's early readings of the Spinozian metaphysical system serve as the foundation for his later thought. The plane of attributes that includes only the abstract qualities of God paves the way for the formulation of the plane of consistency, while the infinite modes ordered within and between attributes, constitute a plane of organization. In his early books on Hume and Spinoza, Deleuze was fascinated by the problem of subjectivity and emotion, thus the theory of affect constructed during that period focused primarily on the strata and organization of concrete entities. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, by contrast, Deleuze and Guattari privilege the abstract and deterritorialized over the concrete and personal. Hence, when Deleuze and Guattari refer to affect, most often they address its impersonal aspect. The foremost task of any becoming is to induce flight and move away from any territory and power structure, and thus, when Spinozian metaphysics is invoked in the becoming plateau, the emphasis is on the abstract rather than the concrete dimension of Spinoza's thought. Consequently, the theory of affect in Deleuze's later work with Guattari now becomes an unspecific, impersonal, and boundless impetus, like the demon of a pack whose exceeding power initiates the one-directional transformation of becomings, deterritorializations, and abstractions. Affect no longer concerns individuals, or the relation between specific and identifiable modes; rather, it now designates an ambience that encompasses (but does not signify) the entirety of a multiplicity.

Deleuze and Guattari begin the section of the becoming plateau titled "memories of a Spinozist" without any reference to the three "triads," but with a direct reminder of the ultimate goal of Spinoza's radical philosophy, which is to "arrive at elements that no longer have either form or function, that are abstract in this sense even though they are perfectly real."¹⁹⁷ Their

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

entire discussion of Spinoza is based on this understanding of Spinoza's project, their aim being to map the similarities between the Spinozian plane and the plane of consistency. For Spinoza, once modes transform into insensible realities, their ways of existence "are distinguished solely by movement and rest, slowness and speed."¹⁹⁸ In such moments, only two factors matter, "degree of speed" and "relation of movement and rest."¹⁹⁹ In this insistence on the separation of things and relations we find continuity between Deleuze's early empiricist thought and his later schizoanalytic thought with Guattari. No individuals can be formed on the plane of consistency; a group of particles by virtue of their speed may enter into relation and thus form a multiplicity, while in the meantime maintaining the potentiality to disassemble and regroup, based on the variations of affect. With fastness and slowness being the only characteristics of the plane of consistency, Deleuze and Guattari assert that the plane of consistency is essentially a totality in which every entity, natural or artificial, can be enclosed and measured according to its speed, and all virtuality is already included so that once the status of the multiplicity changes, the recording of that change still remains within the plane. Thus, the plane of consistency obtains a new name: plane of immanence: "there is a pure plane of immanence, univocity, composition, upon which everything is given, upon which unformed elements and materials dance that are distinguished from one another only by their speed and that enter into this or that individuated assemblage depending on their connections, their relations of movement."²⁰⁰

In this emphasis on the abstract dimension of Spinoza's philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari largely reiterate points made by Deleuze in his early book on Spinoza. We observe again the concepts of affect, speed, external relation, and *conatus* as put forth in *Expressionism in*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

Philosophy and Empiricism and Subjectivity. The multiplicity composed as a group of imperceptible particles bears a speed, fast or slow, which entails a degree of affect, capable of constructing or dismantling a given set of external relations. The authors remind us, “To every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness grouping together an infinity of parts, there corresponds a degree of power. To the relationship composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond intensities that affect it, augmenting or diminishing its power to act; these intensities come from external parts or from the individual’s own part.”²⁰¹ The early Spinozian framework of affect and relation, as shown in Chapter One, find a repetitious version in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which can be summarized as a two-fold theory: a body can both be affected by others and affect others; affect functions on external relations. However, one fundamental difference concerns the concept of the individual. In *Expressionism*, an individual is conceived of as a concrete mode; whereas in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari equate the individual with a group or multiplicity, in which elements are too molecular to be perceptible. To articulate this view, we must adopt the perspective of the plane of consistency, or the collective of attributes in the Spinozian system. Such a difference in perspective marks the paramount difference between Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza in *Expressionism* and his use of Spinoza in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Deleuze and Guattari assert that “affects are becomings,”²⁰² which leaves us with the problem of determining precisely what Deleuze and Guattari mean by affect. Multiplicity, affect, and relations are discussed with an emphasis on the plane of consistency in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as is the concept of the body. In a recapitulation of arguments put forth in Deleuze’s

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 256.

