

# The Provocative Uses of Affect in Imagining the Life of the City

## *Key Note Address*

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### **Introduction**

This conference plays off the currency of the notion of affect, like innovation, a term in popular circulation these days and that merits rethinking in order to separate wheat from chaff.

Because affect seems to saturate our every word and deed it risks being a formless notion unless we can begin to differentiate it in ways that require a bit of discipline rather than laxity towards language. I do not want such discipline to petrify into formalism but instead to serve as a beginning for our concerted and playful examination of the problem posed by this distinction.

I will pretend that affect has a history, a canon, in other words a lineage of interpretations, of assumptions, images and representations. We can think of this history as a conversation or better, a discourse as if a medley of views. First, I suggest that we inspect this corpus of assumptions or better, of interpretive positions, to ask what difference the notion of affect makes in life or to paraphrase Wittgenstein—just what is affect as a language game? This is my preamble.

### **Primordial usage: Emotion**

The Greek root of affect suggests affecting as moving and/or being moved, even of suffering what is done, reciprocally influencing and being influenced by this doing. One does not just act but in acting suffers the affect of what is done, bearing and affirming the weight of the action. Any action could be said to reverberate in this sense like a chord with resonance. It was natural to relate such affect to motivation, to being motivated, in a way that invariably raised questions concerning the sources of being moved, whether external or internal, whether conditioned or voluntary, setting up body/mind and determinism/freedom polarities that for long infected philosophy and continue to appear in its squabbles over inside and outside and over the puzzle of where the border of an act lies, squabbles that are ritualistically played out in reference to the ambiguity elicited by tropes such as pupillary dilation, the reflex, salivating, operant conditioning, the ghost-in-the machine, synapses, and such literary devices that have always seemed to exercise precocious young men and the symptom they regularly show of abstraction.

Let me risk saying that such abstraction tends to recoil when confronted with the resonance of its own speech, the difficulty of seeing how its every word and deed is ‘full of affect’ and how this invites developing habits for reacting to these implications and consequences in ways that do not simply respond mechanically by acting out argumentatively, or

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defensively, but by seizing opportunities for conversation in such openings. In other words in the idiom of William James abstraction always needs to undergo a change of habits almost as in a program of rehabilitation. If we say that all abstraction has to submit to rehab we must beware of assuming that a focus on affect is an antidote for abstraction because affect can be related to and discussed in very formulaic and mechanical ways, ways that assume that simply mentioning its import is sufficient. So if abstraction is a disease it cannot be remedied by a simple preoccupation with the concept affect. What I am saying here is that if focusing upon affect always seems a cure for abstraction, affect can be and is often treated abstractly. For me, one concern of the conference might be to distinguish different relations to affect instead of just praising it to the sky. Since the current rediscovery of affect seems to be griping the sciences, humanities and fine arts one point of my talk will be to remind us that it is a persistent and active part of our intellectual legacy if we treat the notion imaginatively and as evoking more than the concrete word. So I will suggest that it is not enough to use the word without paying attention to the old-fashioned notion of form. In part I will do this by reminding us that sociology, my discipline, has always been engaged by the notion of affect under different guises. This predates the current enthusiasms towards biomedicine, neurology and the body, towards embodiment and corporeality, and can yet be seen to interact with such contributions if we examine these works carefully. This is curious because I have spent my life reminding sociology of how it excludes the humanities and now I am reminding other disciplines not to exclude sociology. So to paraphrase Plato's ironic use of Zeno in the *Parmenides*, to mention affect or to use the word is not so wonderful, but if someone could show us how to analyze affect and ground it as part of a relationship to language and life, we might follow that person to the ends of the earth!

Typically, affect has been used to identify feelings and the emotional environment of speech and action. The emotions have been easily translated into mechanisms of attraction and aversion and over the years after being routinely regarded as irrational, incoherent or contingent, were finally welcomed as socially constructed in various ways and now often appropriated by neurology as intelligible in terms of such frameworks. Yet the analysis of the emotions has not been advanced by such hospitality and at best is situated in frames of reference that try to demonstrate causal force by mapping hypothetical neural or chemical links that make sense only if we agree to be polite, tactful and amnesiac, by simplifying everything we know about human behavior in order to support such enthusiasts by reassuring them that their work matters. Affect as emotion continues to be noted and illustrated at best in examples of manipulative initiatives whether in commerce, politics, or any area of conduct where self interest and power-seeking seems to prevail and the easiest example of affect to grasp has usually been power, domination, avarice, ambition, and/or strivings of such a kind.

