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Toward a psychology of feeling

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What might it mean to call for a psychology of feeling? What are the consequences and requirements of doing so? What definitions might such a project rest upon, and what substantive resources might it mobilise? This paper explores these issues in its proposal that social scientists admit feelings as an analytic category alongside language and discourse.

Keywords: Feelings, discursive psychology, embodiment, neuroscience, experience

Introduction

Power relationships, in Foucault's terms, get *inscribed upon the soul* of the subject. The disciplinary practices of subjectification produce more than mere identities, they do not just generate ideal types of subject to which we must pay lip service in order to avoid censure. Rather, disciplinary practices have a profound effect upon how we are actually able to be, serving to force the impress of power into the very fabric of our being. But psychology remains ill-equipped to address this issue because, rather like the academies it occupies, it is for the most part a thoroughly soul-less enterprise. Rarely in psychology is the societal co-constitution of experience made a substantive focus (Cromby, 2004), rarely are the concrete particulars of real human lives directly addressed (Tolman, 1994), and rarely do the lived experiences of any actual person appear anywhere in its

many pages (Billig, 1998). The successive emphases in psychology on behaviour, then cognition, and now discourse, have each functioned to admit subjectivity only in the most reductive, abstracted and tangential fashion - and so, ultimately, to sabotage its excavation. In psychology, meaningful associations between social and material forces and phenomenal life are for the most part obscured, ignored, or admitted only at such a level of generality and theoretical indeterminacy as to be practically useless (Tolman, 1994) and despite their undoubted influence the rare works that do transcend these limitations retain a 'cult' status somewhat marginal to the mainstream (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine, 1984; Smail, 2005), or indeed appear in other disciplines entirely (Charlesworth, 1999).

Foucault's work is usually understood to be part of the 'turn to language' which has rejuvenated social and critical psychology in recent decades (Harré, 1992). The turn to language has shown how psychological knowledge is provisional, partial, context-dependent, perspectival and bound up with relations of power (Gergen, 1985; Parker and Shotter, 1992), and demonstrated the inadequate character of the Cartesian subject of mainstream psychology. Simultaneously, the focus on language has often meant that bodies, subjectivity and their intimate interdependency with the social world have been ignored, marginalised, or made to appear irrelevant (Bayer and Shotter, 1998). The aim of this paper is to build upon the many gains that the turn to language has brought whilst simultaneously addressing these shortcomings, and its core argument is that including *feelings* as an analytic category – alongside, interpenetrated by, woven into, but not reducible to, language and discourse - constitutes a sensible first step in this process. Hence, it speaks directly to a social and critical psychological context where a particular discursive approach has been dominant for some years (albeit not without controversy, although see McLennan, 2001, for a summary and something of a resolution).

The turn to language has also inflected sociology, social theory, cultural studies and other disciplines, and to this extent the paper's argument has possible relevance for the 'affective turn' in cultural theory, for cultural-political analyses of emotion (Ahmed, 2004), and for sociological work on the body (Crossley, 2001). Hemmings

(2005) discusses the affective turn, arguing that it positions affect as a 'new cutting edge' that gains its power to disrupt existing social orders by being somehow outside of them. Taking issue with Sedgewick (2003) and Massumi (2002), Hemmings argues that both rely on an implicit dichotomy between 'good affect' that erupts more-or-less randomly to subvert oppressive hierarchies, and 'bad affect' that maintains them. 'Good affect' is counterposed to the determinism of social structure and operates in the intersubjective flux of community and relationships, whilst 'bad affect' is acknowledged but its implications are avoided by largely rhetorical means. The notion of feelings worked up in this paper differs somewhat from the notion of affect within cultural theory, although it indexes many of the same phenomena. As will hopefully become clear, its differences are such that it may avoid the problems Hemmings identifies.

This paper's argument is likely to appear frustratingly obvious to some readers, and clearly erroneous to others. Endorsing feelings without tying them to a developed mode of analysis (for example in psychoanalysis) will be seen by some as an omission; alternatively, the very idea that embodied states beyond discourse need be considered at all will be seen by others as anathema. The argument rests upon a recognition that meaning is not simply linguistic but heterosemiotic (Ruthrof, 1997). Ruthrof demonstrates how meaning is constituted from the multiple, shifting, dynamic intersection of numerous sign systems. These systems include signs that are sensual, haptic, corporeal and kinaesthetic, as well as the more formally conceived and conventionally understood signs of language. These various systems come together contingently in temporary, interpenetrative and corroborative relations with each other, and the greater their corroboration the more 'real' or 'true' meanings are taken to be. Blindfolded, you feel me place something in your mouth, and if I tell you it is a cherry you only might believe me because this unusual practice is already straining your trust. But if you bite it, so the juice floods across your tongue and you feel the stone between your teeth, your belief is likely to be much more certain. Elements of meaning flow directly from the lived, sensual body, as well as from the conventions of language and social practice, and these embodied ways of knowing are neither wholly outwith the social nor simply reducible to it.

