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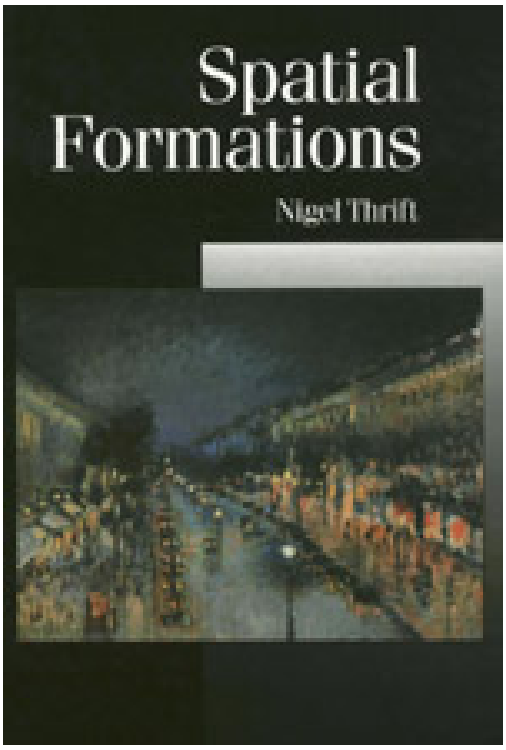

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‘Strange Country’: Meaning, Use and Style in Non-Representational Theories

> Someone coming into a strange country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive definitions that they give him [*sic*], and he will often have to *guess* the meaning of these definitions, and will guess sometimes right, sometimes wrong.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1958, part I, no. 32)

Introduction

The six chapters that follow on from this one are informed by a developing theoretical framework, one which has been laid down gradually over a number of years. In the chapters that follow, that framework is often implicit: in this introductory chapter I want to make it explicit.

Authors are often accused of simply wanting to share their obsessions with the reader. I am afraid that I am no different. From an early point in my academic career, my obsessions have been fourfold. The first obsession has been with *time-space*. The first two working papers I produced, as a postgraduate student, in 1973 and 1974, were both on time-space and they have subsequently been followed by a stream of books and papers on theoretical accounts of time and space, from Althusser and Gurvitch to Moore and Žižek, on time-space entrainment, on time-space convergence (now, for some odd reason, known as time-space compression), on time-space budgets, and on the historical geography of time consciousness. Each of these works, from the earliest one on, were informed by one simple principle, that it is neither time nor space that is central to the study of human interactional orders, but time-space. Whilst I might now quibble with the details of my conclusion to two linked papers published in 1977 (*1977b, 1977c*),[1] the sentiments expressed therein still ring true:

> The essential unit of geography is not spatial, it lies in regions of time-space and in the relation of such units to the larger spatio-temporal configurations. Geography is the study of these configurations. Marx once said, ‘one must force the frozen circumstances to dance by singing to them their own melody’. The frozen circumstances of space only come alive when the melody of time is played. (*1977b*, p. 448)

The second obsession is with the sensuousness of *practice*. My focus on practice was initially the result of reading Marx but some of the limitations of his account of how social being determines consciousness became clear in the attempts of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams to forge a 'cultural' Marxism based on ways of life (for a review, see *1983b*). For me, these attempts contained some fundamental flaws.[2] But they also made me think more openly about practice. Indeed, it was the work of E.P. Thompson which pointed me to the importance of both Pierre Bourdieu (in E.P. Thompson, 1967, 1978) and Cornelius Castoriadis (as Castoriadis and as 'Paul Cardan', in E.P. Thompson, 1978, fn. 167) (*1979f*). In turn, it was Bourdieu's work which directed me to the triptych of Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty, and to the importance of properly theorising time, ways of life and embodiment. At the same time, Castoriadis made me aware of the dynamics of the imaginary and, incidentally, in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987), provided what is still the seminal critique of certain kinds of Marxism.

I have also always been obsessed by the *subject*. My idea of the subject started out by being synonymous with human individuals, fuelled by work on 'time-geography', life histories and biography more generally, and by Williams's and Thompson's more open versions of Marxism which opened up a space for the person, both theoretically and historically. But it rapidly became clear that I was interpreting these accounts in ways that came perilously close to a Cartesian view of the subject. As a result, I underestimated the importance of the between-ness of joint action, and in general drew the bounds of the subject too tightly so that I was excluding many crucial relations between subjects and objects (and, indeed, misunderstanding the very nature of the subject–object relationship). In later work, I have attempted to correct these kinds of problems by paying more attention to processes of subjectification, by attempting to reconfigure what Merleau-Ponty (1962) called 'self-other-things', and by trying to imagine and image new figurations of the subject.

Finally, I have an obsession with *agency*, understood as both the production of action and of what counts as action (and of actors and of what counts as actors). In the first case, that has meant being mainly concerned with the 'wellsprings' of active participation in new beginnings and how these have varied historically and geographically, and most especially, in my case, in the growth of texts and their investment with productive potential and affect. In the second case, that has meant a concern with a new 'classification of things' (Latour, 1993) in which the bounds between subject and object become less easily drawn, both because the inside and the outside of the subject are seen as folded into each other and because the things we have conventionally depicted as objects, for example machines, are allowed into the realm of action and the actor. Many of these thoughts on agency were initially stimulated by the work of Anthony Giddens. Although the mention of Giddens's name nowadays hearkens back to debates over structure and agency which have become passé,

I believe that the task he set of describing agency remains a significant one. Whilst it would not be true to say that the importance of agency has been forgotten in the social sciences and humanities (feminist work on new figurations of the subject is a shining case in point), I do not believe it would be unfair to say that it still receives less attention than it deserves and, to revert to the terms of the old debates, I do not apologise for the fact that this book is weighted towards the consideration of agency rather than structure.

These four obsessions are coded in nearly all of my work as a concern for the *context* of the situation (or the complexification or mediation or spacing of the event). By 'context' I most decidedly do not mean an impassive backdrop to situated human activity. Rather, I take context to be a necessary constitutive element of interaction, something active, differentially extensive and able to problematise and work on the bounds of subjectivity. Context operates on three levels in my work. On one level, it simply reflects an ambition to move away from doing theory by conducting abstract thought experiments towards a style of work which attends to the knowledge we already have, and does not assume a common background when this is precisely what is at stake (Wilkes, 1988). On another level, it is an empirical pointer to the ways in which the constitution of practices varies with context. Take, just as one example, the case of language. The consideration of context automatically challenges correspondence theories of meaning. A contextual approach challenges the ability of any semantic approach to offer an exact characterisation of words since the meaning of utterances is rooted in action-in-context. Then on one more level, it is a theoretically loaded term. Take the example of language again. Here,

> contextual variations exacerbate the problematic nature of the featural characterisation. Not only can a definition not account for all possible cases, but the definition of each case may itself be subject to contextual variations … a given characteristic may hold in one context but not in another. (Shanon, 1993, pp. 29–30)

Shanon goes on to point to a whole series of features of language which critically depend on context: polysemy, novel uses of words, misusages, phrasal composition, translation, labelling, even prototypes. Such linguistic considerations of context hardly exhaust the ramifications of the term but they start to hint at its richness and importance in the kind of non-representational framework I am at pains to develop through the rest of this book. In the matter of context, in other words, the four obsessions I have listed gather together and become one.