1978 essay “Spinoza and Us,” reprinted in the second edition of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that a body, ultimately, consists of a longitude and a latitude. The amount of deterritorialized and unformed matter entering an external relation and composing a cluster based on speed of movement, is termed a body’s “longitude”; while the affect and power, constituting the capability of affecting and being affected, constitute its “latitude.” Becoming, the molecular transition between the two poles of multiplicities or bodies, happens because of affects, or the crossing of borderlines associated with the anomalous, or demons. Without latitude or affect, becoming is impossible. Hence, what Deleuze and Guattari mean by saying “affects are becomings” is that becomings are essentially the transitions of affects between bodies, which are bodies-without-organs, from the perspective of the plane of consistency. No movements of speed or rest are possible without the conatus, generated through affects from the outside.

c. The One-way Street of Becoming

All becoming follows a movement toward becoming-indiscernible, a linear movement from the plane of organization to the plane of consistency. Strata gradually become deterritorialized through variations in affect, and become molecular and imperceptible to the senses. Within this line of becoming, each concrete individual unfolds towards a relatively deterritorialized entity, but Deleuze and Guattari claim that the initial phase of all becomings is that of becoming-woman: “Although all becomings are already molecular, including becoming-woman, it must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is

the key to all the other becomings.”²⁰³ Deleuze and Guattari’s thesis is that subjectification and enunciation, two of the most territorializing and stratifying of processes, privilege the position of male human beings, and that any deterritorialization must begin from the most affective, powerful and dominating entities. Within the spectrum of becomings, the male human being stands the farthest away from the imperceptible and purely abstract. Hence, any form of deterritorialization must begin with a movement away from the male (a becoming-woman) and then away from the human being (becoming-animal), with the ultimate destination of all deterritorializations being a becoming-imperceptible: “if becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible.”²⁰⁴

There is thus a single direction to all becomings—from a becoming-woman, through a becoming-animal, to a becoming-imperceptible on the plane of consistency. The transformation of the coded strata into imperceptible molecules of pure speed and pure relation is unavoidable and inevitable. Any becoming—whatever its initial status—will reach a stable or ideal state only when both of its poles are completely molecularized and deterritorialized, when they exist as nonsubjectified “floating affects.”²⁰⁵ As for how Deleuze and Guattari interpret the functions of becoming-animal, “Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become.”²⁰⁶ To become animal is only one step in the process of becoming molecular. An animal, being only a relatively decoded and minor other, no doubt can assume a majoritarian function in relation to an entity less powerful than it. Hence,

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

wherever becoming takes place, whether within the human, the animal, or any other place, it proceeds in one direction—toward the imperceptible.

A direct consequence of the one-directionality of affect is that affect must be understood as more affecting than being affected, with a positive and affirmative *conatus* that conditions the border-crossings of the demons and, on a broader scale, the molecular becomings of all. The powers of affecting others, of transgressing borders must always be greater than the powers of being affected, in order that the relations of other multiplicities may be decomposed and recomposed. A becoming begins with an addition of affect to the multiplicity of particles, and acquires a speed which parallels that of another multiplicity. In such a process, pure affect functions as the source of movement that enables the arrival of speed through the process of affecting. Precisely due to the impersonal and unbound nature of affect as Deleuze and Guattari conceive it, affect is capable of freely moving between individual multiplicities without bearing any subjective signatures. Deleuze and Guattari rhizomically connect the Spinozian concept of immanence with affect, and it is in that regard that they approach the subject, treating affect as an immanent reality within the territorialized subject itself: “Becomings-animal are basically of another power, since their reality resides not in an animal one imitates or to which one corresponds but in themselves, in that which suddenly sweeps us up and make us become.”²⁰⁷ The affect of a multiplicity is certainly impersonal and variable, but Deleuze and Guattari argue that its condition of possibility, in a sense, is the “subject” as the host of all potential becomings.

As has been pointed out earlier, in terms of the concentration of Spinozian philosophy, in his early work Deleuze clearly attempts to provide a holistic account covering the entirety of Spinozian metaphysics, while in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we witness an accelerated and truncated

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

reading where becoming immediately associates with the later part of *Ethics* with bodies being understood as imperceptible molecules and their status interpreted as pure speed of movement. Everything is rhizomic; Spinoza starts in the middle of his own philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the one-directionality of becoming, viewed from an affective perspective, entails a belief that affect, apart from such already-mentioned characteristics as being impersonal and powerful, is more capable of affecting than being affected so that becoming can be possible.

CONCLUSION: (AFFECTIVE) A LIFE—A USER’S MANUAL

Contemporary scholars of affect theory, though they regard Deleuze as an inspiration for the discipline “affect studies,” seem to have taken a path of investigation of the subject sharply opposed to that of Deleuze. The field’s widely prevalent attention to affect as “feelings,” “attachment,” and so on, suggest a fascination with particular feelings, without a necessary consideration of affect as an intermediary stage towards a higher end: life. Deleuze’s focus on affect stems not simply from an interest in human and animal emotions; but more importantly from his lifelong project of disentangling the true essence of LIFE.

