HUMAN AFFAIRS *17*, 168–181, 2007 DOI: 10.2478/v10023-007-0015-8

PRACTICE, SPATIALITY AND EMBODIED EMOTIONS: AN OUTLINE OF A GEOGRAPHY OF PRACTICE

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Abstract: The paper outlines an approach to social analysis/human geography taking off from a social ontology of practice. This means a focus of attention to embodied or practical knowledges and their formation in people's everyday lives, to the world of experiences and emotions, and to the infinitude of encounters through which we make the world and are made by it in turn. The paper proceeds in three parts. First, considering the way in which subjectivity and identity are created in and through practices sets the ground. The two following sections are extensions from that discussing "embodiment and spatiality" and "affectivity and emotion" respectively. The purpose is threefold; to develop the sensuous character of practice, to consider the spatialities involved in that character, and to discuss possible developments including power and the social differentiation of bodies. The paper is concluded by a short discussion of the geographies following from the suggested account.

Keywords: Practice; embodiment; space-time; emotion.

In this paper, I want to advocate an approach to human/social/cultural geography that takes its starting point in a social ontology of *practice*. By that I mean, first, an approach claiming that nothing in the social world is prior to human practice; not consciousness, ideas or meaning; not structures or mechanisms; and not discourses, assemblages or networks. Secondly, it is an approach that aims to give meaning to unnoticed and apparently insignificant activities of everyday life, to issues of "banality" or "everydayness" (Lefebvre 1958/1961, Seigworth 2000). This means that my main concern is with embodied or practical knowledges and their formation in people's everyday lives, with the world of emotions, desire and imagination, and with the infinitude of encounters through which we make the world and are made by it in turn. An important dimension of that is the social construction of time-space. In emphasizing the temporality and spatiality of practice, I join a group of geographers that even if they do not see themselves as part of the same stream, have accentuation of the time-space constitution of social life in common (e.g. Hägerstrand 1974, 1982, Harvey 1996, Thrift 1996, Massey 1994, 2005). It should be noticed, however, that due to limited writing space, the main emphasis in this paper will be at the spatial dimension. The paper accordingly proceeds in three parts. First, I set the ground by shortly considering the way in which subjectivity and identity are created in and through practices and through a radical intersubjectivity of joint action and communication. The two following sections are extensions from that discussing "embodiment and spatiality" and "affectivity and emotion" respectively. The purpose is

threefold; to develop the sensuous character of practice, to consider the spatialities involved in that character, and to discuss possible developments including power and the social differentiation of bodies. The paper is concluded by a short discussion of the geographies following from the suggested account.

Practice and subjectivity

The approach I want to outline starts from the idea that social life is plied by a series of human practices, and that people's understanding of the world comes out of their everyday practices. Like many contemporary approaches in social theory, this proposition involves a rejection of the classic Cartesian notion of subjects as isolated and disengaged beings made up of disparate parts, mind and body. In this view, consciousness is a disembodied, immaterial unity with full reflexive access to itself, and the body in turn is a material object to which consciousness is attached. The dissociation from this notion has followed different paths. With a "slogan" borrowed from Merleau-Ponty, the one I want to pursue can be formulated as "Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can'" (1962, 137). That is, subjectivity and meaning is basically constituted *in practice.*

One source of inspiration for this approach has been Heidegger's existential phenomenology—in particular as formulated in *Being and Time* (1962). In this work, "Dasein" or human "being-in-the-world" is described as an existential "facticity"—as a practical, directional, everyday involvement. Our concern with the environment takes form through tools and articles for everyday use as well as useful products and projects —all together designated as "equipment" (*Zeug*). "Being-in-the-world" is the everyday skilful coping or engagement with an environment, including things as well as other human beings. That means that our "environment" does not arrange itself as something given in advance but as a totality of equipment dealt with in practice. Heidegger describes very simple skills—hammering, walking into a room, using turn signals, etc.—and shows how these everyday coping skills involve a familiarity with the world that enables us to make sense of things and to find our way about in our public environment. He thus demonstrates that the only ground we have or need to have for the intelligibility of thought and action is in the everyday practices themselves, not in some hidden process of thinking or of history (Dreyfus and Hall 1992). But the skills involved in these everyday practices are in themselves remarkable. Even in the most banal activities, extensive biological and cultural resources are mobilized.