In what follows evidence and concepts from social theory, sociology, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, critical and mainstream psychology are fluidly interwoven. Whilst this strategy avoids positioning any one discipline in a separate section which can then be misread as foundational, it inevitably gives rise to tensions. For example, Foucault's analysis of power and subjectivity is usually seen as antithetical to, and indeed the negation of, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Yet both scholars had a keen sense of progressive politics, both were profoundly interested in the intersection of the social and the corporeal, both took versions of the body as an analytical focus, and there is a sense in which Merleau-Ponty's analyses of habit complement Foucault's analyses of disciplinary practices. This paper's argument follows readings of Merleau-Ponty which emphasise the relational dimensions of his work (Baerveldt and Voestermans, 2005; Burkitt, 2003), and is also informed by other pro-social approaches to phenomenology (e.g. Csordas, 1990; Ferguson, 2006; Langridge and Butt, 2004). Similarly, some readers may think the following account both reductionist and politically questionable because at various points it references neuroscience, a discipline often seen as thoroughly imbued with reactionary values. But analyses that focus solely on language frequently reduce the body, materiality and social practice to their pale linguistic traces; this problematises analyses of power and ushers into critical work forms of idealism and voluntarism. Politically, then, what is at stake is not reductionism per se but the kind of reduction deemed acceptable (and see Wilson, 2004). Neuroscience is not homogenous, and much of it is indeed conceptually confused, reductionist, and naively empiricist (Bennett and Hacker, 2003). At the same time, accumulating evidence from fMRI and other studies is consistently demonstrating that many aspects of the brain's structure and functioning are somewhat pliable with experience: in short, *that the brain itself is socialised*. These findings create new opportunities to move beyond the treatment of dualistic pairs such as mind-body or individual-society as oppositional binaries that necessarily incur reductionism. Mind-body, individual-society and the poles of other related pairs can be understood not as mutually exclusive but mutually interdependent, their opposition replaced with a hybridity that necessarily treats each as mutually constitutive of the other.

Below, a discussion of the nature and character of feelings will serve to better define and delineate this typically vague term. Consideration will then be given to socio-cultural and relational aspects of feelings and it will be shown how, despite their embodied location, feelings are socialised. The relationship between feelings and speech, both inner and outer, will then be discussed; and finally it will be argued that feelings in fact remain the *default* mode of human engagement with the world.

What feelings are

In the social and human sciences the terms 'affect', 'feeling' and 'emotion' are sometimes treated as interchangeable and deployed with little regard for their nuances of meaning; alternatively, they are sometimes understood to be freighted with particular theoretical connotations or disciplinary allegiances. Adding to the confusion, even when clear distinctions are drawn between these terms they are not always made consistently between or within disciplines. A recent discussion of terminology (6, Squire, Treacher, and Radstone, 2007) describes how 'affect' is frequently associated with psychoanalytic thought (especially the British object relations school) and with the work of Deleuze and Guattari. It is currently garnering attention in cultural studies, and sometimes also taken up within neuroscience. Hemmings (2005) characterises affect in cultural studies as referring to states of being, rather than to their 'manifestation' as emotions. In psychology, although affect and its derivative 'affective' are sometimes deployed (particularly in critical work) the terms 'feeling' and 'emotion' are more widely used: but their use is inconsistent, and definitions vary. They are sometimes all-but interchangeable, either because the definition of one is broadened to include the other, or because 'feelings' denote states which function precisely as emotions despite not being widely recognised as such. For example, cognitive psychologists researching delusional beliefs discuss feelings of threat (Taylor and Kinderman, 2002), worthlessness, disapproval, humiliation, entrapment (Fornells-Ambrojo and Garety, 2005) helplessness and powerlessness (Fornells-Ambrojo and Garety, 2005; Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh, 2001). In these accounts, each of these feelings functions just like such states as fear, even though they do not typically appear in

taxonomies of emotion (Griffiths, 1998). Elsewhere in psychology, though, feelings and emotions are distinguished more rigorously from each other. When this distinction is made emotions are seen as patterned repertoires of body-brain responses (whether hard-wired and encapsulated, socialised and enculturated, or some mixture of these) which both motivate and organise activity. Feelings are then taken to be the hedonic or phenomenological aspect of these responses - whether as a distinct, additional cognitive component, in the form of bodily feedback derived from them, or both.