But affect has also been studied as part of the propensities of people, as inclinations, temptations that seem to lead to acceptance of or resistance to ideas and appeals. In these ways affect becomes recognizable as a resource for advancing a cause or position or for defending against it. This is also why those interested in consumers and marketing have developed a new interest in affect and have become friendly towards the graspable parts of affect and its so-called research and towards those who do such work and it accounts for all interested in helping cure anxiety through persuasive appeals to habit change and mindfulness and to academic and policy

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interests now in knowledge transfer, dissemination, and say, health campaigns. To change people we need to measure their affect temperature. Affect can now become part of big business.

Aristotle included the study of emotion as a resource for speaking beings and an orientation to the emotion of another as a fundamental parameter of rhetorical strategy in ways that are still important, for example in *de Rhetorica* by orienting to what we might regard as unspoken registers of anger, insolence, and spite as fundamental impediments even and especially in ourselves as well as others. So those who today think that they are inaugurating a focus on negativism or ugly thoughts just have decided to forget Aristotle, and of course Freud and just about everyone who has dwelt upon ambivalence and resentment. This connection can always alert us to the ways in which affect and resistance coexist in social actions large and small, illustrated in analyses of forms of jealousy, envy, and resentment taken to be important reflections of the vitality of modern life by writers from Nietzsche, Simmel, to Girard and beyond.

Freud in fact uses these affects as signs of vitality and of a life force that can be quite unsettling. His strange conception of the death instinct can then become intelligible as part of the desire to escape the instability and volatility of an affectively charged life, to return to the inertia, capable (believe it or not) of revealing self preservation as egoistic in wanting to preserve itself and somewhat instrumental by choosing death to do this and to do it with a degree of pleasure. This makes intelligible the formulaic view of suicide as an attempt to escape life, perhaps even reasonable as a drive for the imagined repose of death as a way out of the commotion and turbulence of life. So Freud shows us how even the drive to die can disclose an affective investment in self preservation, how suicide is egoistic at its core. Affect is all over in Freud, omnirelevant and omnipresent and he calls it libido. It is as inescapable as the logos and oft considered to have greater force and priority. Affect shows us perennially its Grey Zone or two-sided character as both positive and negative, its lightness and darkness, and even more, appears in the self persuasiveness of the so-called inner speech of the dialogue within the soul. Thus, Hannah Arendt does not obsess over affect but it remains an important thread in her book *The Life of the Mind*. Here then we enter the territory of forgiveness, repentance, apology, self recrimination, guilt and shame and all of the other similar manifestations of affect.

This is important for when many today do decide to do research on affect or the emotions they proceed confidently by asking people questions as if these respondents can give them the final word. Yet the dialectical place of resistance in affect suggests that responses can never be self evident regardless of how extensive the sample and quantity of replies because the very notion of an affective investment in speech must make reference to the complexity of the speaker's relation to her words in ways that typically can escape her and yet remain unspoken influences. So both Marx's vision of social interests and Freud's conception of the unconscious have long dramatized the subterranean force of influences upon any actor subject to them in ways held in abeyance, unacknowledged, or denied, repressed and defended against as armor that make all surveys of preferences, all self reports, and all inventories of beliefs, only beginnings of analysis of what they might mean and not at all final resting places. This sensitizes us to think about how avowal or disavowal can only be the beginning of analysis and how saying it is so can

never make it so, that any declaration is an assumption of a position towards what one declares and always remains 'interested' in what it says in ways that invite further examination.

The force of such an affective register in speech lies here for as Foucault implies, avowing or disavowing a matter is only a beginning, remaining untheorized and unreflective until it is taken up and examined. Plato of course originated this focus by suggesting that possessing an opinion is not really having knowledge of it in any sense but is similar to wearing it around one self like a garment, whereas having knowledge about what we possess in this way is being able to ground it and to make a connection between what we declare and what this means and implies, showing weaving as different than wearing, that is, making us need and desire to weave the speech we happen to wear.

The different models of the use of affect as a figure in theorizing and research focus upon the effects of and on speaking and doing by what we might call feelings, especially for individuals, the interactions supposed between their bodies and minds, influencing in particular constraint and freedom, what was called determinism and free will. We inherit from sociology another conception of affect as the wiring maintained by the collective in itself which it accepts and over which it might not have complete control.