As an addition to the inspiration taken from Heidegger, and pointing more in direction of the realm of the social, I draw on Merleau-Ponty's sensuous phenomenology of *lived experience,* where practice becomes closely connected to the question of perception (1962, 1968). Merleau-Ponty's discussion of perception starts from a critique of two opposed strands of thought: empiricism and intellectualism. The former sees perception as a mere physical sensation and as a reflection of a pre-given, isolated object in the visual system. In so doing, it fails to recognize the phenomenological fact that perception always involves "somebody" sensing something and that this somebody produces significance in the process. The other tradition, intellectualism, consider perception to be a conscious judgement or constituting act and

therefore presupposes a pre-given, independent mind. In other words, intellectualism presupposes the subject of perception, just as empiricism presupposes the object. For Merleau-Ponty, contrarily, perception is an opening-out to and engagement with otherness, a dialectical relationship of the body and its environment, which simultaneously constitutes both subject and object. Therefore, perception is not in the first instance an "experience" of objects, it is a conjunction and involvement with them, and the related mode of consciousness is a practical consciousness which is pre-reflective, pre-objective and pre-egological (Crossley 1996). We should speak of neither reflection nor observation, but of participation, and it is in this participation or practice that meaning and subjectivity are constituted.

It is this kind of thinking that is later sociologised and viewed in a historical/geographical setting by authors who formulate social theories of practice, such as Lefebvre (1958, 1961), Giddens (1984), Bourdieu (1977, 1990), and Schatzki (1996, 2002). When Lefebvre writes about the importance of everyday life, Giddens about "practical consciousness" as the basis of many of our day-to-day activities, Bourdieu about "habitus" as internalised dispositions for action and about people's "sense of the game", and Schatzki about "practical intelligibility" as what makes sense to a person to do, the point is exactly this transcendence of the distinction between subjective and objective, coming from the inseparability of practice and subjectivity. What these authors also make clear is that practices should not be seen as isolated, intentional acts, but rather as continuous flows of conduct which are always future-oriented or part of a project. In this way, they also establish a connection between practices and the constitution and maintenance of social arrangements and ordering.

One more dimension is important to consider in relation to the constitution of subjectivity and meaning—the close connection between everyday practice and everyday language. Merleau-Ponty discusses how thought and language are two sides of the same coin each needing its "other half" for its own existence. It is Wittgenstein however, in particular in his late work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), who most clearly substantiates the connection between language and social practice. In accordance with the contributions from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein argues that meaning and significance cannot be ascribed to some kind of pre-given independent phenomenon; they are produced by human beings in the course of their specific activities. To know the meaning of words is to be able to use them as an integral part of routine enactment of everyday life. That is, speaking and writing are always connected to practices and to the specific situations in which they are conducted. What Wittgenstein provides with his philosophy of language is therefore simultaneously a philosophy of practice—a phenomenological hermeneutics in which being a language user is in absolute concordance with being an acting and speaking person situated in a specific context. Language becomes a medium for social practice—and vice versa. As a consequence, Wittgenstein argued for a return to everyday life—to the life that we share through our language with one another. This strategy brings us to yet another aspect of the relationship between practice, subjectivity and meaning, namely, that our understanding of the world is worked out in joint action and dialogue. Wittgenstein uses the notions of "language game" and "form of life" to crystallise the significance of language and the relationship between language and practice, saying:

> Here the term "language-*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life (1953 I, 11e)

The social character of these notions is further explored through what is known as Wittgenstein's "private language argument". Here, he argues that since language is developed through practical experience and learning, and since one cannot name an object without having a frame of understanding from which to do so, language can only exist *intersubjectively*. Without shared human activity no structured "reality" or practical experiential basis exists that makes it possible to identify items for designation.

The above ideas have at least three implications. The first one is that practice consists of bodily doings and sayings alike and that it would be a mistake to grant priority to one over the other. How different authors establish a close (but yet indefinite) connection between practices and narratives also underlines this point (Ricoeur 1984, de Certeau 1984, see also Simonsen 2004). Secondly, these ideas imply that the classical model of the sovereign subject grounded in reason can be transcended without thereby giving up the notions of subject and subjectivity. The "private language argument" shows that self-consciousness has no primacy over consciousness of the existence of "other" people, since language—which is collective in character—provides access to both. Intersubjectivity, then, does not come from a primary subjectivity; it is the other way round. This reversal is what has caused Crossley (1996) to characterize Wittgenstein's (and Merleau-Ponty's) thinking as "radical intersubjectivity". Thirdly, the practices concerned in this regard are those of humans. In saying that, I dissociate myself from actor-network's and other posthumanist ontologies' levelling of human and nonhuman "activity". This is a position close to what Schatzki (2002) calls "residual" or "agential" humanism, emphasizing socio-cultural experience and the unique social significance of human agency.