Here, this phenomenological emphasis will be retained and feelings will be understood as experiences reflective of the momentary state of our body-brain system as it mediates and enables the situated, relational flow of our being in the world. This does not mean that feelings are simply private mental events, in the manner of cognitions, because their body-relatedness may also give them a visible aspect such that how we feel can be a matter of public display (the beetle does not always remain in the box, as Wittgenstein might have said). This is not to say that the complexities of our experiential states can be simply or unproblematically 'read off' our bodies: reading feelings is always a work of interpretation. Even so, when we look at another person it is frequently both apparent and relevant that they are feeling *something*, even if neither we nor they can adequately name or describe it. But in this account feelings are primarily phenomenological, serving as the principal medium whereby the variable, dynamic body comes to be an ever-present constituent of subjectivity.

Analytically, feelings can be understood as falling into three categories. First, they consist of the embodied component of emotions: the racing heart of fear, the lightness in limbs and body of joy, the flushed face of shame, and so on. Whilst emotions are notoriously difficult to define, on most accounts they are understood to be relatively complex events composed from elements of narrative, knowledge and intention, as well as the feelings which experientially constitute their somatic aspect. By contrast, there is a sense in which this category of feelings is simpler because it consists solely of the manner in which the lived body suffuses experience as a constitutive element or component of these more complex hybrids. Moreover, there is also a sense in which feelings are more basic than

even the basic emotions proposed by psychologists such as Ekman (1992). Research in comparative linguistics has shown that all human languages contain a word or phrase that denotes feelings (Shweder, 2004): unlike emotions, feelings are 'linguistic primes', and so are more basic in the sense that there is evidence that all human societies orient spontaneously toward them.

Second, there are extra-emotional feelings: hunger, thirst, pain, tiredness, sexual desire, the sensations of being tickled or caressed, and so on. This terminology reflects the fact that such feelings typically also have emotional dimensions to them. The emotional dimensions of hunger and satiation in our culture are widely recognised, most obviously with respect to eating disorders (Meyer, Waller, and Waters, 1998). Pain also has an affective component (e.g. Rhudy, Williams, McCabe, Rambo, and Russell, 2006) and indeed can activate regions of the brain that also enable emotion (Borsook and Becerra, 2006). Sexual desire is similarly freighted with emotional meanings (Hiller, 2005), whilst tickling can be alternately experienced as pleasant or painful depending on the emotional context within which it occurs (Phillips, 1994). So the characterisation of these feelings as extra-emotional is not intended to deny their emotional aspects, but to emphasise that emotion does not exhaustively eliminate them. Were it possible to somehow strip the emotions away from these extra-emotional feelings some meaningful residues would remain, textured and valenced in ways reflective of the bodily needs or inputs that prompted them, and yielding affordances that make certain kinds of response (a scratch, a contented wriggle, a search for food) more likely than others.

Third, there are the more subtle and fleeting feelings that arise in social interaction, discussion, deliberation and decision-making. These are the feelings associated with half-formed desires, inarticulate refusals, the imperfect sense of a significance not yet realised or a judgement only partially made. In English, at least, we have few names for these feelings. Shotter (1993b) calls them 'knowing of the third kind' and in everyday life the umbrella term 'gut feelings' is widely used. Not only are these feelings rarely named, their somatic properties (for example location, intensity, duration and character) are infrequently described and, phenomenologically, they are often elusive. William James characterised them in terms of their

meaning, asserting that: 'We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*' (James, 1892).

If feelings are primarily phenomenological it may seem odd to claim, with James, that they can be specified as readily in terms of their intentional meaning as their somatic character, but this might be explained with reference to recent work in neuroscience. Damasio (1994) describes how repertoires of feeling reflective of prior experience can get called out in everyday interaction and provide a form of somatic guidance that aids decision-making. These re-constituted feelings or 'somatic markers' exemplify the body states that accompanied previous situations or events. When we consider options to which past situations become relevant, their associated body states can get momentarily reconstituted in feedback loops between brain and body. The character and intensity of these body-states serves to mark options with valences that then bias and guide our choices. Damasio further explains that these somatic markers typically get substituted for by neural images of bodily states, through the operation of what he calls the 'as if body loop'. In this loop the body-proper is bypassed and areas of the frontal cortex organise those of the insula, sensorimotor cortex and amygdala into the activity profile that might have ensued had an actual bodily state occurred. This movement to the 'as if body loop' enables faster, more flexible responding, but at the cost of transforming the feeling into a fainter, fleeting, more subtle echo of the original embodied state. If Damasio is correct, this could explain why these feelings are intentionally meaningful (because they are both systematically related to previous experience, and oriented towards present concerns) yet physically indeterminate (because they are fleeting neural simulacra whose qualities are less pronounced than those of actual physiological states).

