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Affect, Relationality and the 'Problem of Personality'

Lisa Blackman

THIS ARTICLE will consider why William James's formulation of the 'problem of personality' is an important yet forgotten historical antecedent of contemporary work across social and cultural theory that is being described as 'vitalist' (Lash, 2006). New materialist vitalism is one response to what are increasingly being framed as the limits and problems of the foundational practices of sociology and cultural theory. These include attention to the stasis and mechanism of cultural inscription models that have emphasized being over becoming and structure over process, as well as a renewed interest in the problem of affect, sensation and perception (see Fraser et al., 2005; Lash, 2006). The interest in affect, or what Teresa Brennan (2004) has termed the problem of affective transmission, also reactivates questions that dominated and puzzled scientists and philosophers who were writing within what has now been characterized as a 19th-century science of association (Latour, 2002). These questions related to events within populations that foregrounded the question of affective transmission or contagion. How was it that certain fashions, fads and trends seemed to spread throughout populations with a rapidity that seemed to defy the action of logic or rationality? How did certain fears and forms of hysteria, mania and emotion spread such that they appeared to bypass rationality and reason? What caused individuals in groups to behave in ways that might perplex, bemuse or undermine their sense of themselves as subjects in other contexts? What enabled certain individuals to command the obedience, compliance, love and adoration of others, such that they would be exalted and revered as charismatic leaders?

What lay in the background to these concerns, and the concepts that guided their explanations, was both a fascination *with* and attempt to *know* and *understand* experiences that were ephemeral, 'invisible' and marked by

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a dissolution of the boundaries between self and other, inside and outside and human and non-human. Psychologists, philosophers and sociologists were all drawn to phenomena that were little understood, but that seemed to contain within their mysterious workings possible answers to the riddle of what makes us both 'one and many'. This problem was framed as the problem of how to specify the relationship between social unity or uniformity and individuation. Studies of hypnotic trance, psychical research, spiritualism, psychotic delusions and hallucinations, and even studies of insect societies such as wasps and hornets, were all seen to contain possible clues that would reveal the enigma of how to specify the basis of (human) communication.

The terms that coalesced in relation to this problem provided a set of figurations that not only inspired the writings of early psychologists and sociologists, but also have taken form in the imaginaries of those producing some of the exciting work on affect that is taking hold across the humanities in the present. What I want to do in this article is explore the historical antecedents of some of this work by taking seriously matters spiritual, psychic and psychopathological, and considering how these experiences were connected up through a particular set of terms and concepts. It is this lineage that for the most part is left out and occluded in contemporary theorizing, but, as we will see, continues to haunt cultural theory in terms of the practical and conceptual dilemmas it raises.

Vitalist Conceptions of Life

Elizabeth Grosz (2004) has argued that cultural theory must reinvent the concepts of nature, matter and life in order to give complexity to the image of the subject as one who is inscribed and inscribes themselves. Rather than simply reject the idea of the subject as being culturally inscribed, she argues that cultural theory must deal with the messy, accidental, contingent and dynamic status of matter, which induces or makes possible the endless constitution and reconstitution of subjects.

We need to understand not only how culture inscribes bodies – a preoccupation of much social and cultural theory in the past decade or so – but, more urgently, what these bodies are such that inscription is possible, what it is in the *nature* of bodies, in biological evolution that opens them up to cultural inscription, social immersion, and production, that is to political, cultural and conceptual evolution (Grosz, 2004: 2)

Her project is an exploration of life through the aligning of the philosophies of Darwin, Nietzsche and Bergson; models which she suggests are intimately tied to evolutionary research and also make possible the idea of 'temporal becoming' (2004: 8). This exploration of life injects energy, force and dynamism into matter, such that, rather than being the passive or inert stuff of cultural inscription, it literally comes alive through its action as a key process which induces cultural inscription. As she argues: 'without some

reconfigured concept of the biological body, models of subject-inscription, production or constitution lack material force; paradoxically they lack materiality’ (2004: 4). Grosz’s project is one that should be viewed as part of a current trend in critical thinking across the humanities, that places the reinvention and re-figuring of bodies, corporeality, matter, affect and even life, as central concerns for addressing the question of ‘what makes us human’ (Fraser et al., 2005; Latour, 2004; Massumi, 2002). This work is hugely important and addresses the issues of change and transformation through a recognition that materiality is governed by relations of indeterminacy, contingency and openness. It is not simply stuff governed by psychophysical laws of determination, but an open system which combines, re-combines and is articulated by other systems such that bodies are always in a process of becoming (Latour, 2004).

I want to extend and add to this project by considering how the psychological might be re-figured and re-invented in light of these arguments. Although a key resource for many scholars within this emerging field is the natural and physical sciences, the significance of the psychological sciences has been recognized as important for re-examining questions of ontology (Chertok and Stengers, 1992; Despret, 2004a, 2004b; Latour, 2004). One example of such work pertinent to the concerns of this article is the argument of Vicienne Despret (2004a), outlined in her recent book *Our Emotional Make-Up*. She examines how a particular trope of social influence is inscribed within the knowledge-practices of experimental psychology, such that social influence should ideally be kept at bay, controlled for and eliminated. Despret (2004b) begins her story about this trope of social influence and what it discloses about the history of psychology, by recalling the case of ‘Hans’ (Pfungst, 2000). Hans was a horse who appeared to be able to solve complex multiplication puzzles, and to make judgements and discriminations between different colours and tones. He apparently did this by stamping his hooves in response to questions posed to him by his experimenter. Hans became a test case in experimental psychology for the problem of social influence, conceived as the kinds of bias which might produce responses contrived by the setting of the experiment. As Despret (2004a) makes clear, the problem of social influence, conceived in this way, has led experimental psychology to frame its study through a concern with how to eliminate or eradicate so-called experimental bias (Rosenthal, 1966). Bias, or the compliance of experimental subjects with the wishes or demands of the experimenter, are viewed as ‘parasitic supplements that seriously contaminate the purity of the experiment’ (Despret, 2004a: 118). The problem of social influence that Despret recounts has mutated within contemporary psychology into the problem of affective self-containment. The late Teresa Brennan cogently shows in her book, *The Transmission of Affect* (2004), how the assumption of a bounded individual separate from others presents a number of ‘puzzling incongruities’ for contemporary scholars across the humanities who are interested in theorizing affect.