The general argument, then, relocates our understanding of the world from consciousness to the public sphere (practice, language use, and intersubjectivity) and relates it to the innumerable sets of language games that we play with one another as social beings. The notion of "forms of life" can (among other things) be appropriated as a notion of culture—as concordant ways of living within which the language games are located and utterances acquire meaning. The constitution of meaning is referred to networks of social practice and to people's capability of acting within different social, temporal and spatial contexts.

Embodiment and spatiality

Another important characteristic of lived, everyday practices is that they are intrinsically corporeal. Due to Merleau-Ponty (1962) we are our bodies and all our experiences and the meanings that animate our lives are based in active corporeal involvement in the world. The means by which bodies in this sense possess the world are perception and bodily motility. Lived experience, then, is located in the "mid-point" between mind and body, or between subject and object—an intersubjective space of perception and the body. Perception on its part is based in sensuous practices; in looking, listening and touching, etc. as acquired, cultural, habit-based forms of conduct. It is an active process

relating to our ongoing projects and practices, and it concerns the whole sensing body. This means that the human body takes up a dual role as both the vehicle of perception and the object perceived, as a body-in-the-world—*a lived body*—which "knows" itself by virtue of its active relation to this world. This "relation" might be taken even farther, Merleau-Ponty (1968) suggests, by meshing the body (subject-object) into the perceptible world. His term for this extended conception of the body is *flesh*; a generative body of being and becoming that touches, sees, hears, smells and tastes both itself and "other" flesh and becomes aware of itself in the process. The flesh of the body becomes part of the flesh of the world, where the flesh of the world refers to the perceptibility that characterizes all worldly reality, which is actualised but not created by human perception. Probably the most important aspect of the flesh is its *reversibility*, by which practices and perceptions of the body-subjects are connected in an interworld or "intermundane space". Body-subjects-objects are visible-seers, tangible-touchers, audible listeners etc, enacting an ongoing intertwining between the flesh of the body, the flesh of others and the flesh of the world. For a theory of practice, the most significant consequence of this "mediation through reversal" is the way in which it grounds the principle of exchangeability or *intercorporeality*. Since we are all "perceiving-perceptibles" our experiences are transitive; we share sensuous experiences and even partially inhabit the "feeling" side of another's body. It is, however, important to appreciate that it is not only the sheer sensibility of the body that institutes intercorporeality. It is as well the meaning involved in the bodily practices of the other. One does not just perceive another body as a material object; rather one is affected by the meaning of its appearance. The other body is animated and its animation communicates and calls for response. You do not contemplate the communications of the other, they affect you and you reply to them.

The corporeality of social practices, however, does not concern only the sensuous, generative and intercorporeal nature of lived experiences, but also how these embodied experiences themselves form a basis for social action. Bourdieu's notion of "habitus", seen as embodied history which is internalised as a second nature, describes this. According to this notion, social structures and cultural schemes are *incorporated* in agents and thus function as generative dispositions behind their schemes of action:

> Adapting a phrase of Proust's, one might say that arms and legs are full of numb imperatives. One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, *made* body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instil a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as "sit up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand", and inscribe the most fundamental principles of arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement. (Bourdieu 1990, 69)

The idea of incorporation opens up to an understanding of the ways in which bodies are marked by assumptions made about their gender, race, ethnicity, class, and "natural" abilities. While authors like Foucault and Bourdieu have addressed this issue, it is feminist theorists who most extensively have taken up the task of articulating the social and bodily forces that both constrain and enable practices and the formation of body images (cf. Weiss 1999). Major contributors are Young (1990a), Bordo (1993), Butler