All three categories of feeling are composed of vestibular, haptic and kinaesthetic feedback from organs such as viscera, muscles, and skin, and feedback from circulatory, respiratory, digestive and other systems (additionally, as explained above, feelings of knowing may also be composed of neural images of these various kinds of feedback). Together, this feedback is constitutive of a body-relatedness by which feelings imbue subjectivity with a character reflective

of our embodied, materially situated, intrinsically relational engagement with the world. So as Ruthrof's work implies, feelings are much more than mere background sensations devoid of any meaning. They are the raw stuff from which experience is primordially constituted, and so the very fabric of our being is thoroughly imbued with their texture, valence and affordances. Feelings give us a constant, 'automatic' sense of our embodied relation to the world, and their influence is continuous. Even when we imagine that we are being simply 'rational' the very form of our rationality will most likely be one that feels appropriate to our current situation (and if not, we will be uncomfortably aware of this). But feelings are not cognitive in the usual sense of that word. Rather than being mere information about body, self and world that enters into a decision-making model, feelings are instead the pre-cognitive, unreflective ground upon which information processing, 'rational' choosing and decision-making occur (this does not mean that feelings cannot be taken as information, just that we do not need to reflect upon them for their influence to be manifest).

Although these three categories of feeling can be separated analytically, in the lived flow of experience they merge, blend and overlap with each other and the traffic between them flows in all directions. Being overly hungry can lead people to be short-tempered and treat those around them as irritating and unhelpful; being emotionally aroused can increase sensitivity to pain; being anxious can lead us to see (project, as psychoanalysts have it) anxiety in others, and so on. Feelings get mutually interpellated in circuits that flow between and within individuals: I, or another, can take my anger as an object and be sad, excited or confused because of it; I in turn can feel ashamed, thrilled, anxious, tired or energetic at this reaction. When they mix in such circuits, feelings can get intensified, sustained and generalised beyond the circumstances that initially gave rise to them, producing relatively enduring complexes that may resist easy interpretation (Scheff, 2003). Alternatively they can contradict and challenge each other, becoming mixed, vacillating or confused (Sullivan and Strongman, 2003). Most feelings (with the exception of acute states) are relatively vague and all are known immediately, without symbolic or conceptual mediation; hence we easily fail to recognise their influence (Langer, 1967). Moreover, we do not always notice what

prompted a particular feeling, and often have good reason to disavow how we feel (to avoid hurting others, endure a job we dislike, or protect against understandings too painful to contemplate). For such reasons the full meaning of how we feel is rarely transparent, but something we must work to interpret. Simultaneously, however, these interpretations are themselves prereflectively influenced by the very feelings they strive to interpret, and may in turn modify the feelings that prompted them. So just because we *feel*, this does not mean that we know with any confidence just who and how we are.

The socialisation of feelings

In psychology, and indeed elsewhere, feelings have been most often dismissed, ignored, treated as epiphenomenal or subordinated to other analytics (cognition, behaviour, discourse), and so their status is frequently elusive, marginal or challenging. At the same time, feelings – most obviously in the form of emotions – regularly get enrolled into normative regimes of power and authority, and are the explicit target of practices in business, advertising, management and politics. This dual tendency suggests that attention to both the political dimensions of feeling and the felt dimensions of politics might be appropriate and fruitful (Brown and Cromby, 2007). When such suggestions are resisted, it is sometimes because of the assumption that, since feelings are embodied experiences, they are necessarily individualistic or asocial in character. This assumption is mistaken, reflective of a failure to adequately recognise how thoroughly social and relational influence permeates our very bodies. Feelings are individually embodied and, simultaneously, socialised: they are relationally situated and occasioned; they are cultivated, modified and transformed through social practices; and they get modally aligned with cultural and subcultural norms according to factors such as social class, gender or occupation. As will become clear, this socialisation is not simply confined to context and interpretation, although it occurs through them: rather, it includes actual phenomenal change.

Emotional feelings

There are various accounts of emotion that treat it as intrinsically social. Hochschild (1979) describes the purposeful alignment of