### **Collective Behavior**

Up to now I have talked of the history of affect as a matter of individual conduct and of the relation of individuals to the environment or 'object' as a kind of interaction but this conference asks after affect in the city as if affect is a collective property or a propensity of collective life, as if collectives can be designated and described as 'having' affect. This is not strange for we routinely recognize this aspect of collective life in crises, fads, fashion, trends, crowds, panic, projects of all sorts, and in patterns and regularities of social life, part of the domain sociologists have long called collective behavior and social movements. And of course Bakhtin has captured the contemporary imagination with his many examples and exposition. We see such collective affect not just in critical uprisings, outbreaks and initiatives of all sort and on occasion of festival, celebration, commemoration, protests, strikes, and revolutions but in mundane and innocuous conduct too such as greetings and salutations, manners, customs, and in patterns and regularities such as traffic, walking, gentrification, crime waves, violence, online chats, security measures and everything and anything we might conjure up in such ways. The collective and its affective demands is inescapable. Sociology calls this the normative order, others the symbolic order but always noting that at its core its rules leave a hole that can only be filled in through the affective drive of intuition that must exceed or overstep rules and determination.

### **Affect and the Scenario of Anomie**

According to Max Weber modern life reveals a progressive renunciation of affect as part of the enlightenment demand to exorcise magic and superstition in the name of advancing rationalization. As a metaphor, magic signifies the instability of subjectivity and the need to renounce a focus on what he called values or ends of action for means. Modernity requires a means-end orientation to action, what Bataille called a restricted economy, and in this way

illustrates the normative requirements of administration. That is, values seem random and incoherent as ends of action (subjective, variable), but means seem to be more concrete and palpable procedures within our grasp that we can determine. Of course, since we can only evaluate means in terms of ends, when we reintroduce values again we face the same old problem that can drive us crazy. Affect is seen as needing to be simplified and managed, perhaps even calculated as a quantitative influence, on the part of a subject who must compose herself and fashion a self according to such requirements. So we see here two spaces for affect: one obviously in the motivated compliance demanded of a subject to function in this order, and the other as the affect animating the order itself and its demands, that is, the affective investment in rationalization and efficiency as a value, the affective support of this regime of interpretation. Now combining sociology and Freud we see how such a subject can adapt in many ways and can reengage affectivity in diverse forms of adaptation (Freud: neurotically through repression, etc) but all needing to suffer the renunciation of affect, that is, the loss of full embodiment and the reduction or simplification of *jouissance* that the order seems to require.

Obsession could name this kind of representation that diligently removes affect from its exposition because it gets in the way of its objectives, whether of oneself, the other, the interaction, or what it treats as the self evident truth. Lacan would call this playing dead. Conceptions of the social order as normative or symbolic often seem to leave out affect because it is indeterminate, incalculable and inconsistent, or better, tend to redesign it as the affect necessary to survive the order, the affect of administration demanded by the order, the affect sociology calls motivated compliance. Thus, conformity also has an affective register. This is why affect is not radical or conservative intrinsically but part of a relationship that materializes in practice. By itself it is a dead letter until infused with life. The source of such affect, seems to straddle the border between conflicting requirements to be personal and impersonal at the same time in ways that beset many professional transactions, teaching, doctoring, lawyering, administrators of every stripe, even intimacy in many cases, think of family and friendship. The pervasiveness of affect as a collective property then reiterates the mind-body problem on the collective level, causing us to ask how the automated social actor is wired and if there is room for agency and creativity, for resistance and innovation.

Durkheim's conception of *anomie* lays out the sociological notion of affect as a feature of modern life and its stress on productivity that leads either to failure and sorrow, or to relentless acquisition that cannot be sated and creates the aspiration for more as an unending chain of desire that must remain unfulfilled. The problem of such a subject is to deal with the ambiguity of loss and frustration continuously and in a positive way. The dialectic of pleasure here suggests that progress is destructive not only in Schumpeter's sense of creative destruction that needs to dismantle what it produces as a feature of change and innovation but in the way that social change must destroy accomplishments in the name of progress that makes the feeling of loss persistent, materializing both as an experience of the selective erosion of the past and attachments and in a persistent fascination with what Adam Phillips calls the un-lived life that haunts any present as elsewhere, other, and excluded as what we could have done and didn't or what we are missing. This version of social change resonates with Freud's notion of the self destructiveness of life as constant excitation, as always capable of influencing one to want to

exchange such a life for a more pleasurable destination imagined as lacking frustration, and unresolved ambiguity.

