Introduction

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In recent years the humanities, the social sciences, and neuroscience have witnessed an “affective turn,” especially in discourses around post-Fordist labor, the economic and ecological crisis, populism and identity politics, mental health, and political struggle.¹ This new awareness of affect remains unthinkable without the pioneering work of Gilles Deleuze, who, following Baruch Spinoza, displaced the traditional opposition of reason

and emotion with the new opposition between sad and joyful passions which diminish or increase our capacity to think and act. He thus replaced judgment with affect as the very movement of thought. While classical rationalism implies a moral judgment over and against emotions, the new one is an ethical evaluation of the rationality of emotions themselves. As Spinoza already put it: “we neither strive for, not will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it.”  

For Spinoza, affect constitutes the bare activity of the world. An affect occurs when two finite modes of being (bodies or ideas), each defined by its conatus or its striving for persistence, encounter each other, leading to either an increase or a decrease of their respective powers to affect and to be affected. Affects, then, are collective becomings, i.e., processes or passages of desire individuated by the manner in which beings seek to augment their power to engage with others. They are primordial to, albeit inseparable from, sensations, emotions, feelings, tastes, perceptions, beliefs, meanings, and all other forms of cognition. Whereas the more articulated and exchangeable forms of feeling and cognizing are already individuated and personalized “affections,” affects cannot be reduced to the different ways in which they are embodied and the intellectual states in which they are interpreted. Rather, they contain a transformative potential. For Deleuze, affective becomings make up the ontological element of a transcendental empiricism, a differential element of forces (Friedrich Nietzsche) or tendencies (Henri Bergson) that is autonomous, neutral and eternal. Thought, or the problem of how to orient ourselves within this element, is a matter of empirically and experientially learning to compose with affects.

Spinoza distinguishes passive affects that are prompted by an exterior force, and active affects that stem from an internal cause. Ideas or bodies are active when their actions follow only

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from themselves, whereas they are passive to the extent that they depend on other bodies and ideas. Passion, as Spinoza puts it, is “a part of Nature which cannot be perceived clearly and distinct-ly through itself.”4 Because of its finitude, however, no mode is purely active. All activity is embedded in the lived world along the lines of passions. Whereas the Cartesian “clear and distinct” offers an image of autonomous thought (“I think”) as immediately self-transparent consciousness of self-evident (true) ideas, in reality thought—the active-passive becoming of ideas—is never separable from the obscure and the confused, in other words, the “unconscious.” This is why Deleuze redistributes the rationalist economy of light, even if he does so in a way more indebted to the Leibnizian theory of the unconscious than Spinoza: whereas active affects are distinct but obscure, passions are clear but confused.5 Adequate ideas distinctly express their immanent causality (pure immanence), but as actions or events their visibility amounts only to little glimmerings in the night. Consciousness or clear perception, by contrast, is of the order of effects; it is composed of passions (impure immanence) that express the powers of others and ourselves confusedly.

The trajectory of liberation that defines Spinoza’s *Ethics* is the movement of learning by which thought, born in bondage and confusion, passes into the adequate comprehension of affect and acquires its full potential (the state of beatitude). In practice, then, thought always begins with the passions. These are the beliefs, perceptions, representations, and opinions that attach us to the world and that, by giving us an initial orientation, force and enable us to think. From language to consciousness, everything finds its basis in passion, which makes up the very material of which our lives and thoughts are composed. As soon as we are confronted with empirical knowledge and human affairs, no matter whether this concerns emotions in psychology and sociology, sensation in art, passion in theology, or the struggle

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4 Ibid., III P3.S.
with opinion in philosophy, we are always dealing with passive affects. Rather than being a philosophy of passions, we should therefore say that Deleuze’s philosophy puts passion at the core of thought. It is through passion that we acquire our power of action and thus a power to produce concepts or what Spinoza calls common notions, which are adequate expressions of our communal being. The philosophical task for Deleuze is not one of banning the passions from thought, but rather a question of “How do we extend the passions, give them an extension that they do not have of themselves?”

To become free is to socialize the passions in a political body. “The people must be individualized, not according to the persons within it, but according to the affects it experiences simultaneously or successively.”

The liberation of thought is a becoming active of passion, which always involves joy, since “there is a necessary joy in creation.” Joyful passions bring us closer to our volition, while sad passions, on the contrary, weaken our power, binding desire to the illusions of consciousness and separating us from our power to act. Put differently, joyful passions augment our power, while sad passions enslave us. Instead of truth as ultimate criterion of judgment, the only principle according to which affective becomings can be selected and evaluated is the extent to which they proliferate joy. “A mode of existence is good or bad, noble or vulgar, complete or empty, independently of Good and Evil or any transcendent value: there are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life.” If it takes a lot of inventiveness or imagination to become able to diagnose our present becomings, however, this is because be-

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8 Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 134.

comings are always composite. Desire is a heterogeneously determined mixture, like a line of experimentation traversing a plane on which becomings find their consistency: “there is no desire but assembling, assembled, desire.”

