Hyperconnectivity through Deleuze: Indices of Affect

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One of the expressed aims of the conference 'Deleuze: Text and Image' was to examine Deleuze's work in relation to art. As one of the practising artists at the conference, I felt it was important to discuss the ways in which Deleuze makes his concepts available to artists, precisely because so many art practitioners are influenced by his concepts of process. The purpose of this chapter is not only to discuss the connections that Deleuze makes available, but to also indicate how one practises or enacts such connections. The way in which connections are constructed has direct bearing on the way theory may be understood as practice. To a great extent a person's ability to create and interact with concepts begins with the embodied activities that connect the virtual and the actual.

Brian Massumi's discussion of the 'connectibility' of concepts and the use made of concepts from the sciences by practitioners of the arts (Massumi, 2002, p. 21) sets the stage for my interest in a range of tactics of self-experimentation commonly associated with art practice. Those who run or fly with Deleuzian concepts, as if from the scene of the crime,¹ treat ideas, concepts and processes as environmental information available for the co-construction of a constantly forming world. When reading Deleuze, one immediately becomes aware that his work both invites connectivity and systematizes connectibility; to that end, it operates on a broad spectrum of connectibility, ranging from the most literal and tactile connections forged in the act of writing to the most attenuated, dispersed and abstracted forms of touch in yet-to-be materialized lines of flight.

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Rather than engaging particular concepts, or the program of Deleuze's ideas, this chapter focuses on affects that can be read in, staged from, or understood through Deleuze. The following discussions re-enter the experience of reading Deleuze using concepts that point to or invoke differing approaches to the embodied processes involved in conceptualization, perception and action: Agamben's 'linguistic being' and Arakawa and Gins' 'architectural body'. Agamben articulates the paradox in language regarding the way being is designated as both a set (the tree) and a singularity (a tree) (Agamben, 1993a, p. 9) while Arakawa and Gins (1997, 2003; Gins and Arakawa, 2002) situate language within the body-wide modes of sensing. Robert Verbrugge offers a unique perspective by reconsidering language as event perception.² The aim of these discussions is to investigate the extent to which Deleuze's writing affects a person's ability to enact modes of individuation.

For any practitioner, the intersection of know-how and how-to poses particular issues worth puzzling over. One such intersection – the relation of the virtual and the actual – was highlighted for me by Constantin Boundas during his opening plenary lecture at the Deleuze conference. He pointed out that the univocity which makes all the lines of flight possible exists in advance of our ability to trace them, adding that 'the actual is constructed while the virtual is extracted' (Boundas, 2007). The relation of the virtual to the actual hinges upon the meaning and mode of activity referred to as 'extraction' and the awkward spatio-temporal relationships it implies. The space-time of linguistic expression undermines nonlinear space-time and the immanent nature of concepts such as the virtual. From such a perspective, it seems that the virtual too must be constructed within the world. As bodies-in-process all we can do is constantly review the relation of the virtual to the/an outside and specify the kind of outside we are taking about in a relentless effort to construct modes of extraction most conducive to 'becoming'.

If we recognize the process of reading (in general, and specifically through this context of Deleuze) as an embodied

experience, a series of questions arise regarding the relations between and among:

- touch and connectivity;
- sensation and systematicity; and
- embodied cognition and language.

The lived implications of the second term in each of these dyads highlight the move towards abstraction and, as Massumi put it, 'systemic connectivity without the system' (Massumi, 2002, p. 21). To the extent that one can read the event of writing in a text, Deleuze seems to write from, through and towards bodily conditions. The extent – or perhaps the limit – of the role of language in the configuration of embodied activity is the crucial link in these transformations which converge or diverge at the point where the idea of connection meets the system of connectivity. Hyperconnectivity is a way of describing the variegated 'connectibilities' of words to bodies which are simultaneously proximity-bound and outside the system of touch.