### **Affect as Material Conditions of Speech**

As a supposed update of such a history various examples from biomedicine cause us to rethink affect as corporeal in order to divest the notion of any essentialist or idealistic resonances. This has always been available in the sociological and psychoanalytic conception of drive and automation. For example, Freud identified energy as an element signified in an attachment to any object, eg self, other, idea, place as a kind of adhesive force supplying coherence and stability to norms. Talcott Parsons treated affect as a medium of exchange as the motivational element in life that circulates, making motivation a collective resource that can be mobilized, tapped, organized in ways to produce different shapes and forms of social life and necessary to be factored into understanding all kinds of social arrangements. This conventional sociological view, making implicit use of a libidinal conception of energy, also relates to more recent work such as that of Deleuze on the ability to affect and be affected, revealing affect not as the kind of personal feeling suggested by emotion, but as a passage from one experiential state to another. This conception of affect causes us to ask how the body can be factored into speech and action. That is, Durkheim's conception of the pervasiveness of affect as a condition of social life, whether as drive or a formulaic relation to feelings, brings the body into speech by formulating speech and action as corporeal. What I have been saying implicitly (covertly for some to hear) is that the best sociological conception of corporeal speech might be the cliché, such as affect, when it is treated abstractly as if a dead letter and not invested with the life that theorizing can bring to it.

Affect then becomes a kind of collective resource that is tapped and stereotyped in different formulae and connected to agency, constraint, freedom, determinism, normalcy and eccentricity, and is spoken in all areas of life. Such a model of affect as a structural effect or collective resource makes reference to the capacity to move and be moved, to be animated beyond mundane distinctions etc and as I mentioned, to Freud's image of life as an instinct in contrast to death. In order to reach this point we need some notion (such as Parsons) of affect as a common resource or medium of exchange that circulates in collective life. In Plato's *Republic* it is this capacity in students that is looked for 'prior' to formal instruction, searching for a receptiveness in the learner that promises to disclose a capacity to be moved by speech to rediscover its affective tone as part of the engagement in learning itself, making all education a way of looking for those who seem to have a capacity to be moved (rather than grade point average). Socrates contrasts such a learner to the one he characterizes as in a state of comatose, the one who is immune to stimulation as if dead. We might honor the dead but we want students who are alive, erotic and not inert.

I have reviewed different uses of affect that have sustained its status as a topic over time. Today, approaches seem revitalized by the notion as if suddenly coming to recognize that the feelings and emotions of social life are worth studying. For example, those influenced over the years by scientific indifference now come to recognize that science itself (especially neurology) is capable of colonizing affect as a topic. In this sense the identification of affect as a topic can

begin to reveal interesting dimensions of collective life itself, giving us pause to question the possibility of the very topic. Here we might rethink the ways conceptions such as innovation and affect become important in our contemporary society. For example, it is interesting that science under the influence of its current enthusiasms now thinks that it has the resources to master subjectivity as a topic, but shows no conception of how its own affective relation to inquiry has a bearing on its work. Thus, inquiry is capable of producing examples *ad infinitum* of affect in social life that can be studied without fully engaging the affect of topicalization itself. It is time for me to bring into view the very possibility of affect as a topic. Plato would say that we have many images of affect and though this is not so wonderful, it is a start. It would be important to ask how these images are bound together not as in a definition or formula but as a problem-solving situation.

Can we suggest from such usage and influences that affect begins to point to a kind of insistence in life, a compulsive force that brings body and mind together in accord with various conceptions of the idea of habit, suggesting in its way a tension in embodiment between what Merleau-Ponty called absorbed coping and its contrast to the mechanization of self feeling in habituation? Lacan would say that the anxiety that affect points to here is the tension and divide between desire and drive, the tension causing us to ask in the idiom of sociology just what is the status of motivation and in particular, the motive to live? I propose that as such a force, desire and its limits appear as the joint insistence of mind and body upon each other in a dialectical relationship inhabiting such a space, making affect a figure for this tension itself, a trace of irresolute and irreparable automation that can be a source of humour as it was to Bergson or a signal and symptom of more.