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One such 'conceptual oddity' presented by Brennan is the documented fact that affect can be passed and transmitted between people (2004: 1). She argues that psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis work with the assumption that the healthy person is self-contained and clearly bounded. They know where they end and the other person begins. This is viewed as the capacity of conscious deliberation; that is, forms of sympathetic identification that are conscious, cognitive and perceptual (Leys, 1993). However, what marks the experiences of many therapists and health care professionals is not distance and deliberation, but rather a felt sense that affects are being passed from the client to the therapist. This presumption of separation and unified boundaries that is the goal or endpoint of the therapeutic process is one that Leys (1993) traces back to the problem of suggestion that puzzled Freud and other 19th-century writers. This puzzle framed various attempts to theorize affect and forms of behaviour and experience that were marked by automaticity and appeared to be involuntary and non-conscious. What marked the human subject was not his or her separateness or boundedness, but rather a radical relationality that opened out the subject to being continually permeable to the influence of others. However, from the assumption of radical relationality that we will see framed early attempts by psychologists such as William James and sociologists such as Gabriel Tarde (1962) to explain the basis of sociality, Leys (1993) and Brennan show how these ideas have been marginalized and excluded in favour of what Brennan terms the idea of 'affective self-containment' (2004: 2).

Despret shows how the idea of affective self-containment that is linked to the 'problem of social influence' has excluded and silenced other versions of social influence that show the tensions, fracture lines and contradictions which this authorized psychological version instates. Despret revisits the study of Hans and considers what other versions or propositions about this study might redistribute social influence as a rather different kind of object. In a reconsideration of the case of Hans, the experimental psychologist, Pfungst (2000) argued that the horse must be reading cues – what we might term 'body leakage' – unintentionally communicated by the experimenter. It was concluded that, 'unintentional minimal movements (so minimal they had not been perceived until now) are performed by each of the humans for whom Hans had successfully answered the questions' (Despret, 2004a: 113). Non-verbal communication or body language is usually framed within a contrast between the authentic and the manipulated, the honest and the deceptive, where body leakage is judged according to the extent to which the person is revealing their feelings, which might be at odds with what they are saying or doing. This presumes that self-performance is subject to forms of emotion management, where it becomes a key site for the regulation of feeling (Goffman, 1969; Hochschild, 1983), as well as being the place where the supposed truth of the subject is revealed or disclosed (Fast, 1971). Although, as is evident in the example that Despret develops, there are other explanations of the idea of body leakage that exist as a remainder of or excess to these versions.

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These repudiated versions have more in common with ideas of *mental touch* that existed in more ethereal and spiritual traditions in the 19th century (Connor, 2004; Durham Peters, 1999). Despret (2004a) shows how psychologists have been forced to choose between psychological and sociological versions of selfhood, with critical social psychologists opting for the social as a constructive and determining force. The contrast between essentialism and constructionism is one that separates the corporeal from the social (usually read as the discursive or the textual) and has created an impasse in studies of embodiment (Blackman, 2001). This condition of deciding which is the site of determination of the psychological is not one that Despret (2004a) is advocating. In a move which is typified by many contemporary cultural theorists, she returns to the work of the 19th-century philosopher and psychologist William James to develop a different way of thinking about ‘practices of affect’. His philosophy is one which is considered non-dualistic and connects up the body, world and consciousness in a different and exciting way. The body, world and consciousness are connected such that consciousness becomes a space of openness, flows, and non-conscious and non-rational determinations. She argues that James presented a philosophy which assumed ambiguous bodies and flexible boundaries (2004b: 215). Subjects are articulated with, rather than imposed upon. She says: ‘he gambled on practising science with a perplexed version of his object; of carrying an object that resists determinations to exist, one that transforms these determinations into versions’ (2004b: 210). James is presented as a forefather to the view that what determines embodiment or bodiliness is the capacity to affect and be affected. She argues that ‘having a body means learning to be affected’ (Despret, 2004b: 213).

This practice of rescuing lost figures that exist within an historical archive, and re-staging their theories within the context of contemporary problems and questions is not a new enterprise. Philosophers have engaged this practice in order to create wonder, and to enable the present to be seen as a process of becoming rather than the natural and inevitable outcome of historical processes. Deleuze (1992) has re-staged Spinoza’s philosophical writings on ethics in order to re-figure the body as a process, rather than a substance or essence. Latour (2004) has re-staged the work of Gabriel Tarde in order to inject psychic energy into social processes, and Massumi (2002) has re-staged the writings of William James (1890), in order to make visible the limit of science’s ability to theorize affect, passion and emotion. Isabella Stengers (1997: 49) has advocated a ‘going back’ in order to resurrect figures that have seemingly been forgotten. She cogently shows how reversing the logic of scientific invention enables one to see, in a contemporary light, how, ‘questions that have been abandoned or repudiated by one discipline have moved silently into another, reappearing in a new theoretical context’. She argues that it is never simply the case that questions have been definitively abandoned or refused. What we might be more likely to see is the way in which questions are slightly modified or translated, or particular theories exist in a dynamic relationship with those that elide or disavow the claims

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they might make. This is the 'background context' that Despret (2004b) argues is what makes practices of science-making so creative and inventive. They exist in relations of disequilibrium, disqualification, coexistence, conflict and continuation with those versions which are kept in the background. This relates to what Stengers (1997: 49) refers to as the 'deep communications beyond the proliferation of disciplines'.

In a consideration of the importance of William James's concepts for engendering new ways of imagining the subject, Jeremy Carrette (2002: xl) makes the important point that acts of revival or resurrection are also often 'acts of disciplinary amnesia'. He argues that any return to James must attend to some of the forgettings and omissions that have characterized his figuring as one of the most important American psychologists of the 20th century. One such omission that Carrette acknowledges but does not examine is central to the concerns of this article; that is, 'the importance of the subliminal for examining the unknown dimensions of human experience' (2002: xlvii). The notion of suggestibility, which became one such concept for explaining this register, radically dissolved the distinction between self and other, inside and outside, the human and non-human, the material and ethereal, and the psychological and social. Despite its promise as a concept for examining the potentiality of affect it has largely been 'lost', dissolved into something else, or elided across the psychological and social sciences throughout the 20th century. I will argue that, despite this, its continuing importance increases, as recent vitalist work tries to revive something of the conceptual vocabulary and theoretical traditions that once attended to suggestibility (Borch, 2005, 2006; Chertok and Stengers, 1992; Orr, 2006).