These kinds of obsessions could not be easily handled in a number of the intellectual frameworks which existed when I first began to be gripped by them. These frameworks tended to privilege time over space, clung

to a specular and implicitly male model of the subject–object relation, tended to the neo-Kantian (in that they gave precedence to an *a priori* system of categorisation, whether the unconscious or the symbolic, discursive or ideological order, which defined the mode of being in which objects appear and can be recognised, and in which the subjectivity of persons is constructed) and insufficiently problematised representation. Such frameworks are less common now but it can hardly be said that all their sins have been excised. The privileging of time often seems to have been substituted for by the privileging of space (for example, Soja, 1989). The specular model of the subject–object relation still has its effects on theory (for example, D.W. Harvey, 1989). Neo-Kantianism can still be seen at work in a number of interpretations of Marx, Derrida and Foucault and others which too quickly connect the things of logic to the logic of things. A hardly problematised sphere of representation is allowed to take precedence over lived experience and materiality, usually as a series of images or texts which a theorist contemplatively deconstructs, thus implicitly degrading practices.[3] In other words, the kind of hesitant, partial and situated thinking I have striven for in the chapters that follow is still relatively unfamiliar in the social sciences and humanities, most especially in human geography, which still registers only a very small number of theoretical traditions.[4] The result is that problems of misrecognition abound, of which I will point, very briefly, to just a few.

First, there is the problem of what Merleau-Ponty called the ‘retrospective illusion’: theorists produce a logocentric presence which then becomes the precondition of research, a towering structure of categories lowering over the ant-like actions of humans and others which constitutes the ‘empirical’ raw material. Such an illusion still exists in some parts of the social sciences and humanities. Even in cultural studies, which has invested most in a critique of this tendency, there is a tendency to fall back on phrases which smuggle an absent presence into the centre of what are meant to be decentred accounts, a villain called ‘capitalism’, or ‘patriarchy’, which can be hissed off stage at convenient moments.

Second, and related, the production of such a presence is often associated with what Bernstein (M.A. Bernstein, 1994) has called ‘foreshadowing’, that is, an apocalyptic history of inevitable moments leading inevitably towards a predefined goal or fate which commentators already know, a goal or fate in which everything becomes faster, more compressed in space and time, more commodified, and so on. This logic of historical inevitability depends upon the dubious idea that history has a coherence other than what we impress upon it. It is rather like someone running through the town after the Pruitt-Igoe Flats were dynamited in 1972 shouting ‘postmodern capitalism has began’. In its most pernicious variant, foreshadowing leads to what Bernstein (M.A. Bernstein, 1994, p. 16) calls ‘backshadowing’, in which ‘the shared knowledges of the outcome of a

series of events by narrator and listener is used to judge the participants in those events, as though they too should have known what was to come'. Found most commonly in retroactive accounts of the Shoah, this practice is also common in accounts of the onset of new technologies.

A third, seemingly eternal problem is making the micro-macro distinction. This distinction is still remarkably common in the social sciences and humanities, even though it is neither empirically observable nor theoretically sensible (Giddens, 1984; Boden, 1994); only the latest variant is the 'local' and the 'global'. Yet, as Latour (1993, p. 122) puts it, the words 'local' and 'global' 'offer points of view on networks that are by nature neither local nor global but are more or less long and more or less connected'.

A fourth problem is often, although not always, linked to this distinction. It is the problem of misrecognising the flow of everyday life as, well, everyday. But what Pollner (1987, p. xvii) calls 'the extraordinary organisation of the ordinary' has to be seen in a different way. 'It is not a predicate, or an entity, nor is it self-evident' (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 10–11). It cannot, therefore, be seen as just a frill or a frame (Vattimo, 1988) around social structures, a side-show to the 'real' business of existence. It cannot be seen, either, as a separate and somehow more authentic sphere of 'everyday life', a 'lifeworld' which, in different formulations, can be found in authors as diverse as Habermas and Lefebvre. And it is not just a call to bring people 'back in', as though one was a humanist trying to balance up anti-humanist scales.

A fifth, widespread, problem is the assumption that there has been a general erosion of the social and that we are inevitably moving towards a more abstract, decontextualised, dehumanised and generally disenchanted world, one in which the lifeworld is taken over by the system, 'authentic' spaces by programmed consumer spaces, tactics by strategies, and so on. But this argument is more often assumed than demonstrated; many authors are now beginning to believe that our world may not be so very different from the worlds that have gone before it and that such a view rests on a series of false oppositions (Latour, 1993; Knorr-Cetina, 1994; Ingold, 1995).

> The thesis of the disenchantment of the world fails in several ways. First, it rests on the equation of the content of particular belief systems or modes of operation – which have changed – with 'substance', 'meaning', the 'life-world', etc. in general. If the proposition of the loss of meaning in modern and postmodern life is stripped of this equation, it amounts to a historically plausible but trivial assertion about the changing nature of meaning structures. Second, the assumption of the increase in formal, technical and abstract systems ignores the phenomenon that these systems are never abstract when they are enacted. Presumably, the meaning of abstract elements lies not in their formal

> definition but in their use. Third, the thesis fails in that it has not been systematically demonstrated empirically. In fact, assessments like that of a trend towards the elimination of the life world are ironic in the face of … microsociological studies in the last twenty years which demonstrate the procedures and forms of this life-world. (Knorr-Cetina, 1994, p. 6)

Finally, then, what we see over and over again is the problem of theoretical purification of practical orders. Commentators conjure up a purified system which is able to move inevitably on its way, an unstoppable glacier, transforming all before it and stamping out everything behind it, a system which is inured to the idea that 'nothing is settled; everything can still be altered. What was done, but turned out wrong, can be done again' (Lévi-Strauss, 1973, p. 393), and which therefore continually elevates uncertain forces into certain gods.