emotion with the demands of employment through engagement in 'emotional labour', Ratner (2000) thoroughly deconstructs naïve biologistic notions of emotion and offers a detailed cultural account, whilst Ahmed (2004) shows how the cultural analysis of emotion might be conducted. Similarly, the contributors to Harré (1986) set out a range of social constructionist positions with respect to emotion. Within psychology's mainstream, however, many scholars hold to some variant or other of basic emotion theory by which it is claimed that our species has a common set of hard-wired, genetically endowed emotions (e.g. Ekman, 1992; Johnson-Laird and Oatley, 1992; Plutchik, 1982). Both the number and character of these basic emotions differs from one theory to another, but they are usually said to be relatively few in number – typically, between four and eight. Since it is probably Ekman's conceptualisation which currently commands the most attention in psychology we will focus on how social influence appears in his work. For Ekman there are six basic emotions (joy, fear, anger, sadness, surprise, disgust), and he is explicit that the 'display rules' which govern when and how it is appropriate to experience and express these emotions evince marked sociocultural variation. He also recognises that there are emotions (characterised as secondary or social) that are not universal, but more-or-less culturally specific; and further, that there are some emotions which exist only in single, relatively isolated cultures. So Ekman already admits large degrees of social influence into his analysis, whilst appearing to leave his six basic emotions as hard-wired, asocial, biological responses.

However, at least with respect to their feeling component this appearance is superficial. Because the display rules for emotions vary cross-culturally, this means that the *feeling* of them must also vary in related ways. Displays include the ways in which emotions are expressed and these expressions have bodily and relational components: anger can be tight-lipped or it can be openly, blazingly furious, and the bodily sensation of each *feels* different. The relational expression of emotions such as anger is normatively regulated, shaped by relations of communication and specific, locally-obtaining, materially and socially situated dynamics of power (Burkitt, 1999). These relations of communication and power condition precisely how and when an emotion and its display

should occur, which is significant because, as Shotter (1989) observed, telling a young child what to do is also, over time, telling her how to be. Moreover, the processes of learning how to be are not confined to mere facial displays: there is evidence that normative levels of some neurotransmitters get 'set' as a product of early social experience (Gunnar and Donzella, 2002); that the pruning of synapses in the orbito-frontal cortex in the early years of life provides individuals with a structure of inhibition and self-control appropriate to their environment (Schore, 1999); and that downward projection from the cortex to the limbic system is much richer in humans than other mammals (Ratner, 2000). This suggests that the feeling of even basic emotions is suffused with social and relational influence, even if Ekman is right to claim that there are also elements which are more-or-less hardwired. The ontogenetic processes of socialisation mean that my anger may quite literally not be yours.

Extra-emotional feelings

Everyday examples of the socialisation of extra-emotional feelings might include sexual desire in Catholicism, through the practice of abstention and the repeated association of sensual pleasure with degrees of guilt; hunger in Islam, through the practice of fasting at Ramadan; pain in martial arts training, through repeated practices of hitting hard objects and being hit by others that serve, cumulatively, to de-sensitise the body and raise the threshold beyond which pain becomes unbearable; and recreational alcohol and drug use, where feeling states are induced and managed in socially-learned patterns of consumption. Such practices can serve to cultivate, modify or transform feelings; alternatively, they can intensify those they are meant to subdue. They resonate with those discussed by Foucault (1988) in his later work on 'technologies of the self', where he emphasised the active engagement of the subject with reflexive practices that have as their explicit goal the production of specific forms of subjectivity. Bourdieu (1977, 1984) also discusses the constitutive role of social practices, although he places greater emphasis on their implicit, non-deliberate, pre-reflective aspects, by which tastes, preferences and desires come to be both structured by, and structuring of, social hierarchies and positions. With respect to gender, Young (1990) similarly emphasises the

contingent effects of the organisation of practices such as play and sport, the promotion of 'feminine' ways of walking, sitting and wearing clothes, and differential norms of safety and emotionality for men and women, all of which serve to constitute modally distinct 'masculine' and 'feminine' ways of using and experiencing the body.

Feelings of knowing

Feelings of knowing are intrinsically social and relational. Their character and valence is regulated normatively both by relational practices and by discursively organised fields of legitimated (and hence 'relevant') knowledge. This is no less true when feelings of 'but', for example, are interpellated in response to a text written on paper or a computer screen, rather than in conversation. Such texts are interpreted and responded to using similar cultural resources (Howarth, 2000), and with similar kinds of embodied responses (Jones, 1999) as in face to face interaction. Shotter (1993b) locates feelings of knowing within 'joint action', his term for the way in which the dialogically-shaped co-responses of interlocutors mutually create an evolving context into which each must act. Orientation to this emergent context is necessary for agreed sense to be made and mutually satisfying relations to occur; at the same time, this context must be continually re-made and is the product, not of any one person's intentions, but of how their shared intentionality is mutually played out on the specifics of that particular occasion. Shotter's focus is the interpersonal, but it must be emphasised that such relations are always simultaneously societal since they are mediated by discursive and other culturally-proffered resources, regulated by normative injunctions specific to (sub) cultures and epochs, occur within lines of influence constitutive of societal relations of power, and are situated within specific moments of history. Billig (1999, p.220-252) illustrates this superbly with his reading of Freud's account of his conversation with Dora about her dream of Raphael's Madonna, that draws out its 'repressed' fear of anti-semitism.