(1993), and Grosz (1999). In this connection, I prefer to draw on Toril Moi (1999) who, through a re-reading of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, attempts to transcend the sex/gender division in feminist theory. Moi/de Beauvoir, drawing on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty alike, takes off from a conception of the body as a *situation.* It is a situation amongst (and intertwined with) many others—such as class, ethnicity, nationality, biography, location etc.—but it is a unique one because it is the medium of our experiences of ourselves and of our environment. Following Sartre, she considers the situation (and here the body) to be a structural relationship between our projects (freedom) and the world (which includes the body). In this way, the body appears as a combination of *facticity*, an existential condition and basis for our understanding of ourselves and our environment, and *project*, a phenomenon in the process of becoming, dependent on our practices and projects. The meaning of a woman's body is connected to her projects in the world—to the way in which she uses her agency—but it is also marked by all her other life-situations. There are countless ways of living out the specific burdens and potentialities of being a woman. It might be that the use of the idea of projects introduces a too strong element of freedom and consciousness, but the important point is the way in which the approach allows Moi—in consistency with ideas of embodiment and incorporation—to see the relationship between the body and social identity as neither necessary nor accidental; it is *contingent*. Her understanding of the body as undivided sex/gender is both historical and open—the body is always in a process of becoming, marked by contextual circumstances and by our shifting and fluctuating experiences of ourselves in the world.

An important aspect of the overall locatedness of the body is its situatedness in space and time, which in continuation of the above sets a close connection between embodied practices and space-time. To begin with, the situatedness can accentuate the "place character" of space (see e.g. Casey 1993, 1997). The body is always in place; notwithstanding developments of "placelessness", "disembeddedness", mobility and "hyperspace", we cannot escape that fact. More important, however, is the way in which the body itself is spatial. Overlapping, but different, contributions from Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre can elaborate on bodily spatiality. Merleau-Ponty, to a start, states that the spatiality of the body is not a spatiality of *position*, but one of *situation*. This goes for temporality as well, and it means that we should avoid thinking of our bodies as being *in* space or *in* time—they *inhabit* space and time:

> I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 140)

Active bodies, using their acquired schemes and habits, position their world around themselves and constitute that world as "ready-to-hand", to use Heidegger's expression. These are moving bodies "measuring" space in their active construction of a meaningful world. In taking up or inhabiting space, bodies move through it and are affected by the "where" of that movement. It is through this movement that space as well as bodies takes shape. Inhabiting space is both about "finding our way" and how we come to "feel at home". It therefore involves a continuous negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar, making space habitable but also receiving new impression depending on

which way we turn and what is within reach. This viewpoint also accentuates the spatio-temporal orientation of experience and perception:

> When I say that I see an object at a distance, I mean that I already hold it, or that I still hold it, it is in the future or in the past as well as being in space… Perception provides me with a "field of presence" in the broad sense, extending in two dimensions; the here-there dimension and the past-present-future dimension. (*ibid*., 265)

This means that we see something from "here" at its place "there" at the same time. The here and the there are contemporary in our experience, but the experience also involves the past and the future, in this way constituting the inseparability of space and time.

Notwithstanding internal disagreements[1], I think Lefebvre (1991) can add to Merleau-Ponty's ideas with his stronger emphasis on social issues and on the production of space. He establishes a material basis for the production of space consisting of

> a practical and fleshy body conceived of as totality complete with spatial qualities (symmetries, asymmetries) and energetic properties (discharges, economies, waste) (Lefebvre 1991, 61).

An important precondition of the production of space is (parallel to Merleau-Ponty) that each living body both *is* and *has* its space; it produces itself in space at the same time as it produces that space.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Lefebvre assigns an important role to the body in the "lived experience". As a part of that, the body constitutes a practico-sensory realm in which space is perceived through sight, smells, tastes, touch and hearing. It produces a space which is both biomorphic and anthropological. The relationship to the environment is conducted through a double process of orientation and demarcation—practical as well as symbolic. Through their social activities, human bodies demarcate, beacon and sign their space, leaving traces (networks, places, boundaries) that are both symbolic and material. Social space and the living body are subsequently connected in a conception of *the spatial body*:

> A body so conceived, as produced and as the production of space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space … the spatial body's material character derives from space, from the energy that is deployed and put to use there (Lefebvre 1991, 195).

When Lefebvre refers to the energy of the body, it is not only a material/biological notion. With reference to Nietzsche, he emphasizes the Dionysian side of existence according to which play, struggle, art, festival, sexuality and love—in short, Eros—are themselves necessities. They are parts of the transgressive energies of the body. Further, these activities concern not only the material and meaningful production of space, but also the capacity to transgress the "everydayness" of modern life. It involves participation, conflict and the appropriation of space for creative, generative, bodily practices, as formulated for instance in the book on "the right to the city" (Lefebvre 1996).