Upholding the empiricist principle of the externality of relations, Deleuze claims that within an assemblage “the relations themselves are assigned a sense, a direction, an irreversibility, and an exclusivity according to the passions.” Thus in an assemblage there are always paradoxical factors at work. Health, as Nietzsche has shown, is not so much the absence of sickness, but rather a composition of contrasting tendencies that leads toward less sickness and more health. Likewise, Deleuze discovers in Primo Levi or Yasser Arafat — but also in philosophy itself — a kind of glory that only occurs in relation to the shame that constitutes their initial motivation. In each case, the relation between the terms (health/sickness, glory/shame) is never a simple opposition, as if their difference was already analytically included in them. Instead, this difference depends on a whole constellation of exterior forces, on “the dominant affective tonality” which recruits desire to increase its power.

Spinoza shows how the recruitment of desire traditionally takes place through the tyrants and priests who inspire sad passions in us, just as Karl Marx demonstrates how in capitalism enslavement primarily takes place through employment relations. As Frédéric Lordon has pointed out, Fordism, marking capitalism’s earlier stages, is based on a passionate servitude that instigates and feeds off the fear of starvation when one

10 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 399.
11 Deleuze, Desert Islands, 166.
would quit working in the assembly line. Similarly, the work of Deleuze and Guattari on capitalism and schizophrenia can be read as an encyclopedia of the passions that constitute the affective infrastructure of the *socius* of contemporary capitalism. These include sad passions such as shame, spite, guilt, stupidity, mistrust, weariness, fatigue, fatalism, cynicism, ignorance, hope, anguish, disgust, contempt, cowardice, hatred, laziness, avidity, regret, despair, mockery, malversation, and self-abasement. Whereas the deterritorializing forces of capital constantly demand from us a “passional betrayal” of the dominant social structure, these same passions need to be controlled on the level of our private lives (i.e., the Oedipal triangle). This is why in the formation of a well-emancipated individual the priestly origins of western subjectivity can still be clearly discerned. The contemporary culture of health and abstinence, as Slavoj Žižek has famously pointed out, is a culture of safe sex, smoking bans, coffee without caffeine, intolerance for misogynic jokes, wars without casualties, and so forth. But capitalism could not exist if it did not also inspire joy, love, courage, and perhaps even beatitude. Fordism already compensated for fear by installing a hope for more consumption. Today we witness “the spectacle of the happily dominated” of the managerial class, the flex worker, the citizen-consumer, the bean-roasting hipster, the *homo economicus*, and the self-managed team. It is only in late capitalism that individuation takes place primarily in the form of the self-centered subject that is working for his or her self-realization. With the rise of the self-entrepreneur we can perhaps speak for the first time, despite the manifest oxymoron, of a veritable voluntary servitude, in which enslavement is immediately fulfilled by joyful passions.

Philosophy, the passion of doing philosophy, is far from innocent in this respect. It represses the creative act of thinking by

17 Ibid., xi–xii.
enslaving thought to that haggard image of self-sufficient and self-gratifying rationality that it inevitably produces of itself. As Deleuze and Guattari ask us: “Is there anything more passional than pure reason? Is there a colder, more extreme, more self-interested passion than the Cogito?”

This explains why Deleuze hardly lives up to the caricature of the affirmative thinker of spontaneous happiness that still dominates his legacy. There is joy in destruction, especially in the destruction of Reason. Spinoza already pointed at the common disregard for passions of the thinkers of his era, claiming that “they attribute the cause of human impotence and inconstancy, not to the common power of Nature, but to I know not what vice of human nature, which they therefore bewail, or laugh at, or disdain, or (as usually happens) curse.”

Working along the naturalist axis of Lucretius-Spinoza-Nietzsche and extending it into a Humean “empiricist conversion,” Deleuze equally maintains that the inseparability of reason and passion is in no sense anti-intellectualist or irrationalist. Rather, their inseparability is critical, since it protects reason from its self-imposed stupidity (bêtise) by relating it to the unthought, i.e. the distinct but obscure forces that condition it. And it is clinical, since for the naturalist, it is here that thought becomes possessed by a “power of aggression and selection.”