The next section will focus on the relationship between these socialised feelings and language: both its external, spoken or written forms, and as the inner speech which we frequently imagine to be the most fundamental component of subjectivity.

Language and feelings

When we reflect upon our experience it is often inner speech, the unspoken commentary upon our own and others activity, which seems most prominent. Vygotsky (1962) offers a systematic account of how inner speech acquires its content, showing how it begins verbally in social relations. It then becomes 'outer speech' where we repeat aloud to ourselves things that were previously said in conversation, before finally becoming the abbreviated, condensed and unspoken inner speech that accompanies and, metacognitively, guides our actions. With regard to subjectivity Vygotsky highlights the close relationship between feelings and inner speech, proposing that 'Thought itself is engendered by motivation, i.e. by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency, which holds the answer to the last 'why' in the analysis of thinking.' (Vygotsky, 1962 p.150). Thus in mature humans there are two lines of development (the inner, through biology and maturation, and the outer through speech and language) that come together to create thought, which consists most fundamentally of affective, feelingful tendencies that inner speech then 'completes'. Whilst Vygotsky's analysis is usefully systematic, the distance it places between inner speech and feelings is problematic. It downplays the extent to which feelings are themselves socialised, confining socialisation primarily to the work of language and giving the analysis an unhelpful biologistic character. This in turn makes it difficult to adequately conceptualise the dynamics of subjectivity, and in particular the ways in which feelings and language are frequently thoroughly intertwined. For whilst they do sometimes contradict each other (when we have to 'talk ourselves into' doing something), inner speech and feelings are more often like the strands of a rope, wound in parallel and mutually reinforcing.

Merleau-Ponty (2002), by contrast, developed a less systematic but more thoroughly dialectical[1] approach to the relationship between language and the body. In his analysis the body provides a fundamental lived unity of sensation and perception, which is the basis of subjectivity and which, through both kinaesthetic feedback and the operation of habit (i.e. acquired, socialised modes of embodiment), lends structure to our world. For Merleau-Ponty language is already an embodied capability and, in its spontaneous speaking,

feelingful in character, so that speech and thought 'are intervolved, the sense being held within the word, and the word being the external existence of the sense' (ibid, p.211). The words of a language consist of articulatory or acoustic styles, and in their speaking are but one possible use of our bodies. In their spontaneous production they carry embodied meanings that convey an emotional or gestural sense that actually makes possible their discursive, rational one: '..conceptual meaning must be formed by a kind of deduction from a *gestural meaning*, which is immanent in speech. And, as in a foreign country, I begin to understand the meaning of words through their place in a context of action, and by taking part in a communal life' (ibid., p.208). Moreover, these embodied meanings are already social, derived jointly in the lived moment from our relations with others and from our place in the world, and speech is the vehicle whereby they are 'accomplished', so that: 'There is, then, a taking up of others' thought through speech, a reflection in others, an ability to think *according to others* which enriches our own thoughts.' (ibid., p.208). So for Merleau-Ponty the linguistic forms of inner speech already have a kind of unity with feelings, they conjoin with them to make embodied meanings which are already social. However, whilst his account largely avoids the problems of Vygotsky's it sometimes lacks systematicity and exactness such that 'literary language often appears at the very moment the reader seeks conceptual precision'(Moran 2000, p.431). Hence there is some value in reading Merleau-Ponty through Vygotsky's more systematic analysis, in order to develop and clarify them both.

First, then, inner speech serves to fix the flux of feelings within which we live, acting to 'complete' or 'accomplish' and subtly transform them. This allows us to represent to ourselves and others our experiences and needs and so more fully know what we are experiencing: for example, to recognise that our irritability is rooted in hunger, rather than a friend's reasonable question. Second, inner speech itself may provoke feelings: for example, the 'sinking' feeling when we recall an appointment we have failed to keep. These will tend primarily to be emotional feelings or feelings of knowing, and may be one of the ways in which the present, as duration, is always inhabited by the past (c.f. Reavey and Brown, 2006). Third, both feelings and inner speech arise within, and are

constitutive of, developing trajectories of social interaction, which are in turn constitutive of the modes of subjectivity that emerge. There is also, in other words, a dialectical relation between 'outer' and 'inner', between emergent subjectivity and ongoing social relations, between activity and experience. Subjectivity is always a 'boundary phenomenon' (Shotter, 1993a), dialogically re-made in the flux of social relations: my relational unfolding is sensitively dependent on yours, and vice versa. And fourth, as the term dialectic suggests, the bi-directional lines of influence between feelings and inner speech can produce something qualitatively new. We can extend Vygotsky's systematic analysis of the movement from conversation through outer speech to inner speech to include a fourth stage: a transformational movement from inner speech to feeling itself. In this transformation, inner speech can entirely shed its initial linguistic character as we come to rely instead on feelings, which carry now the meaning that inner speech previously relayed. Conceptual linkages, analytical strategies, or deconstructive ploys are transformed and generalised, so that instead of logical, discursive or conceptual structures they become structures of feeling. Returning to the examples given by James earlier, what were previously logical sequences become feelings of 'and'; what were discursive objections become feelings of 'but'; what were previously expressions of puzzlement become feelings of 'why'; and so on.