How Can the Many Act as One?

The question of 'the One and the Many' was recognized by William James as being a central problem for philosophical reflection (Adler, 1990). This problem was translated by James into the 'problem of personality' that introduced into psychology a 'dynamic psychology of the subliminal' (Taylor, 2002: xxxvii [? xxxvi or xlvi]). James framed this problem as a problem of how the subject achieved unity or could 'hang together' when the self was divided from or discordant with itself due to a register of non-conscious experience. James attested to the affectivity of this register through his fascination with anomalous experiences, such as experiences of conversion, depression, psychotic hallucinations and delusions, multiple personality, drug-induced states of altered consciousness, hypnosis, automatic writing and medium-ship. His interest in these experiences is made most explicit in *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (2002 [1902]), but also forms the backdrop to his seminal work in psychology published in the two volumes of *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). William James, Henri Bergson and Gabriel Tarde were all members of the Institute of Psychical Research in Paris, established in 1900. Bergson published a series of lectures in his book translated into English with the title *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays* (1920). The French original is entitled

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L’Energie Spirituelle (Spiritual Energy). one of these lectures, also published as chapter 3 in the book, *‘Phantasms of the Living’ and ‘Psychical Research’*, was given as a presidential address by Bergson to the Society for Psychical Research in London on 28 May 1913. Thus, the ‘problem of personality’ was framed in this milieu through concepts derived from spiritualism, studies of hypnotic trance, and psychotic hallucinations and delusions. These concepts circulated across a range of sites and connected up different contexts and metaphysical questions about the nature of consciousness, humanness and spiritism.

James explicitly framed the importance of the ‘problem of personality’ in the foreword to a much-cited text written by the psychologist Sidis, titled, *The Psychology of Suggestion: A Research into the Subconscious Nature of Man and Society* (1898). The problem and meaning of personality, with which James concerns himself, is one that was being transformed through an emerging interest in the psychical processes that produce the possibility of particular experiences of consciousness. These experiences were marked for James by a visceral, affective felt sense of transformation, which would often feel like a conversion, possession or even a miracle. These modes of transformation were not achieved through conscious deliberation but, rather, often occurred instantaneously, in ‘the twinkling of an eye’ (James, 2002 [1902]: 171). They were associated with what James termed an ‘energetic character’ (2002 [1902]: 206), that would feel immediate, vital and intuitive (2002 [1902]: 194). In *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (2002 [1902]), James characterizes the forms of intensive attachment that he seeks to explain as those that cannot be ‘thought away’ through the cultivation of a habit or attitude of ‘healthy-mindedness’ (cf. Smiles, 1864). Contrasting religious happiness with what he terms ‘the sick soul’, he argues that what might be termed the ‘misery habit’ reveals the limits of such a cognitivist and voluntarist position (2002 [1902]: 81). These affective experiences, for James, should not be recast as signs of pathology, but rather examined for the processes of subject formation that they make visible. As he describes, what is of interest is not:

... the conception or intellectual perception of evil, but the grisly blood-freezing, heart-palsying sensation of it close upon one, and no other conception or sensation able to live for a moment in its presence. (2002 [1902]: 129)

As he goes on to recount, ‘if you protest, my friend, wait till you arrive there yourself!’ (2002 [1902]: 130). In one of the few books to consider the significance of James’s interest in psychical phenomena and its relationship to the development of his non-dualistic conception of consciousness, Murphy and Ballou (1960) argue that his formulation of the ‘problem of personality’ was the principle of unity for bringing together a diverse range of experiences which have troubled and perplexed philosophers and scientists. These include, ‘unconscious cerebration, dreams, hypnotism, hysteria, inspirations of genius, the willing game, planchette, crystal-gazing, hallucinatory

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voices, apparitions of the dying, medium-trances, demoniacal possession, clairvoyance (and) thought transference' (1960: 219). These experiences were seen to be unified or linked through the mechanism of suggestibility, that was both inside and outside, individual and collective, psychological and social. For James, the 'problem of personality' referred to what we might term our aliveness – our capacity to live and to affect and be affected such that we neither have a static continuity nor are continually in movement. There is a principle of individuality existing simultaneously with the possibility of cleavages, accidents and ruptures, animating the more porous and permeable aspects of the self. This was aligned to the existence of a multi-layered consciousness, which was seen to produce the possibility of different modes of action, conscious and non-conscious. Importantly, in the context of contemporary personality theory within the psychological sciences, this principle of dissociation was not organized through a contrast between the authentic and false self.

James's interest in the 'problem of personality' therefore formulated the question of the 'one and many'; of how many minds act as one, 'many brains as one brain' (Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University, 1909: 51) at many levels of complexity, including in this instance at the level of consciousness. James asks:

What are the limits of the consciousness of a human being? Is 'self' consciousness only a part of the whole consciousness? Are there many 'selves' dissociated from one another? What is the medium of synthesis in a group of associated ideas? (2002 [1902]: v)

If we situate Despret's (2004b) revival of William James within this focus on matters psychic, spiritual and psychopathological, what is striking about her formulation is both its resonance with ideas of suggestibility that formed an implicit and often explicit background in William James's formulations of consciousness, but also with how this complex view of the psychical is not acknowledged or developed. The capacity to be affected, which formed a central connective thread across many theories and philosophies in the 19th century, was concerned with ideas of *mental touch*. The capacity of the body to affect and be affected was tied to the movement of processes which would flow through bodies. This continuous flow was seen to produce variation and discontinuity, registered as a feeling of sensation or affect. This description of communication recast as psychic energy and located within multi-directional movements of communication, was central to more spiritual conceptions of communion in the 19th century. Durham Peters' (1999: 1) illuminating genealogy of the modern idea of communication, or at least its dream of being about the 'mutual communion of souls', is one which he argues draws its foundational status from 19th-century spiritualism. Durham Peters argues that this tradition took ideal communication as happening best 'when bodies and language are transcended in favour of more ethereal modes of thought transference' (1999: 64). Communication is

not located within language and cognition, but works ‘at a distance’, through light, sound, heat, gravity, magnetism, odours and affections; through a kind of ‘sympathetic transmission’ (1999: 78). These assumptions were related to theories of maternal impressions in the 19th century based on the idea that there was an intimate and symbiotic relationship between the mother and her foetus, such that the boundaries between self and (m)other were porous and permeable. This folding and infolding between mother and foetus was achieved through a kind of ‘sympathetic impression’ (Connor, 2004: 118). Both could touch and be touched through processes of ‘psychic imprinting’ (2004: 103). This feminized space of *relationality* provided a way of thinking about social influence, which did not instate the figure of the clearly bounded individual exerting their will and exercising rationality as the means to set them apart from others. The metaphor of psychic or mental touch which produced this non-logocentric way of thinking about relationality was one that depended on ‘the idea that the skin is not simply a boundary or interface . . . the skin begins to wake and wonder, an actively unfolding and self-forming organism rather than merely passive stuff’ (2004: 118).