> Take some small business-owner hesitatingly going after a few market shares, some conqueror trembling with fever, some poor scientist tinkering in his lab, a lowly engineer piecing together a few more or less favourable relationships of force, some stuttering and fearful politicians; turn the critics loose on them, and what do you get? Capitalism, imperialism, science, technology, domination – all equally absolute, systematic, totalising. In the first scenario, the actors were trembling; in the second they were not. The actors in the first scenario could be defeated; in the second they no longer can. In the first scenario, the actors were still quite close to the modest work of fragile and modifiable mediations, now they are purified and they are all equally formidable. (Latour, 1993, p. 126)

This chapter tries to elaborate on some of these preliminary thoughts in two sections. The first section constitutes a kind of intellectual accounting in that it sets out some of the main strands of thought that have influenced my thinking on time-space, practice, subject and context. The second section moves on from this process of accounting to the bottom line; an exposition of the principles that – in one way or another and in more or less developed form – motivate the chapters in this book.

Theories of Practice

This first and longest section of the introductory chapter lays out some of the main tenets of non-representational thinking which, in turn, have had a major influence on my own work. These schools of thought all deny the efficacy of representational models of the world, whose main focus is the 'internal', and whose basic terms or objects are symbolic representations, and are instead committed to non-representational models of

the world, in which the focus is ‘external’, and in which basic terms and objects are forged in a manifold of actions and interactions. I will not be giving a complete review of all such non-representational models: this is a task which is well beyond the scope of an introduction. In particular I will be referring to, but not producing a more extensive account of: the work of the Russian school of activity theory, consisting of writers like Vygotsky, Leonti'ev and Luria (for example, Wertsch, 1985a, 1985b), the ecological psychology of Gibson (for example, Gibson, 1979), the Latin American ‘autopoietic’ school of Maturana and Varela (1980, 1987; Varela, 1989; Varela et al., 1991; Varela and Anspach, 1994), the work of Taussig on mimesis (for example, Taussig, 1993), or Bakhtin's (1984, 1986) dialogical philosophy of language (for example, Clark and Holquist, 1984; Folch-Serra, 1990).

But what it does seem worthwhile providing at this juncture is a summary of some of the main tenets of these non-representational models. Of course, non-representational thinking is a broad church and not all these tenets are shared equally (or equally well) by all its members. An act of survey therefore always runs the risk of producing a non-existent average. However, with such a caution borne in mind, it is possible to identify at least six of these tenets.

First, and most trivially, non-representational thinking throws a critical light on theories that claim to re-present some naturally present reality, or, in Foucault's (1972, p. 26) telling phrase, ‘the pure gold of things themselves’. Instead, it argues that practices constitute our sense of the real. Second, and accordingly, it valorises practical expertise. That is, it is concerned with thought-in-action, with presentation rather than representation.

> The traditional emphasis on the cognitive, the attempt to explain all human behaviour in terms of what we believe and how we consciously represent things to ourselves cannot account for the implicit familiarity and competence that are the hallmarks of everyday practical activity. Explicit representations of things in the practical world and conscious beliefs we form within practical contexts always presuppose this non-represented and … non-representable background of familiarity and expertise. (H. Hall, 1993, p. 131)

Third, this valorisation of thought-in-action emphasises the particular moment, in that it suggests that representation is always a part of presentation, laid out in a specific context which invites only particular kinds of presencing practices. But it does not do this naïvely, by producing ‘presentist’ accounts which isolate each moment from the one preceding and the one following it (Carr, 1986; Copjec, 1994b).

Fourth, it is concerned with thinking with the entire body. In turn, this means that non-representational models valorise all the senses, and not just the visual, and their procedures are not modelled solely on the act of looking. It also means that affect is seen as of primary importance, because 'thought … is not born of other thoughts. Thought has its origin in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotions. The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought' (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 282).

Fifth, and relatedly, it invites a degree of scepticism about the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences and humanities, suggesting that this turn has too often cut us off from much that is most interesting about human practices, most especially their embodied and situated nature, by stressing certain aspects of the verbal-cum-visual as 'the only home of social knowledge' (Curt, 1994, p. 139) at the expense of the haptic, the acoustic, the kinesthetic and the iconic (Claasen, 1993; Serres, 1986).

Then, sixth and finally, it is concerned with a rather different notion of 'explanation' which is probably best likened to understanding a person, a phenomenalism of character which involves, more than other approaches, empathic and ethical components: 'one reads the story of the life of a person. One follows the story, one travels for awhile together with that individual and eventually one gains understanding of him or her. When understanding has been achieved one discovers that one can tell a story' (Shanon, 1993, p. 362). Or, put another way, 'how does one determine that a painting is well composed, that it sits well? By dancing it' (Shanon, 1993, p. 353).[5] Ultimately, in other (than) words, one depends – one has to depend – on non-cognitive 'facts':

> The body knows whether things are balanced or not, whether they are in equilibrium, or not, whether they fit or not. Agents moving about in the world know how to find their way in it. Social agents appreciate whether the other is kind, honest, or boring, or attractive. Likewise, affectively one knows that things are good or bad (for the given agent), pleasant or not so. And ethically, one appreciates that things are right or wrong, fair or despicable. In all these cases what is being determined is whether or not things fit, click, or feel right. (Shanon, 1993, p. 353)

Understanding is not so much, then, about unearthing something of which we might previously have been ignorant, delving for deep principles or digging for rock-bottom, ultimate causes (Diamond, 1991) as it is about discovering the options people have as to how to live. Not empiricism, then, yet a kind of realism (Wittgenstein, 1956), since 'what I do with examples, what I do in explaining, may be essential in making manifest what I mean, but the explanation of what I mean cannot be given by examples, because they cannot adequately represent my relation to what is possible' (Diamond, 1991, p. 69).

Of course, none of the aforegoing is to deny processes of cognition, or the reality of representations. There are a whole stock of imagined understandings, which are shared and drawn upon in any culture (Castoriadis, 1987). It is, rather, to situate these imagined understandings as only a part of a broader process of knowledging. In other words, representational *effort* is always firmly embedded in a contextually specific process of social negotiation (Curt, 1994).

Take 1: 'But Ask Yourself: In What Sort of Case, in What Kind of Circumstances, Do We Say, "Now I Know How to Go on"?'[6]

The body is in constant motion. Even at rest, the body is never still. As bodies move they trace out a path from one location to another. These paths constantly intersect with those of others in a complex web of biographies. These others are not just human bodies but also all other objects that can be described as trajectories in time-space: animals, machines, trees, dwellings, and so on.

