

# THINKING FEELING

TIME-BASED WORKS BY **ZIGGY LEVER** AND **JOANNA MARGARET PAUL**



CURATED BY **PAULA BOOKER**



# The Account

*My present, then, is both sensation and movement; since my present forms an undivided whole, then the movement must be linked with the sensation, must prolong it in action. Whence I conclude that my present consists in a joint system of sensations and movements. My present is, in its essence, sensori-motor. ... This is to say that my present consists in the consciousness I have of my body.*

(Bergson, 1912/1991, p. 138)

*I suppose I would position art practices just here, on the borders or edges of conscious experience—interfacing between the social/cultural world and the individual's subjectivity, formed by her experiences in that world. The lucidity of dreamers is the lucidity of artists. I hope you won't misunderstand this in any romantic or untheorised way.*

(Hiller, 2008, p. 28)

## 1.

How can we account for lost time? Account for the misremembered movements, images and feelings that don't strictly adhere to a rational model of interpretation? Is it possible or even appropriate to try to understand the irrational through a rational lens? How can we account for that which exists at once in two worlds: the concrete and the sublime? In his 1988 book *Bergsonism*, Gilles Deleuze re-presents Henri Bergson's five operations of subjectivity as the intersection where virtual and actual states collide. These operations are thought of as a movement of sensation—contracting and relaxing (*détente*) between time/space, subject/object, virtual/actual and matter/memory. It is a map for the production of affects, showing the role memory plays at the core of the everyday.

Artists have historically participated in ideological preservation, whether it is to “embody eternal ideas of beauty” or to document events overlooked (Rancière, 2004, p. 1). Archival documents are often seen as analogous to memory: in the way they are fragments, and in the way that they are seemingly bound to time. But if memory isn't stored in any archive in the mind, then in



what sort of time (in the sense of duration) does it act? The usefulness of an archive will always be in its pastness—its preservation of cold, chronological, mechanical time. The usefulness of memories, however, lies in the present. In a recent scientific study, it was found that the function of memory is activated across disparate parts of the brain. The study revealed the existence of a disconnection between the ‘where’ (the physical memory of a place in an objective sense), and the ‘what’ (its positive or negative feeling) memory of a place: that these two aspects can be isolated and controlled (Redondo et al., 2014, pp. 426–430).



## 2.

When I was a kid I was a sleepwalker. I would wake up in funny places like in the garden or lounge or once on top of my wardrobe. For a sleepwalker there are two realities playing out: one is in the dream and one is outside it. In the dream I was rock-climbing or running from monsters, and in the waking world I was crawling in the hallway or surprising my parents by running around outside. As an adult I no longer sleepwalk, but I do experience lost time. One period I cannot account for lasted roughly eight hours. When I revisited the place where my memory was lost I was struck with the realisation that it was impossible to relate to that area in any way outside a present experience: the experience of that present, now.

Understanding subjectivity is a kind of impossible task, in the scientific model of understanding, anyway. In fact everything that I write is really working in some way to undo itself. Memory is malleable, and misremembering is a political act. By writing a condensed philosophical account for the movements of subjectivity, I am suspicious of any claims that I might be making, as it is not in my interest to assert scientific truths. I am not a scientist. I am also avoiding any subjective positions that I have—I am self-editing. The experience of lost time is uncanny, and a

little frightening, yet it is something fairly normal too. I only know that I experienced lost time because my memory of the after-event starts abruptly, and it is weird, because it probably wasn't abrupt, more like a slow realisation that I couldn't account for my whereabouts. Losing time is actually about losing your place in time—in your unique experience of time.

## 3.

Memories exist as a web of neural pathways that extend to every part of the brain. Like walking through long grass, the more often these pathways are traveled, the more recognisable they become as paths. The landscape of our bodies is constantly changing to accommodate the creation and retracing of these neural highways. In the last few years, some neuroscientists have focused their research on “associatively activated event representations in learning” (Takeuchi & Morris, 2014, p. 324). This shift towards the ‘internal representation of events’ (and away from theories based on stimuli and response) has proved that memory triggered “by a reminder cue of specific stimulus or the act of returning to a particular place” (p. 324) can effectively take the place of the original events associated with that memory, thus altering that memory's network.<sup>1</sup> These findings show a direct correlation to a Bergsonian understanding of the operation of memory, which is ‘not to store up recollections, but simply to choose’ whichever neural network lays the best path for our future actions to carry out (1912/1991, p. 179). Gilles Deleuze refers to this process as the operation of subjectivity.



<sup>1</sup> This research could have useful application in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers, amongst other stimuli-related disorders like epilepsy or bi-polar disorders.