The starting point for an inquiry into ways in which 'the body must either escape or re-enter habitual patterns of action – habitual actions that have customized life into a few standard patterns' (Gins and Arakawa, 2002, p. 62) begins by looking at events that include language but are not confined to language. Re-entry requires a person to use language as prompt and measure of all the sites of oneself – 'as the familiar passes through itself' (Arakawa and Gins, in Benjamin, 1994, p. 73). In order to develop a practice of embodied cognition – or what artists-turned-architects Arakawa and Gins (Gins and Arakawa, 2002) call an 'architectural body', language and nonlinguistic activities must be considered together. They insist that: 'What will need to be studied is which types and combinations of bodily movements are most conducive to an optimal *tentative constructing toward a holding in place*, and which constructed discursive sequences best constrain them' (2002, p. 59).

Re-entry allows both heuristic and transformational interactions enabling persons to circumscribe, circumvent and circumnavigate the rules of their self-organization. Numerous

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projects call for this kind of material practice – from Guattari's (1995) resingularization through chaosmosis to Latour's (2005) democratization of the human–nonhuman collective (2005) and Olkowski's (1999) call for a science of the singular, among others. Reconfigurative strategies must begin with a practice of embodied cognition. It is by way of the body and its existential insistence in the production of concepts that we can actively forget the hold language has on cognition by making language stammer (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 109). In 'He Stuttered' (1994), Deleuze observes that 'if the system appears to be in perpetual disequilibrium, if the system bifurcates – and has terms each of which traverses a zone of continuous variation – language itself will begin to vibrate and to stutter, and will not be confused with speech, which always assumes only one variable position among others and follows only one direction' (1994, p. 24). The site of connection between language and bodily event can be examined through the experience of lived abstraction, which can be made to dilate and be engaged heuristically as invitation to further action.³

There are many persons who have become, or are becoming, autodidactics of resingularization by reconfiguring multi- and cross-modal cognitive connectibility. Arakawa and Gins suggest that exemplars of transforming an 'organism-person-surround' into an 'architectural body' include Helen Keller, whose multi-modal perception produced emergent senses of body and of self; Ian Waterman, whose deafferent condition led him to work out how to direct all motor functions through visual control; Karl Dahlke, the blind mathematician who attributed tactile qualities to patterns in visualization in order to work on topological problems; or Temple Grandin, whose autism and brain physiology predispose her to process language in the visual cortex. Madeline Gins' book *Helen Keller or Arakawa* (1994) makes the textures of explanation and demonstration, thought and feeling, sensing and understanding, observing and enacting commingle. Gins slows and enlarges the processes by which the indeterminate and atmospheric boundaries of Helen Keller form and shift. Gins performs the 'tentativeness' invoking the 'thoroughly proprioceptive-kinaesthetic (and tactile)

graphicality' necessary for supposition and position to interact (1994, p. 12). In a later discussion of texture and distance, Gins voices what I take to be the condition of a destratified yet fully embodied person:

Von Senden reports that to a blind person who had only recently recovered her sight, a house that was miles away was thought of as being nearby, but requiring the taking of a lot of steps. *In* the blind, either there's no distance or all of distance. Certainly for the deafblind, at least, there's no perceiving at a distance whatsoever. (Gins, 1994, p. 143)

In light of the potential for individuals to explore cross-modal perception and perform resingularization, John Rajchman's (2000) discussion of affect in Deleuze is relevant. He notes that, for Deleuze (via Spinoza), affect

becomes the sensation of what favours or prevents, augments or diminishes, the powers of life of which we are capable each with one another; and it is in something of this same 'ethical' sense that Deleuze proposes to extract clinical categories (like 'hysteria' or 'perversion' or 'schizophrenia') from their legal and psychiatric contexts and make them a matter of experimentation in modes of life, in art and philosophy, or as categories of a philosophical-aesthetic 'clinic'. (Rajchman, 2000, p. 132)

By extracting sensations, affect becomes a 'kind of construction . . . thus art is less the incarnation of a life-world than a strange construct we inhabit only through transmutation or self-experimentation, or from which we emerge refreshed as if endowed with a new optic or nervous system' (Rajchman, 2000, p. 135).