The notion of being articulated with, which Despret (2004b) draws from William James, is one that is also central to Bruno Latour’s (2004) recent interventions within science studies. Latour uses the term *articulation* to talk about bodies and subjects. Subjects can be articulated through learning to be affected; ‘put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans’ (Latour, 2004: 205). This proposition assumes that subjects embody the potential to be affected, and that this potential is maximized or diminished through the way one is linked and articulated through relationships with others, again human and non-human. The body is ‘a dynamic trajectory’ and can become more or less sensitive to the elements that mediate this potential (2004: 206). Latour gives the example of what it means to become an apprentice within the perfume industry in France; what does it mean to develop a good nose or sense of smell for odours? We might think of this process as cognitive; as becoming able to discriminate smells through a process of learning (as a disembodied practice of knowledge acquisition). However, what it means to learn is considered an embodied practice, which involves enacting and developing relationships with artefacts, techniques and technologies that define the particular social practice. The notion of articulation assumes continuation and variation; to be articulated with opens onto a potential ‘multiverse’,¹ with the potential to become-with in multiple, complex ways. The notion of the multiverse is aligned with the work of Gabriel Tarde, whom Latour (2002) resurrects as the forefather of actor-network theory.

The New Paradigm

The focus on how one can account for change and transformation other than through a gradual process of growth, aligns James’s work with that of others, such as Gabriel Tarde, who have now been re-staged within the context of

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a 'new vitalism' (Blackman, 2007; Fraser et al., 2005). Notions of suggestibility derived from studies of hypnotic trance and studies of the psychical also formed the backdrop to the French sociologist and psychologist's reflections. His writings on imitation and monadology have been shown to be central to the materialist approach to becoming formulated by Deleuze (Alliez, 2001). He is also seen to provide a 'toolbox' in the present for understanding how an affective register is marshalled within technologies of advanced capitalism (Latour, 2002; Lazzarato, 2004). The return to Tarde, or what Alliez terms 'tardomania' (200?: 2) has revealed that, despite his disqualification by Durkheim and French sociology, his concept of imitation nevertheless became an important 'foundation of the social sciences' (Barrows, 1981: 139; Borch 2005). Tarde's writings were also central to the formation of Anglo-American social psychology (Blackman, 2007; McDougall, 1910; Ross, 1909), where notions of suggestibility and imitation became important concepts for addressing the problem of metamorphosis. This problem was usually framed as a problem of the crowd; of how an individual can become a particular kind of social animal (Moscovici, 1985: 4). Thus what we can see is the broader field that distributed particular terms and concepts, such as suggestibility and imitation, to address particular problems. The concepts which articulated these problems circulated within a variety of perspectives across the social sciences, and understood so-called normal or ordinary suggestibility as being a key process for understanding the 'nature of social forces' (Sidis, 1898: 3).

This attention to realms of non-conscious perception is increasingly being recognized in the present as an important yet neglected aspect of theorizations of affect and intensity (Connolly, 2002; Orr, 2006; Thrift, 2004). It is also being recognized in a contemporary context that the concepts of suggestibility and hypnotic trance, which were central to the 'problem of personality' and its framing (and the associated framing of the problem of crowd psychology or sociology), are still of huge importance for social theory (Borch, 2005, 2006; Chertok and Stengers, 1992). However, in many discussions of affective transmission within contemporary theory, the importance of suggestion as an explanatory concept is disavowed, denied or assumed to be over (Brennan, 2004; Connolly, 2002; Massumi, 2002). The psychic or realm of the non-conscious is often replaced by either the endocrinological system (Brennan, 2004), the neurophysiological (Connolly, 2002), the neuroscientific (Massumi, 2002) or the gastroenterological (Wilson, 2004), such that the problem of suggestion appears to have been resolved. Connolly does at least acknowledge James's interest in hypnosis and the idea of a subliminal self, but assumes that this register of life can be explained through contemporary neuroscientific research.

In his book, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Massumi (2002) defines the body as being characterized by its capacity for movement and change. This definition is counterposed to approaches to the discursive body that have freeze-framed the body within a range of social positionings that 'subtract movement from the picture' (2002: 3). Massumi

also advocates a turn to affect to capture this movement and change, but laments the lack of a conceptual framework within cultural theory to address its logic. Massumi traces a lineage to the work of William James and Henri Bergson to specify the importance of a vital force, but, as with much work within this tradition, also silences their interest in psychopathology, hypnotic suggestibility and psychic phenomena that engendered this set of terms and concepts. Massumi turns to cognitive neuroscience to find a conceptual language for cultural theory that will allow affect to take form. This retreat to the singular body to explain the performative force of practices has led cultural theorists like Brennan, Wilson, Massumi and Connolly to the neuro-hormonal body, the nervous system, the perceptual system and the brain to explain affective transmission. The very inside/outside distinction that suggestion (or a mimetic paradigm) displaces is replaced by a singular body, and with knowledge practices like the ‘hard’ edges of the psychological and biological sciences concerned with what is taken to be located within the boundaries of the person. It is true to say that even the ‘hard’ edges of the psychological and biological sciences recognize that there is more to the subject than what is inside. However, the problem becomes a perennial problem: how to explain how the outside gets in?

The framing of this question presumes a clear distinction between the psychological and the social, the inside and outside, and tends to draw on behaviourist models of socialization, as in the work of the neuroscientist Damasio (2000), for example. This reifies the very model of social influence, embodied in the dualism between nature and nurture, that has beset the psychological and biological sciences since at least the turn of the last century, and engenders some of the very paradoxes and dilemmas that cultural theory is attempting to move beyond: that is, the problem of structure and agency and the individual and society. I am not suggesting that we should choose mimesis over anti-mimesis. As Leys (1993) cogently argues, this would assume that suggestion is a continuous object that simply needs to be recovered. As she shows in her consideration of hypnotic techniques in relation to the rehabilitation from trauma, hypnosis itself takes form as a very different kind of object across a range of practices and techniques. However, reifying the subject as an information-processing machine, or a neuro-hormonal subject, does not resolve the practical difficulties of refusing suggestion. Rather than attempt to resolve the question in favour of one or the other side of the dichotomy, I seek instead to explore what suggestion might become if we reactivate some of what has been occluded, forgotten and silenced in the revival of the vitalism of James, Tarde and Bergson for example.