Inner speech, then, is already feelingful, just as embodied feelings are already social. As subjectivity comes to be inhabited by language it is not simply that words get laminated onto pre-existing structures of feeling, which remain untransmuted below them. The acquisition is transformative, serving both to fix the feeling into the symbolic realm and, simultaneously, endow the word with a feelingful character. The embodied and the linguistic come to operate in a dialectical relationship of mutual completion: each overlays and interpenetrates the other so that for much of the time feelings and inner speech are mutually constitutive rather than distinctly separated. Moreover, whilst it is easiest to illustrate this by focusing on feelings of knowing, similar movements between 'inner' and 'outer', feelings and language (and other symbolic practices) will also occur for other kinds of feeling. The embodied gets constitutively enrolled within the social at the same

time as it reflexively enables it. However, it must be emphasised that this intertwining does not mean that feelings and inner speech can be treated as wholly identical, so that we could for example dispense with any analysis of feelings and study only language (this, it will be recalled, is the core premise of this paper). Feelings and inner speech co-constitute subjectivity as *embodied* subjectivity, and their phenomenological intertwining gives rise to both word-inflected feelings and deeply-felt sayings such that, as Ratner (2000) puts it, thinking is actually *felt* thinking. Nevertheless, it can be demonstrated that feelings and language are not reducible to each other.

First, at the neural level they are largely enabled by different brain systems and circuits. The production and comprehension of language is primarily enabled by left hemisphere systems focused upon Broca's and Wernicke's areas, a system of systems collectively characterised by Gazzaniga et al. (1996) as 'the interpreter'. By contrast, feelings are enabled by systems and circuits associated primarily with upper brainstem nuclei, the amygdalae and hypothalamus, the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, insula and cingulate (Damasio, 2003). Unlike language, feelings are also associated with chemical pathways mediated by various neurotransmitters, hormones and peptides that permeate the entire body (Panksepp, 1998). Second, feelings and language emerge differently during the processes of human maturation and infant development, with feelings coming effortlessly first. Third, feelings and language have different features and characteristics: by comparison with the words of a language feelings come and go relatively slowly, have comparatively indistinct or fuzzy boundaries, and are much less amenable to deliberate agentive control and choice. Fourth, the meanings of our words and of our feelings are produced differently. Language has a meaning derived primarily from social conventions of use, by reference to which we can use it to 'fix' the flow of embodied feeling and represents its character, both to ourselves and others. By contrast, feelings have a meaning co-constituted from the embodied textures they provide, the valences they generate, the potentials they propitiate, and the specific lines of action within which they arise. So the meaning of a feeling is neither asocial nor a matter of convention, but instead resides in the particularity of how these textures, valences and affordances condition the specific

moment within which they appear. It is sensuous, practical and embodied, produced in the embodied relationality of the lived moment, within the chaining of experience that gave rise to its interpellation. Fifth, although much of our subjective experience is characterised by the thorough intertwining of inner speech and feelings, there are nevertheless times when a particular feeling strongly predominates and thoroughly suffuses experience with distinct qualities. Neither orgasms nor intense pain are matters of language but they are nevertheless phenomenologically distinct from each other, and this remains so despite both orgasms and pain differing in their quality, intensity, and relational meaning, and despite their occasional juxtaposition in sadomasochistic practices (Weille, 2002). Sixth, it follows that experiences shaped and mediated principally by language can be markedly different from those characterised predominantly by feeling: unfortunately, perhaps, for us in academia, having an orgasm is nothing like the same as talking, writing or even reading about one.