A thought only reaches consistency and prominence in “isolated and passionate cries” that deny what everybody knows and what nobody can deny. At the beginning of thought, we discover not a transparent self, but a self dissolved in the interstices of its passions, a veritably schizophrenic thought-drama: “There is always another breath in my breath, another thought in my thought, another possession in what I possess, a thousand

18 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 130.
19 “Reading Deleuze is like a Bacardi Rum advertisement. It is an advertisement without body: one never sees Bacardi rum; one only sees that everybody is happy” (Boris Groys, seminar “Immaterial Communication,” in Concepts on the Move, eds. Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager, 50–67 [Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2002], 65).
20 Spinoza, Ethics, III Preface.
21 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, xx.
things and a thousand beings implicated in my complications: every true thought is an aggression.”

Sharing Hegel’s question of how thought finds its way into the world and vice versa, Deleuze discerns an answer in Antonin Artaud and his concept of the theater of cruelty. The destruction of the established image of thought involves a laborious ploughing through thick layers of passion. Only on the brink of exhaustion, where thought risks to be entirely submerged, do bursts and leaps appear that uncover a glimpse of spontaneous, non-prefigured, and non-subjugated thought-desire. Every true philosophical concept comes into being as a passionate cry. The philosopher faces a schizophrenic task, which “is less a question of recovering meaning than of destroying the word, of conjuring up the affect, and of transforming the painful passion of the body into a triumphant action, obedience into command […]” This is where philosophy and literature meet, in defamiliarizing the familiar, not by taking a “philosophical distance” from the world, but by the full immersion of thought in the world and its material, i.e., passional reality. Ghérasim Luca’s “Passionné-ment,” for that matter, is not so much an act carried out on the mere surface of language, but rather an engagement with the limits of language. By stretching and condensing, by having it bear the weight of what it is not, language abandons its lofty Olympian throne of dialectical reason judging over the world in clear and distinct propositions, and affirms both itself and the world in the production of a new intensity. Or in the words of Deleuze: “The entire language spins and varies in order to disengage a final block of sound, a single breath at the limit of the cry, JE T’AIME PASSIONNÉMENT (“I love you passionately”).”

23 Ibid., 88.
The contributions

It is well-known that Deleuze finds in Hegel the ultimate betrayal of this naturalist practice of philosophy. With thinkers such as Jean Wahl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Alexandre Kojève, and Jean Hyppolite, the philosophical landscape of his formative years was dominated by Hegelianism. But as Moritz Gansen points out in his contribution, the unhappy consciousness that drives Hegel’s philosophical system is a thorn in the flesh of philosophy. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze considers the unhappy consciousness “only the Hegelian version of the bad conscience,” that internalized guilt and restlessness which multiplies and glorifies sad passions. The endeavor of escaping the totalizing tendencies of the Hegelian dialectics has defined his entire oeuvre.

In his philosophical pursuit of joy and creativity, Deleuze seeks to circumvent the dialectical pursuit of reason, which “represents our slavery and our subjection as something superior which makes us reasonable beings.” Samantha Bankston demonstrates how a shift from a philosophy of judgment to a philosophy of affect implies a more radical shift from Being to becoming than the movement of the Hegelian concept allows for. Traditionally, reason forces upon thought the categories of Being, which are analogy, identity, opposition, resemblance. To accommodate for the transformative potential of a philosophy of affect, Deleuze develops a new, twofold concept of becoming. Sensory becoming refers to the immanent logic that makes up the composite nature of assemblages. Absolute becoming amounts to the becoming active, a “counter-effectuation” of the image of thought.

Adopting the Nietzschean project of inverting Platonism and tracing the dialectic to its Socratic roots, Deleuze returns to the Greek dramatic setting of the agon with its rivalry between the claimants of truth. The first time he systematically takes up the theme of distinguishing “the true pretender from the false

one,”26 is in the treatment of jealousy in *Proust and Signs*. As Arjen Kleinherenbrink demonstrates, the jealous lover can only distinguish himself from the other claimants and rightfully claim his beloved one if he reaches her true essence. The passion of jealousy enables him to become active, to make a difference. It does not, however, lead him to her true essence, but rather to the truth that her essence will keep on escaping him. Or, as Deleuze later puts it: “[D]oes not this passionate search for true opinion lead the Platonists to an aporia,” the gray zone in which truth and falsity become indiscernible?27