In embryo, this is a description of the time-space demography (or time-geography, as it is more commonly known) of Torsten Hägerstrand, the Swedish geographer (Hägerstrand, 1970, 1973, 1982; *1977a, 1977c, 1978a, 1980a*). Yet, as a written description, it precisely misses Hägerstrand's main aim, which was to find a geographical vocabulary that could describe these pre-linguistic movements pre-linguistically. That was the purpose of his now famous time-space diagrams. He often compared these diagrams to a musical score, which is a similar set of marks of movement, producing similarly complex existential effects. More than this, Hägerstrand took pains to point out that these diagrams, like a musical score, could stand for a different kind of (non-intellectual) intelligibility.[7]

One more point needs to be made concerning Hägerstrand's work. That is that it is inherently dialogical. In opposition to a number of critics in geography (for example, G. Rose, 1993) who have seen it as a robustly individualistic approach, Hägerstrand clearly saw time-geography in precisely the opposite terms. His stress was constantly on the congruences and disparities of *meeting* and *encountering*, that is, on the *situated interdependence* of life. His intent was, in other words, to capture the pragmatic sense of possibility inherent in practical situations of 'going-on'. In consequence,

> rather than implying an idealist framework of intentional action shaping the resulting totality, it should be evident that Hägerstrand pointed to competitive allocation and displacement effects which made the total outcome anything but the sum total of intentions at the level of actors (be they organisms,

> human individuals, groups, organisations, or even states). (Carlstein, 1982, p. 61)

Hägerstrand's maps of everyday coping can best be placed, therefore, in a line of thinking which stretches from the early Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein, through Merleau-Ponty, to, most recently, Bourdieu, de Certeau and Shotter, who have tried to conjure up the situated, pre-linguistic, embodied, states that give intelligibility (but, not necessarily meaning) to human action – what Heidegger called the primordial or pre-ontological understanding of the common world, our ability to make sense of things, what Wittgenstein knew as the background, what Merleau-Ponty conceived of as the space of the lived body, or, later, 'the flesh', and what Bourdieu means by the habitus. Each of these authors is concerned, in other words, to get away from Cartesian intellectualism, with its understanding of being as a belief system implicit in the minds of individual subjects, and return to an understanding of being as 'the social with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing and which we carry with us inseparably before any objectifications' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 362). In this 'view', being is not an entity but a way of being which constitutes a shared agreement in our practices about what entities can show up, and, likewise, 'humans are not entities but the clearing in which entities appear' (Zimmerman, 1993, p. 242).

In each case, what these authors have in common is that they see the subject as primarily derived *in practice*:

> In the mainstream epistemological view, what distinguishes the agent from the inanimate entities which can also effect their surroundings is the former's capacity for inner representation, whether these are placed in the 'mind' or in the brain understood as a computer. What we have which inanimate beings don't have – representations – is identified with representations and the operations we effect on them. To situate our understandings in practices is to see it as implicit in our activity, and hence as going well beyond what we manage to frame representations of. We do frame representations: we explicitly formulate what our world is like, what we aim at, what we are doing. But much of our intelligent action, sensitive as it usually is to our situation and goals, is usually carried on unformulated. It flows from an understanding which is largely inarticulate. (Taylor, 1993a, pp. 49–50)

Thus understanding of the subject in practice is fundamental in two ways. First, this kind of subjectivity is always present. Sometimes we frame representations. Sometimes we do not. But the practical intelligibility is always there. More to the point, and second, the kind of representations we make are only comprehensible against the *background* provided by this inarticulate understanding. 'Rather than representations being the primary focus of understanding, they are islands in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp of the world'

(Taylor, 1993a, p. 50). Yet the articulation of something that is at heart inarticulate remains a constant problem:

> There is a real difficulty in finding ordinary language terms to describe the Background: one speaks vaguely of 'practices', 'capacities', or 'stances' or one speaks suggestively but misleading of 'assumptions' and 'predispositions'. These latter terms must be literally wrong, because they imply the apparatus of representation. … The fact that we have no natural vocabulary for discussing the phenomenon in question and the fact that we tend to lapse into an intentionalistic vocabulary ought to arouse our interest. … There simply is no first-order vocabulary for the Background, because the Background is as invisible to intentionality as the eye which sees is invisible to itself. (Searle, 1983, pp. 156–7)

Heidegger was one of the first philosophers to take an anti-representationalist view of being and subjectivity as paramount and he has, of course, been highly influential (Dreyfus, 1991; Dreyfus and Hall, 1992; Guignon, 1993). Dreyfus and Hall (1992) list several generations of thinkers who have acknowledged a major debt to his work, including Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Arendt, Foucault, Bourdieu, Derrida, Taylor, Rorty and even Habermas. Heidegger's wide influence can be traced to the fact that Heidegger 'does not ground his thinking in everyday *concepts*, but in average everyday *practice*; in what people do, not what they say they do' (Dreyfus and Hall, 1992, p. 2). Such a view of an 'engaged agency' (Taylor, 1993b) leads Heidegger to jettison the Cartesian way of thinking of human beings, as isolated and disengaged subjects who represent objects to themselves, and to settle instead for the world-disclosing function of practices which always assumes a background of implicit familiarity, competence and concern or involvement. Thus,

> Rather than thinking of action as based on beliefs and desires, Heidegger describes what actually goes on in our everyday skilful coping with things and people and how we are socialised into a shared world. He describes simple skills – hammering, walking into a room, using turn signals, etc. – and shows how these everyday coping skills contain a familiarity with the world that enables us to make sense of things and 'to find [our] way about in [our] public environment'. Thus, like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Heidegger finds that the only ground for the intelligibility of thought and action we have or need is in the everyday practices themselves, not in some hidden process of thinking or of history. (Dreyfus and Hall, 1992, p. 2)

The skills involved in these practices are, in their way, remarkable. For example, Searle (1983, p. 143) writes:

> Think of what is necessary to go to the refrigerator and get a bottle of cold beer to drink. The biological and cultural resources that I must bring to bear on this task, even to form the intention to perform the task are (considered in a certain light) truly staggering. But without these resources I could not form the intention at all: standing, walking, opening and closing doors, manipulating bottles, glass, refrigerators, queuing, partying and drinking.

What Heidegger is suggesting is that being-in the-world does not consist of an organism or an ego containing a stream of experiences but is rather an average *mode of comportment*, a skilful coping which consists of a shared readiness to deal 'appropriately' with people and things, 'a way of being that is concerned about its own being, and yet must get its meaning by assigning itself to the occupations (including roles and equipment) provided by the one' (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 159), where the one is a set of cultural norms that do not depend on the existence of any particular human being but rather produce particular human beings. Clearly, the one is hard to grasp, but Heidegger makes it clear that it cannot be appropriated as something like a pre-existent Hegelian spirit that expresses itself in the world, nor as the conscious meaning-giving activity of an individual human subject; in other words,

> on the one hand, cultural norms are not given in such a way that their intelligibility can be traced back to lucid absolute consciousness. 'The one is not something like a "universal subject" which a plurality of subjects have hovering above them.' On the other hand, once a human being is socialised by other human beings – trained to comply with norms that are not fully available to consciousness – the result is misdescribed if we call it inter-subjectivity. (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 162)

Such a view tends to lead to the deduction that social change will usually be slow-moving since, as Heidegger (1985, p. 265) puts it,[8]

> this polished averageness of the everyday determination of Dasein, of the assessment of the world and the similar averageness of customs and manner, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every exception is short-lived and quietly suppressed.