If Rajchman's assessment of Deleuzian affect is correct, then language is one of many activities constituting the ecological folding of inside and outside, virtual and actual.⁴ Self-transmutation of the body through affect requires a connection between ideas and their anatomical basis. Hyperconnectivity

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consists in the doubling and paradoxical literalness of touch which may exist as the viscous prompt to change or as abstract and 'distinct from the terms of the relation' (Bains, 2006, p. 17). It is my hypothesis that the spectrum produced by the combination of Deleuze's sensitivity to touch, the intensity of his transmission of affect within and across texts, the intimacy of his immaculate buggeries and the timbre of his writing collaboration constitute *indices of affect* which are moving towards the systematicity of thought and of sensation, rather than towards self-experimentation and alternative ways of distributing connections through embodied cognition.

Though Giorgio Agamben (1993a, 1993b) has theorized linguistic being as a two-way street between universalized singularity and situated specificity, the choice of the term 'linguistic being' emphasizes the linguistic over the bodily, inadvertently contributing to the ease with which concepts are exploited for general application. However, Agamben makes this systemic connectibility perceivable by passing the biosphere of contingency through the systematicity of the history of ideas. From this intersection and interference emerge the 'signifier of the signifying function' (1993b, p. 84), the 'intelligence of an intelligibility' (1993a, p. 2) and the 'expropriation of all identity, so as to appropriate belonging itself' (1993a, p. 11). Agamben then applies these modes of lived abstraction to various sites. When applied to situated contingencies, 'whatever singularity' (1993a, p. 5) emerges; when applied to the site of person, 'linguistic being' (1993a, p. 9) surfaces; when applied to language, the 'example' (1993a, p. 9) disperses the system of connections. In this way, Agamben charts the history of abstraction as the way in which absoluteness has participated in the pragmatics of realization. I would suggest that it is the *systematicity* of language moving in all directions at once that requires attention and re-entry. The indexical character of language holds the most promise when investigating the affect that arises from the interaction or interference of top-down conceptual processing with bottom-up perceptual processing.

Robert Verbrugge's 1987 essay 'Language and Event Perception' reconsiders the basis of lived abstraction and

searches for what might be called the *indices of affect* or the affective potential of 'whatever singularity' and 'linguistic being'. He offers a theory grounded in perception and action that juggles the hyperconnectivity of embodied action in both its literalness and its increasing diffuseness. Verbrugge calls for the opening of language, through its indexical aspects, to the extra-linguistic. His ecological perspective on the biology of language suggests an alternative to the adversarial roles of language and perception; he argues against the tendency to understand the relation of perception to events as parallel to the relation of words to things (1987, pp. 162–3). He proposes to reverse this traditional analogy by making event perception and language mutually supportive (1987, p. 164), which may well be what Deleuze's logic of sense attempts to connect.

Approaching language as a constraint and directing event dissolves the divide between comprehension and perception in an effort to treat comprehension as a brand of event perception where language is its specific medium. For Verbrugge, language and perception approach one another in the 'quality of knowing they permit' (1987, p. 167). The aim of producing new perceptions, sensations and emotions that open the body and make new thought possible are consistent with the Deleuzian ethos.⁵ Both types of knowledge (perception and language) reposition the role of metaphoric language from representing correspondences to preparing a person for further action. In other words, language 'attunes' a person to the invariant features available in the environment through both virtual experience and precise description. For Arakawa and Gins' 'architectural body', however, attuning through language means providing triggers that enable modes of perception to be coordinated across different scales of action in the organism-person-environment. Verbrugge proposes that events constitute environmental information that is pragmatically unique because it is context-dependent. His notion of information expands to include the 'affordances'⁶ provided by communication, imagination and perception, and considers them to be as equally a part of the environmental array and interactive situation. In this theory of specific interaction, language and

art act as catalysts which trigger events that 'constrain the flow of imaginings' without containing representations of their own process or results (1987, p. 170).