This thesis traces a lineage of Deleuze’s understandings of the concept of affect from the years when he was still a faithful but original reader of the works of other philosophers, artists, and writers, to the period of his philosophical experimentation with Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. I show a clear distinction between these two philosophical stages, with the former centering on the dualistic interactions and transformations between a subject (the acting part) and an object (the acted); and the latter emphasizing pure active and affirmative movement, a becoming that is only one-directional towards the minor and underpowered multiplicity. Spinoza and Hume are the two philosophers whose stances are directly opposed to the rationalist or idealist tradition, consummated in Hegel’s encyclopedic system. Unlike Kantian transcendental things in themselves or Hegelian absolute spirit, Spinozian pantheism posits the totality of essence as immanent in the world, expressed by God through infinite attributes under each of which exist infinite modes. The totality of infinite modes existing in Nature, though each being limited, is by no means a representation or revelation of God; rather, it is God. In addition, there

is a clear structure in Spinozian nature among attributes and modes; it is organized by parallelism, which establishes an equal status between modes within the same attribute. After establishing the immanent principle and parallelism, Spinoza asserts the necessity of existence of modes since they together ARE God, and such necessity is confirmed and realized through affect and the result of affect: fastness and slowness. In other words, affect is the very precondition for the existence of any particular entity, and consequently for the formations of subject and object. The situation of affecting and being affected is unavoidable rather than optional.

A direct philosophical consequence of parallelism rests in the establishment of an immediate correspondence between body and mind, without privileging one over the other. Deleuze clarifies the distinction between affection and affect that Spinoza makes. All modes are effects of God's affective creation and their existences are termed "affections" that are by nature active given God's infinite power. But between modes, affection denotes both being acted upon by external others and an imperfect state of the affected mode in comparison to the outside body. Affect pertains to the duration in which a mode varies from being passive to active, or as Spinoza phrases it, affect is "a passion of the mind." The theory of affect is arguably the most important theme Deleuze takes from Spinoza, and thus in a glossary of Spinozian concepts composed by Deleuze, he extensively elaborates on the concepts of affection and affect, with a primary distinction: "The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies."²⁰⁸ The key to an understanding of affect, thus, depends on an interpretation of the body. In an effort to continue exploring the

²⁰⁸ Spinoza: *Practical Philosophy*, p. 49.

Spinozian statement, “We do not know what the body can do,”²⁰⁹ Deleuze pursues further the question of the construction of bodies. Influenced by Leibniz’s conception of the monad, Deleuze posits the distinction between composite body and molecular body. He contends that the ultimate body should be in the form of an atom, indivisible and imperceptible by the senses. In terms of the composite body, Deleuze invites us to consider it as a collection of molecular bodies and relations. His readings of British empiricism and American pragmatism allows him to endorse an empiricist theory of relation, which regards relations as external to their terms. Such a philosophical stance on relation is necessary, since for Deleuze, the function of affect is only upon relations rather than the atomic bodies themselves. What is changed, in an affective process, is the relations between bodies, and that process cannot be realized if relations are understood in a rationalist or idealist way as internal to the mind. In his first monograph, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze already speaks highly of David Hume’s insistence on the essence of relation as external and formed through experience rather than being innate. Almost two decades later, when Deleuze crafts a short philosophical biography for Hume, the theory of external relation is deemed one of the most important contributions Hume made for philosophy: “Hume’s originality – or one of Hume’s originalities – comes from the force with which he asserts that relations are external to their terms.”²¹⁰ By establishing such a ground, Hume is able to formulate a theory of knowledge that regards ideas as innate but disordered in mind, and through the impact of the principle of human nature, relations are imposed upon these given ideas and new understandings are made possible. As Deleuze summarizes, “The real empiricist world is thereby laid out for the first time to the fullest: it is a world of exteriority, a world in

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²¹⁰ --, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 37.

which thought itself exists in a fundamental relationship with the Outside.”²¹¹ This empiricist tradition is adopted and developed through William James, who radically cancels the categorical or hierarchical differences between body and mind to construct a system of “pure stuff,” a state of things before differentiations. Hume’s understanding of relation – as Deleuze is well aware – applies only to the mind rather than the concrete world outside. It is conceived only to explicate the transitions between impressions and ideas: “What is a relation? It is what makes us pass from a given impression or idea to that idea of something that is not presently given.”²¹² William James, on the contrary, broadens the scope of application of the external relation so that it serves not only as the ground for a philosophy of knowledge, but also as the basis of a metaphysics.