But this need not mean social fixity either:

> New technological and social developments are constantly changing ways for Dasein to be. Nor does it mean there is no room for an individual or political group to develop new possibilities, which

> could then be available to the society. But it does mean that such 'creativity' always takes place on a background of what *one* does – of accepted-for-the-sake-of-whichs that cannot all be called into question at once because they are not presuppositions and in any case must remain in the background to lend intelligibility to criticism and change. (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 161)

However, Heidegger was not interested in how his understanding of being was instantiated or in how it was passed from one generation to another. Following the 'ontic trail' from ontology into the realm of social and historical structures requires us to move on, specifically to the work of the later Wittgenstein and to Merleau-Ponty. Wittgenstein agreed with Heidegger insofar as he stressed that the source of the intelligence of the world is average public practices:

> 'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?' – It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions [intentional states] but in form of life (background practices). (Wittgenstein, 1958, no. 241)

But Wittgenstein differed from Heidegger in that he did not believe that the practices that make up a human form of life could be described by an existential analytic of the kind Heidegger devoted much of his life to. For him, practices form an impenetrable thicket which cannot be systematised:

> How could human behaviour be described? Surely only by showing the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. Not what *one* man [*sic*] is doing *now*, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we see an action, and it determines our judgement, our concepts, and our reactions. (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 97, no. 509)

However, Wittgenstein produces another orientation to theories of practice in his concentration on the *ways of life* of different social groups, on the way that these different groups produce different 'pictures', via the 'finitist' doctrine that proper usage is developed step-by-step, in processes involving successions of on-the-spot judgements. 'Every instance of use, or of proper use, of a concept must in the last analysis be accounted for separately by reference to specific, local contingent determinants' (Barnes, 1982, p. 30). What in Heidegger is thinking about practices in Wittgenstein becomes thinking about the 'rough ground' of social practices conceived as forms or patterns of collective life (Wittgenstein, 1958, 1964; Kripke, 1982; Diamond, 1991). Through now famous notions like the language-game Wittgenstein battled against the 'discourse of thinking' which directly relates meanings to words. Wittgenstein insisted that thought is fully centred in thready, knotty

social interactions (Rubinstein, 1981):

> Giving ground … comes to an end; but the end is not certain presuppositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting* which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (Bloor, 1983, p. 183)

Merleau-Ponty can also help on this journey from the ontological to the ontic, and especially the later Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). In the earlier Merleau-Ponty, practices are embodied skills that have a common style and can be transposed to various domains. In this point of view, 'existential understanding' (Crossley, 1994) can be found, through the development of a sensuous phenomenology of *lived experience*, as constructed, as synthetic, as simultaneously active and passive, and as located at the 'mid-point' between mind and body (here Merleau-Ponty prefigures notions of a third space of joint action). Most importantly of all, lived experience is necessarily, ineliminably and ineffably *embodied*, 'corporeally constituted, located in and as the subject's incarnation' (Grosz, 1993, p. 41). This means, first of all, that the human body is unique in playing a dual role as both the vehicle of perception and the object perceived, as the body-in-the-world which 'knows' itself by virtue of its active relation to its world.

Second, the body is always active. 'The body … does not tend to a state of rest; it maintains levels of tension available for efficacious operations' (Lingis, 1994, p. 9). In other words, body sensing is active from the start; it takes a 'hold' of the world; 'the concept is Heideggerian; Merleau-Ponty envisions looking – participating with the eyes – tasting, smelling, and even hearing as variants of handling' (Lingis, 1994, p. 7). Then, third, the body is always located in time and space, which are conceived through the body. Thus,

> Our body is not a space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we wish to move about we do not move the body, as we move an object. We transport it without instruments … since it is us and because, through it, we have access to space. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 5)

Further,

> By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and possibly time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actually measures them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplace of estab-

> lished situations. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 100–2)

Fourth, and finally, bodies and things are not easily separated terms, precisely because of this locatedness:

> For example, it is not by means of access to a Cartesian abstract or geometrical space that one knows where to scratch in order to satisfy an itch on one's back. This is true, even if I use an instrument like a stick. From this point, Merleau-Ponty claims, the stick is no longer an object for me but has been absorbed or incorporated into my perceptual faculties or body parts. (Grosz, 1994b, p. 91)

But in his last text, *The Visible and the Invisible* (which might well have been retitled *The Sensible and the Intelligible*), Merleau-Ponty (1968) goes farther in his introduction of the concept of 'la chair', *flesh*. Here, he moves close to a Heideggerian pre-reflective predicate, a single fabric which refers to both the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world:

> Flesh is neither matter nor spirit nor substance, says Merleau-Ponty. The best analogy is with the old concept of 'elements' as applied to earth, air, fire and water. In something like that sense 'la chair' is an element of being in general. It is that which makes facts to be facts. It is as if in seeing something, I experience it as if I myself were visible to it. (Harré, 1991, p. 96)

To expand, Merleau-Ponty wants to 'return' to pre-discursive experience, a 'wild being', that is unarticulated but not unintelligible:

> In returning to a pre-reflective sensible, however, he is not seeking a pure domain uninfluenced by the social: instead his goal is to find precisely the preconditions within sensibility itself, within the subject (as well as the world) that make the subject open up to be completed by the world, things, others, objects, qualities, interrelations. Neither subject nor object can be conceived as cores, atoms, little nuggets of being, pure presence: not bounded unified entities, they interpretrate, they have a fundamental openness to each other. (Grosz, 1993, p. 43)

Thus the inside and the outside fold back into each other; to see is also the possibility of being seen, to touch is always to be touched, and so on. But

> Merleau-Ponty's claim is stronger than that everyone who sees is capable of being seen (by someone else). His point is ontological: the painter sees trees but the tree also, in some sense, sees the

> painter. This attribution of visibility to the visible as well as the seen is not an anthropomorphism, but rather a claim about the flesh, about a (non-identical, non-substantive) 'materiality' shared by the subjects and objects of perception. … The subject and object are inherently open to each other for they are constituted in the one stroke dividing the flesh into its various modalities. They are interlaced one with the other not externally but through their reversibility and exchangeability, their similarity-in-difference and their difference-in-similarity. Things solicit the flesh just as the flesh beckons to and as an object for things. Perception is the flesh's reversibility, the flesh touching, seeing, perceiving, itself, one fold (provisionally) catching the other in its self-embrace. (Grosz, 1993, pp. 45–6)