### **Language and Affect**

Lacan permits us to refocus the question of affect as connected to the signifier in ways that centre its problem as a relationship to language and representation. For him, affects appear as representations that are end products of chains of signification as in declarations of feelings that are only beginnings and never ends of analysis. This relates to what we discussed earlier as avowals and disavowals, that landscape of usage in which affects are declared or indicated in ways that are meant to open inquiry and not to close it. Declarations such as “I am sad” or “I am mad” are only beginnings for theorizing to engage how such self expressions of sadness and anger point to sites of anxiety and ambiguity that need to be worked-through. This is what gives empirical quantitative research on affects such as happiness and sadness its comedic potential for a dialectical eye. If Derrida famously said that under every righteous presence there is a murder in progress, Freud would have said that under any and every self report or avowal or disavowal, there is an unconscious at work, just as Marx would have said that under any and every declaration there is an oriented interest at work. Lacan might say that underneath every affect there is a graph of desire in progress that reveals the conflicted trajectory of a problem-solving situation that is fundamentally ambiguous, a Grey Zone. In this view, citing affect as if self evident or a theme, is simply an excuse for not undertaking an analysis of the uncanny register of anxiety that underlies this chain, the fundamental ambiguity or trauma of meaning of which the avowal of an affect is a symptom. Lacan suggests that an affect is only interesting when it can be used as an opening for analysis and otherwise is distracting and serves as an alibi for not

developing the analysis. For Lacan the model of affect is anxiety and its uncanny register and the objective of inquiry should be to recover the idea from which the affect has become detached. In the idiom of addiction, affect is a symptom and its management only reveals the need to rediscover the fundamental problem to which the symptom is a reply. The affect of anxiety itself is a signal that invites theorizing and research to explore how it is grounded in something we might imagine as a question-and-answer exchange where the question is a problem and the answer is in part the discourse created in its name. Since Lacan distinguishes anxiety as an aim from what he calls a cause, we can note how each beginning isolates affect as if an object of fascination that is grounded in some influences and ‘cause’ that it leaves unspoken. In examining the abstracts for this conference I have noted how almost every single paper uses affect as an indication that points to an anxiety concerning a fundamental matter that it leaves unspoken. I suggest this as an intellectual challenge that we can playfully address as part of our conversation on affect. Affect then serves as a surface reflection of the movement of spirit in collective life and is both material in that sense and a disclosure of its separation from some idea which it affirms.

To examine such materialization we must appreciate its necessary unfolding as an ambiguous terrain due to the division in any notion, its fundamental otherness. To challenge the simple notion of affect as an undivided concept it is worth considering some puzzling mixtures of feeling in action that make the idea of affect more provocative and that reveal the complexity and heterogeneity of the usage, how it can never be self evident. Examples that can be used to demonstrate how the affective surface can be used as a work site for theorizing its sources come to mind easily in usage on the emotions, the fabled frustration-aggression hypothesis, ambivalence, and similar postures of adaptation. Can we apply this to the city itself? Let me offer three models of urban affect.

### **Excitation/Overflow/Hysteria**

The hyperstimulating city is assumed to compel movement and a search for diversity, perhaps what Simmel called adventure, the attempt to create and expose oneself to the surprise and excitement of contingency always intrinsic to the lure of congestion and density. Damisch captures this.

For the drift to which the air, movement, and even noises of the city expose the modern subject is not, or is no longer, an affair of either perspective or point of view, nor of judgment. Even if he remains in his lodging, the mere opening of a window can provoke in him an overflow that literally flings him outside of himself (Hubert Damisch, *Skyline: The Narcissistic City*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001)

The thrill of overflow, leading to the movement around the city like the fabled flaneur, or participation in its associational life and networks, also marks its propensity towards hysteria, acting out, addictive behavior and the continuous readjustments noted famously by Durkheim as the anomic character of urban life. Overflow, promising advance and adventure, must also make



its place for repression, longing and loss, and self destruction. In this sense if overflow is produced by the promise of productivity, its contingency means that it always must coexist with frustration and disappointment. Note how Valery shapes the anxiety of overflow to fit the ambiguity of Paris.

Can you imagine the incomparable disorder that can be maintained by ten thousand essentially singular beings? Just imagine the temperature that can be produced in one place by such a great number of prides, all comparing themselves. Paris contains and combines, and consummates or consumes most of the brilliant failures summoned by destiny to the delirious professions... This is the name I give to all those trades whose main tool is one's opinion of oneself, and whose raw material is the opinions others have of you. Those who follow these trades, doomed to be perpetual candidates, are necessarily forever afflicted with a kind of delusion of grandeur which is ceaselessly crossed and tormented by a kind of delusion of persecution. This population of uniques is ruled by the law of doing what no one has ever done, what no one will ever do... Each one founds his existence on the non-existence of others, but from them he must extort their consent not to exist (Paul Valery, *Selected Writings*, New York: A New Directions Book, 1950, 244)

No matter how they measure on happiness or depression scales, Valery makes reference to the *jouissance* of the Parisian selfies condemned to depend upon the recognition and approval of those who they refuse to acknowledge, thus showing us an image of the master-slave relation as a fundamental seat of anxiety in urban life. More than this he points to the dissatisfaction that can endanger such a life in its range of affects from overestimation, self aggrandizement, feelings of envy and persecution, to mixtures of feelings of power and potential *and* impotence. Yet beneath such expressions of affect Valery allows us to see the force and insistence of the motivation to live in a manner that differentiates one from others and excels in its way, as a necessary resource of the city and of its innovative potential.