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[1] Lefebvre criticised Merleau-Ponty for his focus on perception and for not taking social practice sufficiently into consideration (see e.g. Lefebvre 1991, 183n). For a more thorough discussion of Lefebvre's treatment of the body see Simonsen (2005).

Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre thus provide an understanding of the indispensable relationships among practice, body and space. What they do not appreciate to a satisfactory degree is the differences among bodies.[2] Above, I approached difference by way of Moi's/de Beauvoir's attempt to theorize sex/gender through the notion of the body as a situation. As a preliminary attempt to spatialize this notion, it is worth noticing the now well-known essay by Iris Marion Young (1990a) in which she explores the possibility of a specifically "feminine" body comportment and relation in space. She displays a contradictory spatiality primarily based on the historical and cultural fact that women live their bodies simultaneously as subjects and objects. A woman has an ambiguous experience of her body on the one hand as background and means for her life-projects and on the other hand as a potential object of others' intentions. This ambiguous bodily existence tends to "keep her in her place", and it influences her manner of movement, her relationship to her surroundings and her appropriation of space. Presumably other deviations from the "neutral" body—such as skin colour, age, sexuality, and bodily ability—similarly give rise to specific practical and symbolic spatialities.

What I have tried to establish so far, then, is an indispensable relationship between practice, body and space(-time). This provides a theory of engagement that invites extension in at least two directions. First, the social body becomes "the geography closest in"—a constitutive social spatiality reaching out towards other socio-spatial scales from local configurations to national and transnational/global connections. Secondly, as already indicated, the intercorporeality and connectivity of bodies involve not only spaces of sensation, but of affectivity and emotion as well.

Affectivity and emotion

Seeking an understanding of emotion connected to practice, embodiment and spatiality once more leads me to phenomenology.[3] Phenomenology, as a start, suggests that we are never "un-touched" of the world around us—as in Heidegger's ideas of *moods* (Heidegger 1962, Guignon 2003). Moods (*Stimmung*) or our Being-attuned are, according to Heidegger, "a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior* to all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure" (1962, 175). Moods are basic human attributes, but they are not inner physical and psychic states. We should rather see them as attunements—contextual significances of the world, associated with practices, lifemode and social situation. The same ideas of situatedness and of the collapse of the distinction between "inner" and "outer" we find, in a much more embodied way, in Merleau-Ponty's visions on emotion. As a first approximation, we can condensate his view as a notion of *situated corporeal attitudes*, understood as ways of being and acting in relation to the world (Crossley

[2] Merleau-Ponty has been criticised for offering a "neutral" phenomenology of the body and building on the male as the norm (Irigaray 1984, Young 1990a). Lefebvre stresses the "right to difference" but does not connect this to the spatial body.

[3] Within geography issues of emotion and affect have gained increasing attention during the later years—se e.g. Social and Cultural Geography (2004), Thrift (2004), Davidson, Bondi and Smith (2005). Few however seems to consult phenomenology for a theoretical ground.

1996). Emotions are inseparable from other aspects of subjectivity, such as perception, speech/talk, gestures, practices and interpretations of the surrounding world, and they primordially function at the pre-reflexive level.[4] They are, in short, ways of relating. This account gives occasion for a double conception of emotional spatiality.

One side of emotions are an *expressive space* of the body's movements, which might be seen as a performative element of emotion. Emotions are something practised and showed. Here, emotions are connected to the expressive and communicative body. The body, Merleau-Ponty argues, is comparable to an expressive work of art, but one that express emotions in the form of *living meaning*. These meanings are communicated and "blindly" apprehended through corporeal intentions and gestures that reciprocally (or intercorporeally) link one body to another:

> Faced with an angry or threatening gesture, I have no need, in order to understand it, to recall the feelings which I myself experienced when I used these gestures on my own account…. I do not see anger or a threatening attitude as a psychic fact hidden behind the gesture, I read anger in it. The gesture *does not make me think* of anger, it is anger itself…. The sense of gestures is not given, but understood, that is, recaptured by an act on the spectator's part. The whole difficulty is to conceive this act clearly without confusing it with a cognitive operation. The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the person's intention inhabited my body and mine his…. One can see what there is in common between the gesture and its meaning, for example in the case of emotional expression and the emotions themselves: the smile, the relaxed face, gaiety of gesture really have in them the rhythm of action, the mode of being in the world which is joy itself (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 184-186).