More recent writings make it possible to edge a little further towards social, historical and geographical specificity. The writings I am most concerned to engage with are those of Bourdieu and de Certeau, who both cite Heidegger, Wittgenstein[9] and Merleau-Ponty as major influences 'for a non-intellectualist, non-relativistic analysis of the relation between the agent and the world' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 10). Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus are crucial to the 'historicist ontology' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 273) that he offers.[10] In modern societies, the social cosmos is made up of a number of 'relatively autonomous social microcosms [which are] specific and irreducible' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Each of these microcosms is a network of objective relations between positions based in certain forms of power whose possession commands access to the specific advantages that are at stake in that field (which are defined historically). The field is usually in a state of dynamic tension since the relations between positions, what counts as advantage and even where the borders of the field are drawn are constantly being redefined in struggle by the agents who are situated in it by virtue of a configuration of properties which define their eligibility and therefore their ability to participate.[11]

The correlate of the field of objective positions is the structured system of practices and expressions of agents, the 'symbolic stances' that make up what Bourdieu calls the *'habitus'*. Whereas the field is the objectified state of historical process, the habitus is the embodied state. They are what Bourdieu, citing Spinoza, calls 'two translations of the same sentence'. Together they are the means by which 'the dead seizes the living' (Bourdieu, 1993).

More specifically;

> The concept of habitus refers to an ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluat-

> ing, speaking, and acting – that structures all the expressive, verbal and practical manifestations and utterances of a person. Habitus has to be thought of as 'a generative principle of regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78) (which are called practice), an incorporated structure formed by the objective conditions of its genesis. It is 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature', as Bourdieu says, 'the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' [1990a, p. 56]. By contrast with the familiar sociological concept of role, habitus refers to something *incorporated, not* to a set of norms or expectations existing independently of and externally to the agent. Likewise, as it is thought to be part of the living organism, thus functioning in the way of living systems, habitus refers to a *generative* principle, *not* to a set of fixed and finite rules. (Krais, 1993, pp. 169–70)

In other words, the habitus is a kind of 'embodied unconscious' which

> makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that realisation entails. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 57)

Habitus and field are obviously intimately related to one another:

> habitus reacts to the solicitations of the field in a roughly coherent and systematic manner. As the collective individuated through embodiment or the biological individual 'collectivised' by socialisation, habitus is action to the intention in action of Searle or to the 'deep structure' of Chomsky except that, instead of being an anthropological invariant, this deep structure is a historically constituted, intrinsically grounded, and thus socially variable generative matrix. It is an operator of rationality, but of a practical rationality, immanent in an historical system of social relations and therefore transcendent to the individual. The strategies it 'manages' are systematic, yet ad hoc because they are 'triggered' by the encounter with a particular field. Habitus is creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures, which are the embodied sedimentation of the social structures which produced it. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 18–19)

In other words, there is 'an ontological complicity between habitus and the social field' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 194). Or, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1993, p. 38) put it even more succinctly, 'our socially inculcated dispositions to act make the world solicit action, and our actions are a response to this solicitation'.

Bourdieu is clearly interested in framing the encounter between practices and history. It is left to de Certeau (1984, 1986) to frame the encounter between practices and geography. It is too rarely noted that de Certeau wrote critically on Bourdieu, and the terms of his critique were explicitly spatial. Thus, de Certeau praised Bourdieu's ethnological work on the everyday tactical practices of the Kabyle and the Béarnais but he was unable to find the same kind of subtlety in Bourdieu's work closer to home on the French educational system. As both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Reed-Danahy (1985) also point out, in this work, the subtle energies of habitus are absorbed in a complex but still recognisable regulation model which confuses 'the ideology of his own milieu with its practices' (Herzfeld, 1987, p. 83). For de Certeau (1984, p. 59), Bourdieu extinguishes tactics' fire 'by certifying their amenability to socio-economic rationality … as if to mourn their death by declaring them unconscious'. Perhaps this is because of Bourdieu's need for an

> *other* (Kabylian or Béarnian) which furnishes the element that the theory needs to work and 'to explain everything'. This remote foreign element has all the characteristics that define the habitus: coherence, stability, unconsciousness, territoriality. … It is represented by the habitus where, as in the Kabylian dwelling, the structures are inverted as they are interiorised, and where the writing flips over again in exteriorising itself in the form of practices that have the deceptive appearance of being free improvisations. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 58)

De Certeau's answer to this occidentalist dilemma is interesting. It is to concentrate on the importance of tactics by exploring the importance of *space*. De Certeau tries to surmount the problem of Bourdieu's implicit denigration of the tactical properties of practices by exploring how space intervenes both in constituting tactics and in forming the other. Thus, 'a tactic insinuates into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance' (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). For de Certeau practices are always spatial-symbolic practices which can be discovered via spatial-symbolic metaphors like walking, pathways and the city. Through the movements of the body and the powers of speech the subject (now a walker) can jointly produce the possibility of converting one spatial signifier into another. New places and meanings, 'acts and footsteps', 'meanings and directions' are produced and they produce;

> liberated spaces that can be occupied. A rich indetermination gives them … the function of articulating a second poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 105)

Space intervenes in another way too, in the production of narrativities. For de Certeau:

> Narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes. By means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints, they regulate changes in space (or moves from one place to another) made by stories in the form of places put in linear or interrelated series. … More than that, when they are represented in descriptions or acted out by actors (a foreigner, or city dweller, a ghost) these places are linked together more or less tightly or easily by 'modalities' that specify the kind of passage leading from the one to the other. …
>
> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ('its to the right', 'take a left'), the beginning of a story the rest of which is written by footsteps, to the daily news ('guess who I met at the bakery'), television news reports (Teheran: Khomeni: is becoming increasingly isolated), legends (Cinderellas living in hovels) and stories that are told (memories and functions of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past). These narrated adventures simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a 'supplement' to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. In reality, they organise walks. They make the journey before or during the time the feet perform it. (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 115–16)

In the latter parts of his career, de Certeau explained these spatial stories as a vital constituent of the other, specifically through the construction of practices of Empire and colonisation (de Certeau, 1991).

Take 2: Further Down the Ontic Trail

This brief exposition of the work of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu and de Certeau has allowed me to consider the main theorists of practices. It has also allowed me to travel some way down the ontic trail towards social, historical and geographical particularity. Now I want to both fill in some more of the details in theories of practice and, at the same time, travel still further down the ontic trail, through an appeal to three different sets of literatures concerned with, respectively, the conversational nature of practices, the conundrum of subjectivity and the deployment of power. In so doing, I also want to face up to the kind of criticism made by Copjec (1994b) and like-minded authors, that a framework built on the principles of Heideg-

ger and the four other theorists we have encountered so far is incapable of 'supposing' a subject, by actively showing how their work can be extended in precisely this direction without damaging its most important insights.