The Problem of Metamorphosis

Like hypnosis, suggestibility has taken on a predominantly pejorative meaning denoting an illegitimate influence, that is, an influence the acceptance of which cannot be rationally justified by the one who accepts it. Suggestion is impure; it is the uncontrollable par excellence. (Chertok and Stengers, 1992: xvi)

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In this section I wish to examine some of the historical antecedents that led suggestion to be translated into a problem of abnormal suggestion. This redistribution of a particular model of social influence is one that many contemporary authors assume in their writings, and prevents a serious engagement with its implications in relation to affect and relationality (see Brennan, 2004; Connolly, 2002; Massumi, 2002; Wilson, 2004). This will entail taking a closer look at a set of debates that were there at the very beginning of the emergence of the psychological sciences, and that are being reactivated, albeit in a disavowed form, within contemporary approaches to affective transmission within cultural theory. As we have seen Brennan (2004) suggests that what characterizes contemporary approaches to affect across the psychological sciences is an understanding of affective self-containment. That is a model of social influence that presumes that, ideally, the subject is self-enclosed and bounded, able to clearly separate themselves from others. This model of the rational, bounded individual, although now the regulatory ideal within the psychological sciences (Despret, 2004a), took form through the dissolving of suggestion into a problem of will or inhibition (Smith, 1992). Suggestibility was increasingly taken to refer to the lack of a set of competences that would enable the subject to withstand social influence and therefore separate themselves from others. It became the property of individuals and groups who were considered bio-socially inferior and susceptible to a kind of atrophy of thought and development. Thus suggestibility was to become a problem of left-over animality (see Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001). This translation can be mapped in the writings of McDougall (1910) and Ross (1909), who are both considered founders of Anglo-American social psychology (Kremor et al., 2003; Sherif and Sherif, 1956).

We can see this redistribution clearly if we examine the place of the subject within the beginnings of what has come to be known as 'mass psychology' (Moscovici, 1985). Moscovici suggests that Le Bon (1922), Tarde (1962) and Freud (1921) all helped to shape the parameters of this field of study, and translated notions of suggestibility through contrasts which began to distinguish leaders from followers. Thus the 'problem of social unity' – of how particular ideas, beliefs, customs and practices would spread through a social field, was framed by Tarde through the concepts of *invention* and *imitation* (1962). For Tarde, *imitation* (as a form of suggestion) was a basic process of social life, but was also governed by laws of regularity which could be attributed to the action of *invention*. Invention was also a social process which determined which ideas were to spread, from whom to whom, but was governed by principles which delineated what Tarde (1962) termed the 'leader principle'. Thus, quite simply, there were those subjects who were seen to have the capacity to lead, to influence, and those who were more likely to copy. However, this was not a form of mechanical copying, but rather a process of mimetic desire which was *thought* through concepts derived from hypnotic trance and related phenomenon. Although Christian Borch (2005: 87) has argued that Tarde's focus on imitation was

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also functionally differentiated through spatialized distinctions between the rural and the city, with the city considered the ‘point of radiation’ of imitations, this aspect of Tarde’s thought was of less interest to the emerging social psychological sciences. What was affected within the emergence and shaping of this disciplinary specialization was the importance of the concept of psychological *type* as distinct from the concept of personality mobilized within James’s (1890) writings.

Within social psychology, the redistribution of suggestibility into abnormal suggestion allowed for the intermingling and crossing of the boundaries and separations integral to the modernist subject through a particular register of individual and social pathology. This was cross-cut by classed, raced and gendered lines. Thus, particular passions, affects and forms of psychopathology were distributed across populations such that they became attached or fixed to particular bodies and cultural objects. Women, the working classes, colonial subjects and children were all viewed as more suggestible and amenable to processes of social influence, which might result in what Guattari (1984: 36) has termed ‘subjected groups’. This term was used by Guattari to describe the kinds of solidification of affect, ideas and belief which characterized individuals who were seen to become fixated in relation to a particular institutional object or figure. A particular psychology of boundedness was invoked to explain the competences which allowed individuals to withstand rather than submit to particular beliefs, ideas and customs. The endpoint of the complex interweaving of the impulsive and the environmental, the inherited and the acquired, which is found in the accounts of the social psychologists McDougall (1910) and Ross (1909), are crystallized in the concept of inhibition (Smith, 1992). Thus ‘the self-reliant man [sic] of settled convictions’ (McDougall, 1910: 98), or those of ‘strong, robust individuality’ (Ross, 1909: 83), were more likely to invent, rather than imitate in a Tardian sense.

This resolution of the ‘problem of personality’ characterized social influence as a force or threat to the boundaries of the atomized individual. This form of psychological control became what Smith (1992: 114) identifies as a ‘nodal position’, in what was to become a common discourse about the nature of humanness. It was this mode of continuity and its repeatability and iterability which linked a diverse range of sites, including neurophysiology, general physiology, neurology, psychiatry, experimental psychology and philosophy (Smith, 1992). Smith’s genealogy of the term ‘inhibition’ explores how inhibition and will became increasingly integrated and linked through a developing science of control and communication, established in the neurosciences in the 20th century. This research and its connections across disciplinary specializations particularly focused upon what was known as the ‘reflex model’. Mechanisms known to regulate the reflexes were viewed as analogous to those physical mechanisms seen to provide the basis of psychological or voluntary control. Habits were those acquired patterns of associations which could limit the scope of reflex actions (the automatic), and therefore initiate movement through particular

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patterns of reflection, association and habit. This was often equated with the building and cultivation of corresponding reflexes. This concern with the inhibitory action of the reflexes and the will was the focus of the experimental psychologist, Wilhelm Wundt (1910), who attempted to identify the localized centres through which the higher and lower functions were integrated and balanced – what he termed *apperception*. However, for many authors the distinction between the simple and the complex was used as a means to differentiate so called ‘lower human types’ from those who were seen to be able to develop complex associative patterns to regulate the reflexes. Thus sensation or feeling, through this distinction, would not meet much antagonism or interference in certain ‘types’ of people, and would form the basis of immediate, so-called instinctual or automatic action. These distinctions formed the basis of the very particular colonial and class-based project, which was extended, authorized and developed within the emerging human, and particularly psychological, sciences (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001; Henriques et al., 1984; Rose, 1985, 1989).