Feelings as default

So despite their mutual intertwining, feelings are not the same as language. But we can go further still, because there is evidence that feelings provide our *default* mode of engagement with the world. That is, unless we make a deliberate effort to be otherwise it is the immediately felt aspect of our thinking that conditions the particular rationality we will favour. Unless the situated demands of social interaction or the task at hand require us to mediate and regulate our activity primarily by adopting an explicitly symbolic or discursive rationality (as, for example, when writing a computer program), we engage with our world in a predominantly feelingful manner. This may seem unlikely (especially to the more alexithymic reader, of whom there are many in academia) because when we reflect on our experience feelings do not always figure prominently. But this is precisely because feelings are without symbolic mediation or conceptual form (Langer, 1967); because their meaning for us has an immediacy and situatedness co-constituted through the social practices and material situations within which they get enrolled; and because when we reflect upon our experience we tend to emphasise what of it could be 'fixed' and clearly communicated to others, and so to recall the clearly defined symbolic-conceptual at

the expense of the fluid-immediate-embodied which made it possible. Moreover, there are both generic and specific sources of evidence for the proposition that feelings are our default mode of being.

Generically, it has already been noted that feelings do not need to be taught or acquired, like language does. Human infants show clear evidence of feeling states long before they can speak, and children with severe intellectual impairments, some of whom acquire neither expressive nor receptive language, similarly display recognisable feeling states in response to both social stimuli and environmental influences (Hall, 1984). Although we can to an extent propitiate future feelings (for example, by seeking out evidence to justify feeling angry with someone – Solomon, 2004) it remains true that feelings are typically difficult to produce (we can't fall in love because we think it's a good idea) or prevent (we can't stop ourselves feeling sad by wanting to, either). Indeed, the recognition we give skilled theatrical performers suggests that feelings are difficult even to *fake* convincingly. Empirically, evidence that feelings are the default mode of our engagement with the world comes from Zajonc's studies (Zajonc, 1980, 1984); from Sperry and Gazzaniga's work with split-brain patients (Gazzaniga, 1998); from Panksepp's (1998) investigation of basic affect systems; and from recent work on the neuro-anatomy of consciousness which suggests that feelings are its fundamental constituent and are the necessary basis of any experience whatsoever, since if the brain is entirely deprived of feedback from the body then consciousness also disappears (Damasio, 1999). And, of course, much psychodynamic research also suggests a default role for feelings in human life (Mitchell and Black, 1995). More specifically, it is possible to describe particular circumstances where it seems that our 'rational' decisions must necessarily rely mainly on feelings. These include circumstances where information is lacking; where feelings are running high; where the ability to reason is impaired; where competing but mutually-incompatible logics are relevant; where time is extremely short; novel social situations where existing rational-discursive forms can't easily be applied, and open-ended social situations where each decision feeds forward into the next in ways that render 'rational' choosing impossible (Cromby, 2007).

Conclusion

Including feelings as an ontological category will not of itself resolve the shortcomings of the turn to language, in critical psychology or elsewhere. Indeed, like other attempts to re-introduce the lived, phenomenal body it may bring benefits but will also generate problems. Viewed negatively, the admission of feelings as an ontological category makes more visible again the problems of dualism largely concealed by constructionist and other approaches that focus solely upon analyses of language and texts. Indeed, in contemporary social analyses, suspicion frequently attaches to any attempt to engage with ontological categories. Hemming's critique of the affective turn in cultural theory portrays it also as an ontological turn, and it is in part the positioning of ontology her reading implies that causes her concern. With regard to the detail of her critique, however, it should be clear that in the analysis presented here feelings are not in any sense 'random'. On the one hand they represent the (enculturated) needs of the body, which occur in more-or-less regular rhythms; on the other, they are normatively inculcated in modal patterns reflective of societal hierarchies and associated subject positions. Moreover, feelings cannot sensibly be dichotomised as 'good' or 'bad', since they can be both and they can be neither. Tiredness and boredom can disrupt the demands of tedious employment, and hunger and resentment breach the injunction against shoplifting. Alternatively, tiredness and boredom may hinder attempts at workplace organisation, and hunger and resentment fuel attacks against marginal groups. So feelings have no intrinsic capacity for progressive action, but their ontological status and concomitant irreducibility to the linguistic, the formally symbolic, gives them the continuous potential to be spatio-temporally disjunctive with any given 'rationality'. And it is these disjunctions, rather than their intrinsic qualities, that generate feelings' potential for creative disruption - just as their conjunctions generate their normative potentials. Consideration of how these conjunctions and disjunctions are patterned, produced, situated, maintained and confined might therefore illuminate the mutually troubling relations between representation and being, desire and actuality, appearance and experience (Stephenson and Papadopoulos, 2007). It might help us address oppression, inequality and difference, to

better appreciate how autochthonous social orders are maintained and reproduced, and so grasp more effectively the power relations, paradoxes and opportunities of everyday life. It could put the soul, subjectivity, centrally onto our agenda: not individualistically and reductively, but as societally and materially co-constituted and relationally interpellated.

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Notes

1. Dialectical, here, means a continual, transformative, mutually-constitutive movement of realisation and suppression, a flux, rather than a turbid, relatively static and dichotomous opposition.

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