#### 4.

In *Matter and Memory* (1912), Bergson sets up the binary oppositions of subject and object, phenomenology and ontology, body and mind as a “frankly dualistic” project (1912/1991, p. 9). Instead of sticking to a strict dualism, his philosophy uses this framework to “lessen greatly, if not overcome, the theoretical difficulties” of dualism. He moves instead towards a multiplicity of events that allows both dualism (difference in kind) and monism (difference in degree) to coexist; going beyond the two terms (1912/1991, p. 9). Bergson’s method to move beyond the dogmas of philosophical assumption is (paradoxically) called ‘intuition’. Different from the common usage and meaning of the word today, Bergson’s method of intuition operates through a series of ‘strict rules’:<sup>2</sup> a mathematical equation determined to see a precise philosophical understanding.<sup>3</sup> Not to be confused with analysis (which deals with set parameters, ‘decomposing’ or categorising “what is already known”), “Intuition, by contrast is that mode of (internal) transport into the heart of a thing such that it suits that thing alone, its particularity in all its details” (Grosz, 2005, p. 8). Bergson’s intuitive method can be described as the creative sibling of analysis—where analysis deals with the rationalisation of the relatable, representational and sensible—intuition is an internal contraction towards the ‘nature’ of a thing at *this* precise moment in its duration *as* a thing. Intuition then dilates back into analysis, folding over itself. This durational movement is expressed as *détente* (contraction/dilation): the movement of the pupil or aperture of a lens to filter depth of field and the amount of light being received.

Thinking about intuition as movement is vital to this “method for attunement with the concrete specificities of the real” (Grosz, 2005, p. 7). Concerning the relationship between art and science, “Intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy”, rather it takes flight at the moment rationality or common modes of address fail to reconcile with the present (Deleuze, 1988, p. 13). Bergson understood intuition as ‘a simple act’. However, that does not undo its complex relationship with multiple durations/actions (1966/1988a, p. 13). As Elizabeth Grosz assures:

*Intuition is not simply the discernment of natural differences, qualitative differences or differences in kind; it is the inner orientation to tendency, to the differences between tendencies. It is the capacity to understand natural differences beyond a monistic or dualistic model, not as a relation of two terms, but as the convergence of two tendencies or dispositions, not marked by negation but brought together through contraction/dilation.*

(2005, p. 9)

#### 5.

The ‘five aspects’ of the subjective\* are in no way chronological or linear, they are rather “distributed on two very different lines of facts”: an objective line intersecting a subjective line, producing affects (Deleuze, 1966/1988b, p. 53). Subjectivity in this way not only bridges the gap between “matter and memory, perception and recollection, objective and subjective” but suggests that all these divisions are entirely contingent on one another (1966/1988b, p. 53). It is in this sense that subjectivity is intuited—determined by and acting upon duration. This is the “sense that we are determined by our pasts, but are also specifically future-orientated beings” (O’Sullivan, 2013, p. 167). The notion of the present as an intermediate stage between ‘past’ and ‘future’ where subjectivity is performed “always occupies a certain duration, the actual present moment itself being an unattainable mathematical point” (p. 167).

#### 6.

The mythical image of a painter *en plein air*, trying to convey something beyond representation in a landscape; or the still life, preserving and altering images of decaying matter; the ‘motorway scene’ in Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris*; the potter whose clay is elastic on the wheel, like a record of movement over time; the accidental recording of a table top (obscured) by a mobile phone, that stops finally when the remaining memory is exhausted; the Snapchatted image that is defined by its temporality. These fragmentary images all deal with memory and the real. I suppose that the real problem for me is attunement. How do you know when to tune in, or change channel? If you are looking for a particular feeling to attune towards you won’t find it here. You’ll be presented instead with another monster that you’ll have to accept on entirely new terms.

2 1. “Apply the test of true and false to problems themselves”. 2. “Struggle against illusion, rediscover the true differences in kind or articulations of the real”. 3. “State problems and solve them in terms of time rather than space”. See “Intuition as Method” in *Bergsonism* (1966), pp. 13–35.  
3 In *Bergsonism* (1966), Gilles Deleuze asks “How is intuition—which primarily denotes an immediate knowledge (*connaissance*)—capable of forming a method, once it is accepted that the method involves one or several mediations?” (p. 14).



## Addendum

\*The five operations of subjectivity from *Bergsonism* (1966) are as follows:

### 1. Need-subjectivity

*The moment of negation*

Need arrests and subverts the process of duration, identifying every point of interest into nodes.

### 2. Brain-subjectivity

*The moment of interval or of indetermination*

This is where the nodes created by 'need' are given edges,<sup>4</sup> and assimilated into a network(s). It is here when a virtual structure is molded around the fragments of need simultaneously providing a lattice for an idea to form. It is also the creation of 'interval' or interstice between nodes, as the brain "divides up excitation infinitely" and motor neurons allow "us to choose between several possible reactions ... establishing a zone of indetermination".

### 3. Affection-subjectivity

*The moment of pain*

Affection is the muddying of the 'objective' and 'subjective' lines of subjectivity. It is itself an operation that is entirely contingent on the other lines of subjectivity, Deleuze suggesting it "is the price paid by the brain or by conscious perception". Affection is received, instead of created, and "depends on the intersection of the two lines" (1966/1988b, p. 53).

### 4. Recollection-subjectivity

*The primary aspect of memory*

Recollection fills the gaps between needs, and is experience (memory) drawn from/projected in order to 'make sense' of the present. It is the materialising of memory in the present.

### 5. Contraction-subjectivity

*The second aspect of memory*

The point of implosion of the above excitations, based on the "body being no more a punctiform instant in time than a mathematical point in space" (Deleuze, 1966/1988b, p. 53). This is the concentration of memory into action that can be useful in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> See Galloway, A. R., & Thacker, E. (2007). *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks. Electronic Mediations* Vol. 21. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



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