

AFFECTS

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN

VLADIMIR SAFATLE

AND

MARCUS COELEN

Lacan famously said that affects lie and the only affect that doesn't lie is anxiety. The question of affect is of course a dense topic in Freud, not quite emotion, not quite drive, perhaps something repressed, perhaps some kind of oozing of the repressed, all of which seems to make and break social bonds. What is the relationship between affect and language? What is the difference between affect and the more conventional 'feeling'? In this conversation—centered around Vladimir Safatle's new book, *The Circuit of Affects: Political Bodies, Distress and The End of the Individual*, and Marcus Coelen's preface to this work—we will ask a question about affects and their role in politics, culture, and the clinic.

For Safatle, societies aren't just a system of norms and rules. They are, above all, systems of affects. Reconstructing some major insights in the Freudian theory of social bonds, Safatle argues for the system of affects produced inside hegemonic models of social bodies. Freud, in fact, gives us a way to think of social bonds that aren't just the production of affects such as fear and hope, but rather of distress. In Freud then, there is the possibility of thinking a social body where distress appears as a political affect of emancipation.

Coelen, picking up this thread in Safatle's work, investigates how the very complexity of affect is repeated in and triggers a certain polemos. Tracing affect back to the earliest mechanisms of identification and the precarious affective form—'I am the object'—Coelen asks what psychoanalytic frame might best accommodate this view, especially as it concerns the important Freudian affects of distress, and yes, discontent or unbehagen.

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Vladimir Safatle, Professor at the Department of Philosophy and the Institute of Psychology (Universidade de São Paulo). He is one of the coordinators of the Laboratory of Research in Social Theory, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis and coordinator of the edition of Theodor Adorno's Complete Work in Portuguese. Author of the translated books: *Grand Hotel Abyss: Desire, Recognition and the Restoration of the Subject* (Leuven University Press, 2016) and *La passion du négatif: Lacan et la dialectique* (Georg Olms, 2010).

Marcus Coelen is a psychoanalyst in Paris and Berlin as well as a researcher affiliated with the Department of Comparative Literature at the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität. He is the editor and translator of several books and compilations of texts by Maurice Blanchot into German among which *Vergehen (Le pas au-delà)* (2012) and the author of *Die Tyrannei des Partikularen. Lektüren Prousts* (2006) and editor of *George Bataille: Key Concepts* (2015) with M. Hewson.

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