The first of these literatures is concerned with the nature of practices themselves. Each of the exponents of theories of practice so far addressed, for different reasons, tends to leave the exact ways in which practices are reproduced/revised in abeyance.[12] For example, the fast and often unpredictable interactional to and fro of everyday life is missing, concepts of the self and personality tend to lie dormant, certain issues concerning language are passed over, and processes of socialisation of the child get short shrift. These omissions can at least start to be redressed through an appeal to the North American pragmatic tradition, which begins with the work of Dewey and Mead. No one who is interested in theories of practice can readily ignore this tradition. Mead was, of course, a remarkably prescient thinker who, from the start, was intent on avoiding the demarcation of social and personal regions. Thus, in his account of language and the social self, thought and self-awareness arose from interpersonal processes. Initially this means communication by gesture.[13] Later, other forms of language emerge. The inner conversation which we denote as 'thinking' takes on an impersonal form, because the conversation in our minds is no longer with actual persons but with a 'generalised other'; the values and morals of the social group which are embodied in discourse. In other words, the 'inner' organisation of the self 'rests on the dialectical interchange with everything outside that is outside it: that is to say: its natural environment as it is mediated through social activity and communication' (Burkitt, 1991, p. 48):

> from this standpoint, perfect individuality or a fully developed personality, instead of being something given and simply to be recognised, is the result of deep and profound consciousness of the actual social relations. Furthermore, as a prerequisite of this consciousness, we imply the formation of the most extensive and essential social relationships whose control must lie within themselves and in their interaction upon each other, rather than in any internal judgement. From this standpoint personality is an *achievement* rather than a given fact. (Mead, cited in Burkitt, 1991, p. 48)

It is also clear from the quotation that, for Mead, 'extensive and essential social relationships' refer to preconscious patterns of conduct which are necessary to the entire economy of conduct, and 'this is similar to Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, where the future of objects is constructed by habitual everyday activity in the material world, and the meaning that objects have for us is the part that they play in that habitual activity' (Burkitt, 1991, p. 49).

Mead's work was chiefly taken up in sociology, where it became incorporated into the symbolic interactionism of Blumer and others (for accounts, see Alexander, 1989; Denzin, 1992) as a ‘down-to-earth’ approach to the study of human group life and human conduct resting on three main assumptions: first, that ‘human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them’ (Blumer, 1969, p. 2); second, that meanings arise out of the process of social interaction; and, third, that meanings are modelled through an interpretive process which involves self-reflective individuals who symbolically interact with each other. In appealing to these assumptions, symbolic interactionism clearly tended towards an individualist and representationalist view. However, the work of many of its scions is still instructive for theories of practice, and can be recast in their terms. In particular, there is the work of Garfinkel and Goffman. Garfinkel's ‘ethnomethodology’ (Heritage, 1984) is an approach which shows the stuff of social order as people's familiar, everyday actions, arising out of the ‘local logics’ connected with concrete social situations. But these actions are achieved in ways which are artful as well as taken-for-granted. To accomplish them people must constantly utilise well-known and well-used procedures or codes *creatively*, or, as it is often and famously phrased, ‘for another first time’.[14] These procedures are the folk – or ‘ethno’ – methods which we must try to understand if we are to make everyday actions intelligible. In other words, Garfinkel was concerned to produce an analysis of social phenomena which recognised them as

> the managed accomplishment of organised settings of practical actions, and that particular determinations in members' practices of consistency, thankfulness, relevance, or reproducibility of their practices and results – from witchcraft to topology – are accompanied and assured only through particular, located organisations of artful practices. (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 32)

By the same token, Garfinkel goes on:

> it is not satisfactory to describe how actual investigative practices, as constitutive features of members' ordering and organised affairs, are accomplished by members as recognisably rational actions in actual occasions of organisational instances by saying that members invoke some rule with which to define the coherent, or consistent or planful, i.e. rational, character of their actual activities. (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 32)

Thus, it follows that:

> a leading policy is to refuse serious consideration to the prevailing proposal that efficiency, efficacy,

> effectiveness, intelligibility, consistency, planfulness, typicality, uniformity, replicability of activities – i.e. that rational properties of practical activities – be assessed, recognised, categorised, described by using a rule or standard obtained outside actual settings within which such properties are recognised, used, produced and talked about by settings' members. (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 32–3)

Most particularly, Garfinkel attached importance to the *accountable* character of social action as a reflexive, inferential and inevitably ethical (since it must involve moral intuition) product of the interpretation of shared procedures: 'by his [*sic*] accounting practices the member makes familiar commonplace activities of everyday life recognisable *as* familiar, commonplace activities' (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 9). In other words, social actors are, through their own actions, unavoidably engaged in producing and reproducing the intelligible character of their own circumstances by constituting practically adequate situations (in contrast to the standard sociological view of situations as stable objects of consensual identification). Thus,

> Garfinkel's interest is in descriptive accounts and accountings as data which are to be examined to see how they organise, and are organised by, the empirical circumstances in which they occur. Far from being treated as external to social activity, accounts are to be treated as subject to the same range of circumstantial and interpretative categories as the actions and instances they describe. In this context, Garfinkel begins his description of accounts by noting that their 'fit' to the instances they describe is 'loose' and subject to adjustment by *ad hoc* devices: that accounts, like actions, are understood by reference to a mass of unstated assumptions and that the sense of an account is heavily dependent on the context of its production. Descriptive accounts, in short, are indexical. (Burkitt, 1991, p. 56)

The same emphasis on social action as being designed with reference to how it will be recognised and described, and on language as *language-in-use*, can also be found in the work of Goffman. Here I do not want to concentrate on Goffman's dramaturgical models of impression management but on his later work on micro-social interaction, where, as he put it, 'most of the work gets done'. Most particularly, in this later work, Goffman was interested in recognising the *rhetorical* character of *talk*. For Goffman, 'talking is not experiencing or perceiving, the objects and happenings around us, but doing. Talk is performance, a form of acting on and interacting with what is, and with what is going on around us' (Burns, 1992, p. 301). But talk is not just performance:

> While it is true that utterances are performative and convey commitment to action, or promises, or

> assent, dissent, caution and much else, a good deal of the talk in which performative utterances are conveyed is only indirectly connected with the performative content; indeed, this may be a minor feature. (Burns, 1992, p. 303)

Thus,

> What the individual spends most of his [*sic*] time doing is providing evidence for the fairness or unfairness of his current situation and other grounds for sympathy, approval, exoneration, understanding, or amusement. And what his listeners are obliged to do is to show some kind of audience appreciation. (Goffman, 1974, p. 503)

These kinds of concerns with accounts and the rhetorical properties of talk have been taken up again more recently in the *conversational* models of human conduct pursued by Harré and Shotter. For both Harré and Shotter reality is 'conversational':