The Problem of Suggestibility

The resurrection of Gabriel Tarde’s writings within contemporary social theory, and specifically his lauding as a forefather of Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2002, 2005), fails to recognize the hierarchical view of humanity that was being proselytized in his elucidations of the concepts of invention and imitation. Although the tendency to flatten his theories to inject a kind of psychic energy into social processes is an interesting move (see Toews, 2003), I want to investigate what the remainder or excess which has been left out can tell us about the way particular notions of affect have been mobilized to address the apparent stasis of cultural inscription models across the humanities. I want to contend that, important as this work is, it tends to extinguish and iron out a more serious engagement with the implications of this work for re-figuring the psychological. Tarde engaged with and reworked concepts from evolutionary biology (see Barrows, 1981, for a more detailed discussion), and established a set of contrasts between the higher and the lower, the civilized and the animal, and the leader and the follower, in his discussions of the importance of understanding social influence processes conceived as a form of hypnotic suggestibility. The key sentiment of Tarde’s work, and its political bent, resonated with many writers of the time and put forward a particular knowledge of crowd psychology as providing the means to better equip bona fide leaders to govern and therefore avoid fascist dictators having effects on vulnerable minds (Apfelbaum and McGuire, 1986; Barrows, 1981; Moscovici, 1985).²

What we can clearly see within a field of increasing unification is the aligning of so-called forms of social disorder with a hierarchical establishment of sets of contrasts which placed the nervous system and the brain as being ordered from higher to lower functions. Inhibition or will became a major focus of attention and analysis across a range of different contexts, in which it ‘returned in endless variations’ (Smith, 1992: 69). The capacity to

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exercise control in the face of imitative processes was aligned with the will, volition, the brain and reason, with the spine, emotion, automatism and the involuntary providing the limits of the person’s capacity to invent rather than imitate. These differentiations were woven together in different ways across the social and physical sciences, where ‘the term inhibition gave a physical appearance to the psychological will’ (Smith, 1992: 168). Thus a field of complex processes characterized by distinctions between the inner and the outer, the corporeal and the incorporeal, the physical and the social, and the voluntary and the involuntary were redistributed through a common nodal point. These had previously been matters considered undecidable and a source of wonder and perplexity (James, 2002 [1902]). This common grounding or ‘nodal position’ was one which attempted to weave together the paradox between movement and fixity, between flight and becoming arrested, and between the automatic and the habitual. This was accomplished through the combination, association and substitution of concepts from evolutionary biology, neuro-physiology, neuroscience and psychology, with concepts derived from studies of consciousness, which originated in sites concerned with matters spiritual, psychic and non-conscious. The distinction between flexibility and rigidity, movement and fixity, and their mapping onto contrasts central to evolutionary biology and psychology were evident in the philosophies of Bergson, James and Tarde.

The Subject as a Node within a Network

David Toews’ (2003: 87) evaluation of the ‘new Tarde’, asks ‘why new sources for social theory are being sought in a pre-Enlightenment mode of discourse?’ Some of the characteristics and criteria sought in this revisiting are those that are beginning to shape the parameters of some of cultural theory’s engagement with affect. Toews (2003) recognizes that what he terms a metaphysical-theological-social opening is being ushered in, although, Tarde’s fascination with the psychic, and psychical research, has been largely written out of this contemporary story. He is seen to provide social theory with a way of conceiving of the individual subject as a node within a network rather than as an atomized individual (Latour, 2002). Invention is not about will or volition, but relates to more complex processes of imitation, which, as we have seen, were reliant upon understandings of suggestibility derived from studies of hypnotic trance and mediumistic phenomena.³ Tarde is seen to provide a modelling of psychosocial processes which is compositional – about a coming-together which cannot be predicted from the component parts or interactions. Regularity is due to repetition and duplication which is not imposed on individuals but in-folded, such that there is no separation between the individual and the social. The individual as a node simply provides a point of dynamic interchange for the psychic energy which characterizes the flow between actors within a complex social field.

Although this provides a relational model for contemporary social and cultural theory, and brings affect and intersubjectivity into alignment, it

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nevertheless leaves out important parts of the context of Tarde's writings. Toews (2003) highlights how Tarde inspired the philosophy of Deleuze, particularly in *Difference and Repetition* (1994), but was rejected in *Anti-Oedipus* for what Deleuze referred to as his 'model of the family in the realm of culture' (Toews, 2003: 93). In line with other philosophies at the time, and particularly that of Henri Bergson, repetition was not spatialized and located within relations of force, but linked to duration and a less linear conception of time. However, as Toews (2003: 95) highlights, 'repetition in social affairs is not some neutral, gender-free event'. This statement points towards at least some of the ways in which the concept of repetition, as imitation, was circumscribed and delineated through the formation of particular psychosocial *types*. As we have seen, the limits of invention, and its relationship to imitation, were set by differences that were viewed as constitutional, genetic, biological and established along thoroughly gendered, classed and raced lines. The subject as a node was not a general or generic subject, but one who was very much embodied in terms of relations of distinction and differentiation. Not all nodes were equal, and imitation, as we have seen, became, through Tarde's engagement and its extension with social psychology, a measure of a range of competences that were viewed as part of the 'make-up' of particular psychological subjects. By making the subject a generic node, one is in danger of disavowing those distinctions which produce difference as inferiority, couched in relational terms, such as the simple, the involuntary, the emotional, the instinctual and, of course, the feminine. I am interested in how we might reconfigure the idea of the node so that it does not merely refer to the flow of psychic energy or intensity across bodies, but can explore intersubjectivity and relationality without re-introducing an idea of psychosocial *type* as a set of fixed characteristics and attributes. This will involve a radical rethinking and reflection on the versions of psychological matter that our social theorizations rely upon, and which are largely rendered implicit or brought in through the back door (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001).