Even if feeling is an integral part of emotional experience, Merleau-Ponty obviously does not identify it with feelings in the sense of "inner states". Emotional experience is something "in-between"—situated in the perceptibility of its gestures. In this way, emotion as living meanings relates not only to meaning in the above-mentioned sense of something created through practice and the experience of mobile bodies, but also to meaning as it is found in artwork, expressed in poetic or musical meaning. Emotional meanings are "secreted" in bodily gestures in the same way that musical/poetic meaning is "secreted" in a phrase of a sonata or a poem. This feature also endows them with a cultural situatedness. Biological and manufactured alike, they like speech are contextually performed:

> It is no more natural, and no less conventional, to shout in anger or to kiss in love than to call a table "a table". Feelings and passional conduct are invented like words (*ibid*., 189).

The other side of emotional spatiality is *affective space*, which is the space in which we are emotionally in touch—open to the world and aware of its "affect" on us. This

[4] This means that I depart from the recent tendency to distinguish between affect and emotion, seeing them as unmediated sensation and conscious recognition respectively (see e.g. Massumi 2002). This dichotomous model on the one hand misses how that which is not consciously recognised might still be mediated by past experiences, and on the other hand it risks cutting off emotions from the lived experience of being and from having a body (see also Ahmed 2004).

means that emotions are not just actions, something that our bodies express or articulate. Another aspect of them is how we are possessed by them or swept into their grasp, as when experiencing or appreciating a work of art. It is the felt sense of having been moved emotionally, the more passive side of emotional experience. Cataldi (1993, 106) describes this phenomenon as follows:

> It coincides with the senses in which we might say that we have fallen into love, are gripped with fear or seized by terror, burdened with remorse, overcome by shame, filled with joy, cast into despair, and so forth. It coincides, that is, with a view of emotions as "passions".

This aspect of "affectivity" suggests an active-passive duality (in form of mutual implication) as a complementary relation. Emotions are neither "actions" nor "passions" (understood as forces beyond our control that simply happen to us)—they are both at once. The active-passive duality can be related to the idea of reversibility. It suggests that there are at least two sides to affective experiences and that neither of those sides is intelligible apart from the other. They overlap and cross over into each other, but they never completely become the same. For example, we cannot directly or fully comprehend danger without appealing to our emotional flesh, without apprehending, emotionally, the significance of fear.

Taking a practice approach or a phenomenological approach to emotions emphasizes the embodied nature of emotional experience, involving situated and moving bodies, the expressive character of the body, active-passive duality, and the reversibility of "feeling". Furthermore, it also essentially sees emotions as public and *relational*. Emotions are formed in the intertwining of our "own" bodily flesh with the flesh of the world and with the intercorporeal flesh of humanity. This sense of mutuality should, however, not be mistaken for harmony, since the kind of emotions involved is not necessarily positive and appreciating. They take form of the whole register of different emotions such as for instance love, desire, hate or fear.

Having said that, the phenomenological account still lacks an understanding of emotions and power relations created in encounters with "different" bodies. Means for overcoming this deficiency can most expediently be sought in feminist and postcolonial[55] The seminal work in this connection is of course Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), most brilliantly translated into Geography by Gregory (a.o. 1994, 2004) theories. These theories obviously render incomplete Merleau-Ponty's idea of the social body as a body opening up into the fleshy world of other bodies. For this world is not a general world of humanity, but a differentiated world, and in such a world what is meant by the social body is more often than not "precisely the effect of being with some others over other others" (Ahmed 2000, 49). The social body is also an imaginary body that is created through the relations of vision or touch between bodies recognisable as friendly and/or strange. Encounters with other bodies therefore involve practices and techniques of differentiation. Familiar bodies can be incorporated through a sense of community, being with each other as like bodies, while strange bodies more likely are expelled from bodily space and moved apart as different bodies. Bodies encountering other bodies not only register familiarity and strangeness but also are affected by both differently in a way that serve to re-form those bodies as being "in" or "out of" place. In

this way "like" bodies and "different" bodies do not just precede the bodily encounters of incorporation or expulsion, likeness and difference are directly produced through these encounters.