The implication of Verbrugge's theory subsumes all language into index. He states: 'my extension of the term index to cover all language is based on what I see as an existential relation between all words and their natural occasions' (1987, p. 179). Language is an event that is neither representative nor arbitrary, but related to some 'natural' constraint, as are typical indexes such as a footprint, thunder, a bad cough or a pencil line (1987, p. 177). The indexical trace or concrete instance, however, is not the footprint of the body in language but the activity of language as it folds into and from the personal and interpersonal sites in which language happens: 'While language constraints may be abstract, they can nonetheless be *unique*. For the seasoned listener, the catalytic effect of words can be very precise.' (1987, p. 181) The important point here is that an index needs more than a signifier and a referent: 'people and their catalysts develop together', but only 'if we view language as an event integral to our environment and not an arbitrary associate of it' (1987, pp. 180–1). Verbrugge argues that language is not a collection of descriptive surrogates estranged from the world (1987, p. 183), but rather constituent parts of the world that would allow integration of the theory of language with other activities in the organism, and that this accounts for the persistence of language as a reliable tool for the exploration of adaptation, learning and coordination.⁷

Like Verbrugge, Arakawa and Gins (1997, 2003; Gins and Arakawa, 2002) are dissatisfied with the segregation of language from the study and practice of bodily engagement of an organism with its environment. Their observation that 'the body and its person, co-extensional only up to a point, share events but not extent' (Benjamin, 1994, p. 68) situates language within the realm of touch, rather than perceiving it as a mode of transcendence.

In *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari (1986) provide a complex description of embodied affect, an

affect which I find to be consistent throughout my experience of reading Deleuze:

As Kafka has the ape in 'A Report to an Academy' say, it isn't a question of a well-formed vertical movement toward the sky or in front of one's self, it is no longer a question of breaking through the roof, but of intensely going 'head over heels and away,' no matter where, even without moving; it isn't a question of liberty as against submission, but only a question of a line of escape or, rather, of a simple way out, 'right, left or in any direction,' as long as it is as little signifying as possible. (1986, p. 6)

This description moves away from linguistic being towards what Arakawa and Gins (Gins and Arakawa, 2002) call the 'architectural body' and 'procedural architecture'. Procedures are 'constructed as built propositions, [that] marshal existing logical connectives and position newly invented ones into the "real," steering, regulating and guiding interaction between the body and the bioscleave' (2002, pp. 58–9).⁸ Language is one node within the changing and changeable body-wide modes of connectibility. If, as Guattari (1995, p. 6) proposes, we should develop pragmatic interventions that occur at the intersections of asignifying systems with other semiotizing systems, we must be careful not to disconnect our absolute potentiality entirely from the environment of meaningful consequences, even when expressed through the hyperconnectivity of systematicity. Although Deleuze carries out infinitesimal degrees of initiating and brings forth movement in which effects precede and exceed their causes, I would assert that he is caught between linguistic being and architectural body, between concepts of process and the connectibility of material processes. For anyone who makes use of Deleuze's work to pursue modes of individuation, it is more difficult to investigate the ways in which the exteriority of relations is a part of the conditions of contingency and contiguity.

The subtitle of Paul Bains' book, *The Primacy of Semiosis: An Ontology of Relations*, seems to promise an investigation of the embodied conditions of language and languaging. He often

refers to Guattari's enaction – a concept of reciprocal specification between the knower and known – to insist that relations are real. However, Bains' reality moves away from Guattari's material practices by making language into the systematicity of relations that 'goes beyond the relative exteriority . . . to an absolute outside which is not that of an external world, but of the exteriority (and univocity) of relations to their terms' (Bains, 2006, p. 135). Unfortunately, this pure systematicity leaves out the connectibility of 'lived abstraction' which Massumi (2002), for one, sees as necessary part of 'operative reason' – the materiality of thought, perception and action (2002, p. 128). In his discussion of the sensation evident in operative reason, Massumi uses Stelarc's 'Suspension' works to conclude that:

To perform the conditions of evolution is to reproblematicize them. For an immortalized cyborg future-present, natural selection would no longer be the operative principle of evolutionary unfolding. The old way of generating evolutionary solution-cases will no longer hold. (Massumi, 2002, p. 125)

By approaching language as events within an evolutionary landscape which operate in relation to processes and direction of change, the materiality of cultural and metacultural selective mechanisms comes into play (Sheets-Johnstone, 1996, p. 15).