Deleuze was deeply influenced by the Spinozian and Humean philosophical traditions, and readers can easily discern a continuation of his thinking on the philosophical problems of affect and relation in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, his collaborative project with Guattari. But Deleuze does not simply reduplicate and transplant the concepts of Spinoza, Hume and James in an unchanged form; rather, he reformulates and modifies those concepts, while remaining sympathetic with Spinoza, Hume, and James. Three concepts carefully elaborated in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* serve as the kernel of Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysics: rhizome, flow, and becoming. Rhizome designates the infinite conjunctive relations between terms. It is necessarily external in the affective world, but unlike the Humean version, Deleuze gives the rhizome a certain capability of action: relations in Deleuzian metaphysics can freely move and combine with anything other, instead of remaining a passive product of principles imposed from outside. In addition, these relations are no longer restricted to the domain of the human, but become

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

something applicable to everything in the world. Such a radical revision of the theory of relation cannot itself stand if divorced from Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the world, which builds upon the Jamesian metaphysics of stuff. The problem in James's claim lies in the limitation of temporality: stuff only denotes the homogeneity of things and ideas before any activity of specification or individuation, but for Deleuze and Guattari, such a state is the beginning and end of everything. There is no essential difference between bodies, since individuations are only a matter of compositions or decompositions of bodies that can eventually be understood as multiplicities of atomic bodies. The world, thus, is a moving flow in which anything can be connected to anything else, always reversible and regardless of time.

What causes the movement of the flow? What is the source of the speed of movement? The necessity of the world as an ever-moving flow is based in the continuous affects that pass among its components. In Spinozian term, affect is always two-fold, including both an ability of affecting as a subject and an ability of being affected from outside as an object. Given a duration, however, the status will reverse, after the mode is aware of the common notions between itself and others, so that a passive mode can gradually become active and affective. A problem in the Spinozian model – speaking from the perspective of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* – is the affirmation of an initial status: one that has a moment of absolute passivity. For Deleuze and Guattari, any beginning is impossible to conceive; rather, we are always in the middle of the process of movement. Guided by this spirit, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we think Spinozian affect without positing any beginning passive status. They intentionally reduce the importance of the role “being affected” plays in their metaphysical system of the plane of consistency, starting only with the most abstract form of existence in the Spinozian system: a multiplicity of imperceptible particles and pure relations. One should,

though, notice that this change does not mean a complete denial or elimination of passive affections. It results solely from an excess of positive powers that overturn the passive ones and thus appear as if only active affects exist.

This new version of affect theory is termed “becoming,” which refers to a one-directional and real movement of particles and implementations of functions between two poles of unequal powers. Deleuze and Guattari observe that for an unequal power relationship, the majoritarian and powerful pole always moves in the molecular way towards its minoritarian other. Affect or power of the already powerful does not move towards the other bearing more power than itself; on the contrary, it moves towards the less powerful and eventually adopts its functions. Through affective becomings, all strata experience deterritorializations that eventually become decomposed into atom bodies, imperceptible to the senses. Deleuze and Guattari envision a plane that encompasses an abstract and final stage: one in which only imperceptible atom bodies and relations exist, at certain speed. Above is the goal of this thesis: to delineate the passage of formation of Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysical system of affect with an emphasis on how the authors assimilate and improve the Spinozian and Humean models.

It seems that an essential question is still left unsolved: “why affect?” Deleuze and Guattari never directly justify their philosophical taste for affect, but it seems timely to address such a problem in affect studies.

What is the study of affect *for*?

Basing the understanding of affect on my reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of affect in *A Thousand Plateaus*, I argue that the study of affect aims to understand Life. And the key to this project—unlike that of most contemporary affect theorists who turn directly to specific kinds of human emotions—is to search for a ground that encloses Life; or we may call it

an affective precondition of Life. Deleuze and Guattari's reduction of the passive beginning of Spinozian affect in *A Thousand Plateaus* rather evidently shows a preference for and insistence on the affirmative and affective nature of Life, a purely one-directional movement of a multiplicity that has no regard for the affects that come from others. It designates the final achievements of Deleuze's lifelong battle against Hegelianism.²¹³ The principle reason for his antagonism is Hegel's insistence on the negation of differences in life as a way powers establish relations. His negation only proceeds from the slave's perspective, a craving for recognition from others: "It is an exhausted force which does not have the strength to affirm its difference, a force which no longer acts but rather reacts to the forces which dominate it – only such a force brings to the foreground the negative element in its relation to the other. Such a force denies all that it is not and makes this negation its own essence and the principle of existence."²¹⁴ Hegelian dialectics cancels the very vitalism of Life, completely embracing the passive pole of affect instead of moving to the active side. Thus, judging from the Spinozian criteria of the necessity of existence actualized by affect, Hegelian dialectics means death.

Affect for Deleuze is a mood, but this mood cannot be specified. Ultimately, it is the immanent condition, an active power that grounds and affirms the existence of difference without any consideration or reference to the other, be it the subject or the object. Thus, this study of affect may lead us to Deleuze's final understanding of "A Life" in his last essay, "Immanence: A Life":

²¹³ "What I most detested was Hegelianism and dialectics," Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 6.

²¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche And Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 9.

We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ *Immanence: A Life*, p. 27.

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