The turn to philosophy and forgotten philosophers as a means of creating new alliances and concepts for social and cultural theory, carries with it the danger, therefore, of missing how particular concepts became central to the regulation and management of populations. The lack of attention to the ways these terms circulated within the 19th century and were specified within the human sciences, negates the way that movement and flow have always been thwarted by what has been confined to the animal, the instinctual, the irrational and the so-called primitive. That these terms were also differentiated through gendered, raced and classed distinctions throws further doubt on the viability of authorizing generic conditions to describe becoming. Whether we are talking about the subject as a node, or having the potential to be affected, these positions are never neutral or general. The re-articulation of these terms, within the context of contemporary cultural theory, is an important move away from the idea of essences, and does much to compensate for the ignoring of the materiality of subjects

that has characterized deconstructionist work. However, the issues of power and regulation are still as crucial as considering flows and movement, even if we might need new tools to think about this dynamic intersection.

This seems to me increasingly pertinent given that Latour (2004) only seems able to conceive of blockage or becoming-stuck in negative terms, reproducing some of the very distinctions that re-figured suggestion as abnormal suggestibility. Latour (2004) argues that the concept of sensitivity relates to an awareness of the relationships that you are being articulated with – a becoming-aware that does not imply certainty of knowledge or mediation (for there are complex relational dynamics which articulate subjects), but does assume an attunement of the subject with their more permeable and porous boundaries. To be moved implies an awareness, and, as Latour suggests in the context of what it means to have a body, to be put into motion requires a registering of this motion as, ‘if you are not engaged in this learning you become insensitive, dumb, you drop dead’ (2004: 205). This rather facetious remark, which opens Latour’s paper, shows that, despite the gesturing to the interplay of movement and becoming-stuck he makes at points throughout his argument, the latter state is one which is pathological and to be avoided. Fixity, constancy and solidity delineate unintelligent learning and confine subjects to inertia; the shadowy other to the ontology of movement which arguably Latour’s philosophy is part and parcel of. It is at this point that I would like to return to William James and explore some of the tensions and occlusions that framed James’s discussion of suggestion in order to open up a rather different discussion about what suggestion might become. This is not simply to resurrect James as an important hero who can offer resolutions to the problem of affectivity, but rather to draw out ‘the confusions of a subject, its fault lines and paradoxes’ to reveal more closely the problems of ‘closure’ that exist in the current shaping of new material vitalisms (Carrette, 2002: xliv).

The Reinvention of (Psychological) Life

One of the paradoxes that govern James’s framing of the ‘problem of personality’ was the ‘problem of the cohesion of the subject’ (Carrette, 2002: xli). In *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James focuses upon the subject ‘in a mode of unknowingness’ (Butler, 2004: 30). This is a mode of psychological life that explores how the boundaries between self and other are fragile, porous and permeable, such that one can ‘be periodically undone and open to becoming unbounded (Butler, 2004: 28) James’s mobilization of suggestion is one concept for explaining the existence and ramifications of the register of the subliminal that he mobilizes to explore this permeability. However, he does not assume that the subject can ‘overcome’ this register through conscious deliberation or an act of will. The intensive attachments he explores are those which have an affective force, and that are difficult to reason away. However, he is also clear that suggestion as a concept tells us nothing unless we can examine the affective and performative force of particular practices; of which ideas are efficacious at particular times for

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particular individuals. The complex view of relationality that James was beginning to develop is one that could be augmented by a return to the work of R.D. Laing, who was writing in the same anti-psychiatric context that inspired the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Guattari, 1984). I would argue that Laing's discussion of affect and relationality, and his energetic conception of the subject is one that has a lineage to the work of James and his 'problem of personality'. It is this lineage that might be most productively exploited in order to reinvent suggestion as a phenomenon that is both inside and outside, psychic and social, material and ephemeral for example.

They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I shall break the rules and they will punish me. I must play their game, of not seeing I see the game. (Laing, 1970: 1)

Laing's poetic translations of the flows of conscious and unconscious dynamics produced across relational practices, constantly mutating and reconverging with an affective force, captures some of the issues I wish to foreground in my discussion. Laing described *Knots* (1970) as a fictional account of the kinds of dynamic patterns he had observed in his analytic practice, and which he used the words 'knots', 'tangles', 'fankles', 'impasses', 'disjunctions', 'whirligogs' and 'binds' to describe. The *knots* refer to those relational connections that circulate between people that are characterized by a kind of rhythmic repetition. This rhythmic repetition is not simply a fixity of habitual thought, but rather forms of dialogue and reflection that displace the very idea of a clear and distinct separation and boundary of self from other and inside from outside. Laing also referred to them as 'webs of maya' (1970: Foreword) disclosing his interest, perhaps, in forms of energetic exchange or interchange that have a kind of psychic pull. We get caught up in these webs, perhaps losing our way or being unable to navigate. They are not us, but equally they reveal the positions we try to invest in to resolve or rid ourselves of the unbearable tension these webs might create. The knots also reveal the complexity of how we might become an unwitting host, expressing a relational dynamic through the singular body as depression, neurosis, psychosis, paranoia and so forth. Laing famously described one such *double-bind* in the context of a family member who expresses, through a psychotic episode, the connections or relational dynamics which bind the participants. What we have here is an extreme state of bodily affectivity linked to a particular set of relational dynamics or connections which might usually remain invisible or occluded.

Laing, like many of his contemporaries was interested in the relationship between energetic transmission and rhythm. He drew on a contagion model, but this was a model that foregrounded the subject as a particular kind of host. The host would act as a kind of concealed carrier of relational dynamics which he or she was positioned within and could not necessarily articulate; except in some cases through extreme forms of bodily affectivity. These forms of *secret madness*, usually expressed through a singular body,

could be thought of as enactments of a disharmony or attunement of the subject to relational dynamics which are hidden or covered over. This is a kind of *rhythm analysis*, which explores how some subjects might resonate with and through these energies, resulting in blockages or forms of inertia. Laing was interested in the concept of entrainment that had been developed in the work of geophysicists such as Shumans, who had explored how brainwaves can become attuned to naturally circulating rhythmic signals (see Becker and Sheldon, 1985). What is passed between participants is a form of energetic exchange that is felt within an affective register, and which is not easily available for conscious deliberation. It is not that affect or emotion is simply ‘caught’ or transmitted between subjects, but that subjects get ‘caught up in’ relational dynamics that exhibit a psychic or intensive pull. What this work draws attention to is the complexity of the relationship between energy, transmission and rhythm. The concept of entrainment that Laing mobilizes is one that presumes the subject is porous and permeable, rather than being affectively self-contained. Laing’s project was a map of the power relationships that governed these energetic exchanges, where certain people’s rhythms were subsumed, or blocked by others. The dialogues he observed in his practice were not ‘simple affective transfers’ (Brennan, 2004: 49), but complex affective cycles that Laing situated within family relationships. The ‘familialism’ of Laing’s project was one of the main reasons that Guattari rejected Laing’s model of energetic exchange, framing it as a broader problem with how Freudian psychoanalysis specified the problem of madness (Guattari, 1984: 54).