Young (1990b) theorizes such practices of difference. When the dominant culture defines some groups as "other", she argues, the members of those groups are imprisoned in their bodies. They are defined in terms of bodily characteristics and constructed as ugly, dirty, defiled, impure, contaminated, or sick. Young uses Kristeva's notion of "abject" (see also Ahmed 2004) and the notion of an ambiguous "border anxiety" to account for the double emotional experiences that occur in such oppressive situations; both group-based fear or loathing and group-connected experience of being regarded by others with aversion. In the original use, "abjection" refers to disgusted aversion towards expelled or excreted matter and fluids coming from the body's insides. Here it is translated to a socio-spatial situation in which the other (or the abject) takes an ambiguous position between subject and object; it is just at the other side of the border, next to the subject and too close for comfort (1990b, 144). The other is not as different from me as is an object; he/she is like me but is affectively marked as different. What this analysis suggests is that in aversive reactions to "others"—even those whom we hate, loathe, and strive to distance ourselves from—we do not experience them as entirely separated from ourselves. In this way, abjective relations reinforce Merleau-Ponty's conception of the flesh—including intercorporeality, the permeability of bodily space, and the spatialisation of emotion in the form of an ambiguous relationship between distance and proximity.

The other side of the process of encountering "other" bodies is the experience of being exposed to oppressive vision or emotion—whether the difference concerns race, gender, disability or other body marks. It is about internalising "otherness" or oppressive body images, an enculturation of the body that often leads to the development of a "double consciousness", experiencing one's body from inside and outside alike (see a.o. Fanon 1967, Young 1990a, Weiss 1999). In this way, the recognition of difference in encounters with "other" bodies renders visible the necessity of modifying of the phenomenological approach to emotions. Notions applied here such as practices of abjection, border anxiety, and incorporation of body images are some of the ones expedient in doing the job.

Conclusion: a geography of practice

In this paper, I have summarily tried to establish the ground for a social analysis/ human geography based in a theory of practice. Through embodiment as a crucial focus point, my discussion led to an account of practice that emphasizes lived experiences and spatialities, joint actions and forms of life, intercorporeality, and affective relations to "other" bodies. In this process, my attention has focused on ontological matters, which has left many crucial issues unaddressed. An obvious one is epistemology. Of course an ontology of practice holds epistemological consequences, but it is beyond the possibilities of this short paper to address them. Another missing issue is power. Power has not been totally absent from the discussion; it is part of the discussion of social differentiation of bodies. But there is no room for to develop of the issue further.

Other aspects of the account have not received the accentuation they derserve. One of them is the multiscalar character of human co-existence. When the body is seen as "the geography closest in"—a constitutive social spatiality reaching out towards other socio-spatial scales from local configurations to transnational connections—it is exactly what is at stake. A suggestive account of multiscalarity is what Lefebvre (1992) calls *rhythms*—that is, spatio-temporal flows of living bodies and their internal and external relationships. Different (and multiscalar) practices are characterised by different rhythms between which there are both mergings, clashes and interferences. Spatial entities (places, cities etc) then become loci of encounters, outcomes of multiple becomings. They are meeting points, moments or conjunctures where social practices and trajectories meet up with moving and fixed materialities and form configurations that are continuously under transformation and negotiation. This accentuates the significance of the issue of encountering other bodies. Massey (2005) stresses this significance by way of the notion of *throwntogetherness*, emphasizing the unavoidable challenge of negotiating multiplicity, the sheer fact of having to get on together.

Finally, as part of this spatio-temporal path, I want to accentuate two additional qualities of the account. It is at the same time *contextual* and *relational*. Contextuality refers to the situated character of social life, involving co-existence, connections and "togetherness" as a series of associations and entanglements in time-space. Practices produce contexts as plural and productive time-spaces. Each of these time-spaces is however also relational, articulated with multiscalar connections and trajectories. This connectivity does not mean that territorial borders and practices of delimitation and enclosure do not occur. Rather it means that border construction is itself a relational conduct, presupposing an alien exteriority and constituting complex relationships of contradiction and connectivity.

Acknowledgements

During the writing process this paper has been presented at the Nordic Geographers Meeting, Bergen June 14-17, 2007. I thank the participants in the session for their engaged comments. Also, I thank Theodore Schatzki for his very helpful comments on the first version of the paper.

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