Sjoerd van Tuinen further develops Deleuze’s method of dramatization by staging the priest and the philosopher as the two competing claimants to the concept of *ressentiment*. They embody respectively a nihilistic sense of the concept of *ressentiment* and a speculative sense. The priest moralistically judges others because of their *ressentiment*, while the philosopher immanently affirms *ressentiment*, rather than opposing it. Historically speaking, this difference leads to a parting of the ways in the discourse on *ressentiment* after Nietzsche. By psychologizing *ressentiment* and fixating it as the secretive emotion of guilty individuals, authors such as Max Scheler and René Girard have instrumentalized the concept of *ressentiment* to turn it against the voices of minorities. Deleuze, by contrast, is a genealogist who affirms *ressentiment* as an inherently political passion open to a drama of divergent becomings. Ultimately, the difference between the priest and the philosopher is not a question of truth, but of passion. As conceptual personae, they are two passions of thought and thus two different powers of imagination and becoming. Whereas the priest judges on the basis of empirical *facts*, only the philosopher—Nietzsche’s philosopher-legislator—possesses the transcendental *right* to wield the concept of *ressentiment*.

Likewise, Jason Read points out that a philosophy of affect always carries the risk of interiorization, in which the intimate

26 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 254.
27 Ibid., 148.
takes precedence over the social and the social is reduced to a set of individuals. Combining Spinoza’s inherently political account of affect with Gilbert Simondon’s theory of individuation, Deleuze and Guattari in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series put forward two different ways in which this risk can be avoided. *Anti-Oedipus* provides a history of the dominant affects that determine the structure of feeling, while focusing on resisting reductive accounts of the social, with Sigmund Freud as its polemical target. *A Thousand Plateaus*, on the other hand, reaches beyond the historical determinations of affect by tracing the affects of capitalism that pass between the dominant passions, indicating possible lines of flight.

Following Deleuze and Guattari, Benoît Dillet argues that ideology critique is ineffective since it merely critiques a system of beliefs, rather than diagnosing the passions that are at the basis of capitalism. The strict separation of psycho-social passions and economic interests in ideology critique reinforces a mechanism of neutralization of the joyful passions, because it denies the desire that is at the very core of capitalism. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari propose to expand the project of ideology critique to the project of noology critique, which refers to the study of the images of thought and their historicity. This means that the materiality and the passionate infrastructure that preconditions the dogmatic image of thought is taken into account.

Louis-Georges Schwartz points out that the image regimes as presented by Deleuze in his books on cinema emerge dialectically from the labor-capital relations (formal versus real subsumption of labor under capital). With the full subsumption of labor — when labor itself and being available for labor become indiscernible — the image regime of the twenty-first century is what Schwartz calls Cinema Hostis. This regime pivots upon an antagonism; characters become each other’s enemies and the camera is the enemy of all. Just as each of Deleuze’s two image regimes expresses affects in its own signs and forms, with Cinema Hostis affects become weaponized molar ready-mades and lose their transhuman and deterritorializing character, immobilizing their creative potential.
David Liu takes up the theme of the possibility of escape in asking us: When Deleuze jumped out of the window, toward his death—just as Luca jumped into the Seine one year earlier—did he deframe or reframe the passions? Should we consider Deleuze’s suicide a line of flight or a line of death, or both at the same time? The Spinozist division between joyful and sad passions forces a binary logic upon thought, which denies the fundamentally paradoxical and heterogenous nature of becoming. This dichotomy is only intensified in capitalism, in which you are either productive or unproductive, happy or sad. Deleuze may have escaped this capitalist dualism with his public suicide, which enabled him to affect and be affected at once. While implying his irrevocable death, his suicide also forces us to think about how life always carries death within it.

With Liu we see how even Deleuze’s death impassions our thinking. To return to Deleuze’s question “How do we extend the passions?” we can maintain that he has indicated many openings for doing so. With this volume we aim to provide a systematic study of Deleuze’s taxonomy of the passions and their importance for a thinking that reaches beyond itself, whether this is effectuated by tracing the sad passions that Deleuze tries to escape (Gansen, Bankston) or by engaging with strategies that integrate sad passions with joyful passions (Kleinherenbrink, Van Tuinen), by diagnosing the passions that make up the affective infrastructure of capitalism (Dillet, Read, Schwartz) or by questioning the dichotomy of the joyful and sad passions altogether (Liu). We hope that, between the lines, you will read the passion that made us compose this volume, that this book will move you, and equip you with tools to extend this movement.

28 Cf. “This, precisely, is the fourth danger: the line of flight crossing the wall, getting out of the black holes, but instead of connecting with other lines and each time augmenting its valence, turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple the passion of abolition. Like Kleist’s line of flight, and the strange war he wages; like suicide, double suicide, a way out that turns the line of flight into a line of death” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 227).