Through the Stoics, Bains recognizes that Agamben and Deleuze push towards a similar consideration of the event of language as separate from particular being. Bains valorizes Agamben's relentless move towards systematicity as a novel procedure. For Agamben and for Bains: 'Language is the capacity to signify rather than an actual signification, and what is expressed is communicability itself' adding 'for if language is potentiality, the "coming community" will not belong to the state but rather will appropriate its own being-in-language, or belonging itself without affirming a representable identity, and exist as absolute potentiality.' (Bains, 2006, p. 137)

How does a person appropriate being-in-language? What is the bodily process by which this occurs? I am concerned that Paul Bains finds a way – and historical support – to disconnect

the body-person (yet again) from an environment of meaningful consequences by removing the reality of relation to a pure and safe haven in the virtual. The more difficult task is to find how the absolute pure relation, under all known aliases, is drawn back into local scales of action. This would require that we examine the biology of language and study the capacity of persons to gerrymander the boundaries of their biological systems in order to utilize the embodied affects and effects of pure relation. As Maturana and Varela (1980, p. 13) explain, the nervous system expands its cognitive domain by making it possible to interact with 'pure relations' or 'abstract thought'. They describe 'abstract thinking' as the inclusion of cognitive domains within the cognitive domain, or the ability to include 'interactions with one's own internal states as if these were independent states' (1980, p. 13). Maturana and Varela seem to be describing the autopoietic basis for self-experimentation, since the biological mechanism for indirectly interacting with as-if scenarios (projected into/onto an external world in anticipation of the affects) is well established.

Arakawa and Gins propose that the way to anticipate and interact with the pure potential of language is to tactically build the questions that one may ask of the body-person. This process is what Arakawa and Gins call *parlaying indirectness* (2003, p. 20), and it is also what Maturana and Varela described as expanding a cognitive domain within the cognitive domain (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 13). Here the body-person is the mechanism that acts upon language as event and constructs a way to extract virtual states from the affective processes of the body.

If the biology of language plays a crucial role in forming 'what may happen next', the degree to which Deleuze is caught between linguistic being and the architectural body is a function of the interaction of the affects foregrounded in his writing and the modes of connectivity available in language. Perhaps we should consider the painful whorls of Deleuze's hypersensitive fingertips when thinking about the turbulent affects of his writing which sends us simultaneously towards the molar and the molecular. Hypersensitivity affects the perception of all textures – surfaces, objects, atmospheres and thoughts – not

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just the texture known to cause pain.⁹ In turn, such sensitivity might enhance the understanding of hyperconnectivity, a form of touch-without-touch inherent to language, and become infused in the act of writing. The intensity of touch and the avoidance of touch inflect Deleuze's text with embodied context, and paradoxically allow readers to feel-think (understand) either the intensity of affect or an elision of the body. As an artist, I am fascinated with both of these experiences – neither of which can be quarantined within the skull. This is to say, the imagination is a body-wide activity and thinking the unknown, the unknowable, the infinite, the impossible, the immaterial, the unstratified, the virtual and even the Real takes place within organism-person-environment, perturbing its homeostatic relationships.