### **Planning, Inertia/Obsession**

In response to the hyperstimulating city, a need for restrained concentration can be celebrated as requiring withdrawal from such an affectively charged environment. Celebrity thinkers such as Heidegger and Thoreau condemned the city for requiring creative souls to be exposed to its superfluity and seem forerunners in movements designed to reaffirm a quality of life endangered by the city. Of course affect comes to view not only in the noisy and detestable city but in their own conceptions of how purity needs to fortify itself against the infection of chaotic urban life. In response many moved to the village, country or hideaway, or tried to maintain a zone of tranquility within the city itself. Does obsession appear here in response to conditions of urban life seen as hysterical or at least, careless in habits? The city is often seen as unconsciously idealizing an unlive life, an alterity that imagines a sanitized zone of neighborliness and security away from the clamor of the urban. Yet such an image is maintained

in the imaginary of the city itself as an idealization of the good life unencumbered by noxious vitality. This tension between life and death is always played out in formulations of planning, gentrification, housing, zoning, and conceptions of the city as needing to administer its affective register by keeping extremes aligned in harmonious relationships. We can ask what kind of city does a creative life require and an answer is not self evident. Was this not in part the question raised in Plato's *Republic* and that has confounded us over time not simply about how it stands in relation to poetry but to the more timely question of writing and speaking and the place of the face-to-face in the city and whether or not technology has modified this question? We observe in many cities a tension between an administrative imaginary that aspires to design and organize *jouissance* and the affective force of the environment that often threatens to disturb administration because such an environment itself is affectively charged, touching its subject through the senses and especially visually and tactically.

### **Affect as In-Between**

The resurgence of affect studies today testifies to the dissatisfaction with the polarity of mind and body as an undialectical relation and the recognition of that incalculable space in-between that affect is meant to occupy. I have posited this relationship to be captured by the figure of insistence as the inexplicable upshot of the work of the unconscious in action, work that could hover between retention and extension, between restraining and giving.

It has been observed that breaking through to such hearing and seeing, the convention of the 'break-through', can be understood through the figure of the gift. Lewis Hyde (1979) uses this distinction to represent the kind of breakthrough that art might do (or creativity) in relation to the market. This theme has been taken up by Simmel (1950), Bataille, Lacan, and Derrida in the recognition that the gift stands for a challenge internal to the market (circulating system) much like the tendency to recover the oddness in the familiar that Wittgenstein always discussed. If gift is understood as the condition that is given, then our question becomes: what gives the conditions for giving? If the gift arises in relation to the economy and apart, it is not foreign to finite circulation but a relation of foreignness within the system (Mansfield 2010: 77).

The gift, disrupting the logic of exchange, of interaction of self and other, of mutually oriented, calculable, and intelligible (or not) identities, must depict the necessary and yet possibly impossible condition of giving that returns to the subject the possibility of enjoying ambiguity and life. Now imagine the body of language as the word and breathing life into this body as the mind and the relationship to the dead signifier as one of giving it life, giving the word the gift of life. This is what I have been suggesting that we do with language and all of our commonplace distinctions and I have tried to suggest one such direction for the notion of affect. This starts to frame the problem of reformulating affect by identifying it with conditions of giving as such and particularly in relation to the economic version of affect as a restricted economy to which we must be hospitable. As I take it up, the gift as applied to theorizing gives back to the signifier what belongs to it not as something it lacks but as the life it needs to be animated and infused with value. Wise people talk this way from Socrates to Walter Benjamin and beyond and those in comatose couldn't care less or think it's all weird and uncool. We give

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affect to the word, the signifier, and bring it to life. Baudrillard uses the formula “God is dead’ to show that it is not God that is dead empirically but the word God that has lost its weight, its value. I hinted that art has lost its value and weight when identified with compensatory striving and that we need to give it some value greater than this. I have been saying and try to show glimpses of how the same investment needs to be made with affect and indeed, that the affective drive in life and to live might be best seen as the power of empowerment, of giving more to what exists.