Re-figuring the Capacity to be Affected

What has been emphasized in many contemporary approaches to affect across the humanities is a retreat to the neurophysiological body in order to explain the mechanisms of affective transmission (Brennan, 2004; Connolly, 2002; Massumi, 2002; Wilson, 2004). With the translation of suggestion as a mechanism for understanding affective transmission into a set of capacities located within a singular body, we can begin to see the historical antecedents that have led suggestion to increasingly be specified through the action of the central nervous system. What we clearly have here is a redistribution of automaticity, the involuntary and forms of unintentional communication within the body – and particularly the central nervous system (see Wilson, 2004), such that the problem of suggestibility or mimetic desire appears to be resolved. This reactivates and authorizes the very contrast between compliance and will that redistributed suggestion as an impure phenomenon and was central to the dismissal of hypnosis as a therapeutic practice (Chertok and Stengers, 1992). Rather than locate suggestion within a singular (neurophysiological body) we need to reinvent suggestion as a concept that points towards the subject in a ‘mode of unknowingness’ (Butler, 2004). This would engender a rather different set of relationships between affective transmission and relationality. These problems paradoxically, I would argue, are being made more urgent and

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visible in the championing of affectivity as the means of addressing flows in social, material and cultural processes. It is important to think about the psychological matter that induces cultural inscription, as 19th-century philosophers and scientists knew all too well. We have veered between the idea of subjects as blank slates to more cognitively inspired voluntarist subjects in a see-saw of presumptions about the nature of psychological matter (see Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001). These presumptions are often brought in through the back door, when claims are vehemently made about the unimportance of the psychological in thinking about the spread of cultural processes.

What is eliminated in this repudiation is the possibility of thinking about the capacity to affect and be affected as being a complex process of acceptance and resistance; of contiguity and evolution. Despret (2004a) plunders James's work for concepts that will allow new connections, alliances and articulations to emerge for thinking about affectivity. She also makes an important point which relates to the argument I am developing; that is, that studies of affectivity (and I would add the psychological more generally) must hold together the fact that emotions and affect can be the site of change and transformation as well as sites that arrest, stick and solidify the affects and passions of bodies.⁴ We have seen the way that solidity and fixity have historically been located within the instinctual and animal, where particular conceptions of mass or crowd psychology have been invoked to explore what is figured as the passivity or susceptibility of particular groups to social influence processes. Despret suggests that any new articulations to emerge from the translation of concepts from the work of James must be able to hold the tension between activity and passivity as a dynamic, complex relation. Valerie Walkerdine (2007) makes this point in her important new book, which explores how processes of so-called rationality and irrationality, cognition and desire, reality and fantasy, and, I would add, suggestibility and inhibition are both sites and processes which mark the making of subjects in advanced liberalism. It is not simply that we either resist or acquiesce to social influence, but rather that we do both, often at the same time, in complex relational practices and dynamics. These practices may operate at the level of conscious and non-conscious perception. This approach does much to counter the see-saw from passivity to activity, from determination to agency, that has beset social and cultural theory.

Conclusion

The 19th-century science of association that has inspired many contemporary theorists was one that was also concerned with delineating a complex psychological relationality marked by processes of modification and continuity. This dynamic relationality was neither inner nor outer, voluntary or involuntary, but marked by a complex interweaving that was to be finally settled and refigured through evolutionary biology and psychology. To focus on matter and assume that the psychological is merely a force which

animates matter, misses the complex processes of subject-constitution which are conscious and non-conscious, rational and irrational, cognate and desirous, real and unreal, material and psychological, historical and natural, and induce both *becoming* and *becoming-stuck*. The realm of the psychosocial cannot be made to disappear with the invocation of the subject as a generic nodal position. This is a deleterious move if we forget to be mindful of the tensions, contradictions, dilemmas and struggles that characterize life in all its forms (Blackman, 2004, 2005). Katherine Hayles (1999) has critiqued the disembodied nature of the concept of information that has characterized much cybernetic discourse. Hayles (1999: 13) attends to the elisions and suppressions that enabled information to lose its body. The focus on cognition and the cogito as the means to differentiate the human from the machine erases the ‘embodied enaction’ (1999: xii) that characterizes material and psychological life (see Kember, 2003). As a rejoinder to this, I would argue that ideas of flows (of information) also lose any solidity to the subject. It is this solidity – this *hanging together* – which, I want to argue, poses interesting questions for science studies and social and cultural theory more generally. It is not that this question is not recognized as important, but it is left usually as a rhetorical statement rather than being engaged with in a more psychologically complex way. John Law and Annemarie Mol argue that ‘attending to multiplicity, then, brings with it the need for new conceptualizations of what it might mean to hold together’ (2002: 10). These new conceptualizations might draw life from the very concepts and explanatory structures that distribute suggestibility as a phenomena that is both inner and outer, psychic and social, and material and ephemeral. This distribution forms the backdrop to the reinvention of life and matter currently taking hold across sociology, science studies and actor network theory. Attention to this forgetting places the need for a re-figuring and reinvention of the psychological as an important, yet neglected, dimension of social and cultural theory.

Notes

1.

To name such a world, I will employ the term *multiverse*, put to such good use by James: the *multiverse* designates the *universe freed from its premature unification*. It is exactly as real as the universe, except the latter can only register the primary qualities while the former registers all of the articulations (Latour, 2004: 213)

2. Moscovici (1985: 61) claims that both Mussolini and Hitler ransacked Le Bon’s study of crowd psychology, that it was studied by the military and also became ‘one of the dominant intellectual forces of the Third Republic’.

3. Toews (2003: 86) suggests that Tarde’s account is not about ‘isolated, fashionable individuals who celebrate their own self-centred achievements’.

4. Sara Ahmed (2004) explores these practices of solidity and fixity in relation to the emotions by exploring how emotions ‘stick’ to certain bodies and mark them as inferior, dangerous, pathological and so forth.

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