Returning to the puzzle of how a person might extract the virtual, we are confronted by the notion that virtual events are quasi-causal (Boundas, 2007). Destratification may become the creative process by which the indirectness of causation can be parlayed and developed into a practice. Deleuze and Guattari describe the dangers of too-sudden destratification in bodily terms – suicidal or cancerous¹⁰ – because all constructions, including philosophical constructions, occur within artistic poiesis *and* organic autopoiesis. The extent to which language can be configured as one mode of embodied activity among many depends upon how the virtual is deployed: as the outside of the inside, as Deleuze suggests, or as the recourse to an outside, as Latour warns.¹¹

The case of Deleuzian affect is significant because he chose to intensify both the affects of language: the sensations that flow between word and body; and the most distributed filaments of hyperconnective (systematized) passage. To go 'head over heels and away' describes a heavy-handed embodied mode of action. To go 'even without moving' describes an intangible hyperconnective mode of passage from virtual to actual. In the realization of living, there is only the outside that we project and then extract from our projections to catalyze action (Verbrugge, 1987, p. 170). Whether we can become comfortable with the 'productive paradox' of the virtual (Massumi,

2002, p. 38) depends upon our ability to achieve a state of connectedness in which body, site and surround become variegated textures under the most deregulated conditions of selection, which Arakawa and Gins call 'atmospheric intricateness' (2003, p. 25). The literalness of this ecological approach prompts the hyperconnectivity of linguistic events to pass through the indices of affect and emerge as the anatomical basis of becoming.

Notes

- ¹ Brian Massumi discusses the 'issues of thefts from science for the humanities' through the notion of connectibility, observing that scientists might rightly object that a stolen or appropriated concept has ceased to have anything remotely scientific and function as a metaphor (2002, p. 29). To avoid taming concepts, Massumi advocates treating scientific concepts the way any other concept is treated – with creative violence sensitive to the concept's arrival and departure in the flow of language and how it tends to relay into other concepts (2002, pp. 19–20). The connectibility of concepts from science for the humanities applies to the connectibility of concepts from philosophy for practitioners under discussion here.
- ² See Gorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1993a); Arakawa and Gins' exploration of the relationships between and among an organism, person (1997, 2003; Gins and Arakawa, 2002); Verbrugge's (1987).
- ³ See Alphonso Lingis's discussion of 'direct expressions' (2003) and Barbara Bolt's (2004) insights into Peirce's 'dynamic objects' and 'immediate objects'.
- ⁴ In his discussion of the way Foucault avoids resuscitating old notions of interiority, Deleuze states that 'the outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside' (1988, pp. 96–7).
- ⁵ Brian Massumi's last comment in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* suggests that he believed the value of the book lay in the possibilities it opens in thought through the body (2004, p. xvi).
- ⁶ The term 'affordance' was used by ecological psychologist James J. Gibson to emphasize what the environment affords an individual in the way of discrimination (1966, p. 23). The term emphasizes the perceiver-specific use-value for a particular action capabilities related to a category of potential encounters (Warren and Shaw, 1985, p. 12).

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- ⁷ By 'natural', Verbrugge means part of the lived environment, which bears a similarity to what Arakawa and Gins call 'sited awareness' (Gins and Arakawa, 2002, p. 50) or the 'shape of awareness' (2002, p. 86).
- ⁸ In *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins state: 'Architecture's holding in place occurs within and as part of a prevailing atmospheric condition that others routinely call biosphere but which we, feeling the need to stress its dynamic nature, have renamed bioscleave' (Gins and Arakawa, 2002, p. 48). Cleaving, to adhere (to) or to divide (from), is the dynamic movement which is crucial for persons to understand about their own world-forming capacities. They introduced the term 'cleaving' in *To Not to Die* (Arakawa and Gins, 1987, pp. 40–50).
- ⁹ 'One might also note, looking at my fingertips, that I haven't got the normal protective whorls, so that touching anything, especially fabric, causes such irritation that I need long nails to protect them' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 5).
- ¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, 'Conclusions: Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines', *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004, p. 554).
- ¹¹ Bruno Latour in *Politics of Nature* provides a historical critique that warns of the dangers of maintaining 'recourse to an outside' (2005, pp. 34–41). He sees such recourse as a gambit of science which has kept it from taking part in political ecology.

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