> The fundamental human reality is a conversation, effectively without beginning or end, to which, from time to time, individuals may make contributions. All that is personal in our mental and emotional lives is individually appropriated from the conversation going on around us and perhaps idiosyncratically transformed. The state of our thinking and feeling will reflect, in various ways, the form and content of that conversation. (Harré, 1983, p. 20)

It is possible to argue with Harré's approach to the conversational reality with its rather odd distinction between a practical and expressive order, and its tendency to neo-Kantianism. Therefore, I will concentrate on the work of Shotter (1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1993a, 1993b; see also Shotter and Gergen, 1994), which mixes Harré with Vico, Wittgenstein, Vygotsky and Bakhtin to produce an intriguing conversational version of social constructionism which fits with the main tenets of theories of practice in its attempt to move 'beyond representationalism'. Shotter's work on conversation (understood as everyday practical talk) depends on four main principles. First, and most importantly, it concentrates on the third space 'between' the individual psyche and the abstract systems or principles which supposedly characterise the external world.[15] This is the space of everyday social life, a flow of responsive and relational activities that are joint, practical-moral and situated in character and constitute a new understanding 'of the third kind'. This is the space of 'joint action' in which 'all the other socially significant dimensions of interpersonal interaction, with their associated modes of subjective or objective being, originate and are formed' (Shotter, 1993b, p. 7). It is, in effect, Wittgenstein's background

foregrounded.

Second, Shotter's work assigns a crucial role to the use of language, not as a communicative device for transmitting messages from the psyche or social structure, but as a rhetorical-responsive means of moving people or changing their perceptions. Thus in this rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism the account of language that is offered is ‘sensuous’ – language is a communicational, conversational, dialogical and persuasive means of responding to others (and ‘ourselves’):

> all of what we might call the person–world, referential–representational, dimensions of interaction at the moment available to us as individuals – all the familiar ways we have of talking about ourselves, about our world(s), and about their possible relationships which in the past we have taken as in some way primary – we now claim must be seen as secondary and derived, as emerging out of the everyday, conversational background to our lives. (Shotter, 1993b, p. 8)

Thus, and third, Shotter is clearly committed to a highly *situated* view of human life and language use. Situations ‘exist as third entities, between us and the others around us’ (Shotter, 1993b, p. 9).

In turn, such a view of situations produces an orientation to the other, which is necessarily ethical:

> To us as individuals, … situations may seem like one or another kind of ‘external’ world. … However, such situations are not external to ‘us’ as a social group. As neither ‘mine’ nor ‘yours’, they constitute an Otherness. And it is from within this Otherness that we must distinguish, slowly and gradually, between that which is due to our relations to each other, and that which is not – the task of distinguishing what is dependent upon factors of our talk from what is independent of it. This will be a difficult and politically contested task; but it is clear that until now, it is a task that has been ignored. (Shotter, 1993b, p. 9)

Therefore, fourth and finally, in Shotter's rhetorical-responsive account a careful emphasis is placed on self-other relationships:

> Social constructionists are concerned with how, without a conscious grasp of the processes involved in doing so, in living out different, particular forms of self–other relationships, we unthinkingly construct different, particular forms of … person–world relationships: the special ways in which, as scientists, say, we interact with the different worlds of only theoretically defined entities, the routine

> ways in which as ordinary persons we function in the different realities we occupy in our everyday social lives; as well as the extraordinary ways in which we act, say, when in 'love'. (Shotter, 1993a, p. 12)

The second literature I want to appeal to is concerned with filling out the notion of subjectivity. What I have outlined so far suggests something not so far from the classical poststructuralist decentred subject; this is as I believe it should be (*1991b*). But I also believe that the subject *is* psychically 'anchored' in various ways: by narrative surely, as Freud and de Certeau make clear; by the recording of early pre-discursive experiences of the object certainly (Winnicott, 1974, 1975; Bollas, 1987; Rustin, 1991); by the word even – I have not entirely given up on Lacan! But most importantly of all, there is the *primary unconscious imaginary*, defined as 'the key psychical mechanism through which human beings establish an imaginary relation with the self, others, received social meanings, and society' (Elliott, 1992, p. 4). Here I want to draw on the work of Castoriadis (1984, 1987, 1991a, 1991b). Castoriadis's work is, without doubt, exceptional: as Lecercle (1993, p. 58) puts it, 'he was so obviously right forty years before everybody else. More importantly, he is the only living incarnation of two figures who ought to be close to our hearts: the philosopher-cum-psychoanalyst who manages to articulate Freud and Marx.' But this may still seem a rather odd choice. After all, Castoriadis is known for his commitment to a human psyche which produces representation; and to an actual faculty of signification:

> the imaginary ultimately stems from the ongoing positioning or presenting oneself with things and relations which do not exist, in the form of representations (things and relations that are not or have never been given in perception). We shall speak of a final or radical imaginary as the common root of the actual imaginary and of the symbolic. This is, finally, the elementary and irreducible capacity of evolving images. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 127)

But what Castoriadis means by 'representation' is actually quite specific; and has very little to do with most definitions of representation; especially those definitions that are based on notions of the reflection of a 'real world':

> Those who speak of 'imaginary' understanding by this the specular, the reflection of the 'fictive', do no more than repeat, usually without realising it, the affirmation which has for all time chained them to the underground of the famous cave: it is necessary that this would be an image of something. The imaging of which I am speaking is not an image *of*. It is the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone

> there can ever be a question *of* something. What we call 'reality' and 'rationality' are its works. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 3)

It clearly follows that:

> The term 'representation', as used by Castoriadis, does not denote some organic bond between images and things, ideas and the object world. Rather, the nature of representation for Castoriadis is anchored firmly in bodily reality, lit by the moment of creation *ex nihilo* between the thrust of the drive and the individual's unique mode of being. 'The individual' writes Castoriadis 'is not just a first concentration of representations – or better, a first "total representation" – he [*sic*] is also, above all, a ceaseless emergence of representations and the unique mode in which this representation/flux exists.' Unconscious representation, then, is a finite-infinite 'flux': it is indefinite in form, and is indifferent to the rules of ordinary logic. (Elliott, 1992, p. 28)

For Castoriadis, then, representation is a creative and constitutive feature of social experience, intention and affect. In the guise of the (primary and unconscious) imaginary, it is the endless emergence of these representations, drives and affects (originary investments), 'understood as an imaginary dimension of subjectivity, the dimension through which human beings create themselves anew and the political shape of their society' (Elliott, 1992, p. 4), by 'opening out' to

> self-identity, others, reason, society, and political engagement. Thus, the decisive grip the imaginary holds on the symbolic can be understood on the basis of the following consideration: symbolism assumes the capacity of positioning a permanent connection between two themes in such a way that one 'represents' the other. It is only at very advanced stages in lucid rational thinking that these three elements (the signifier, the signified and their *sui generis* tie) are maintained as simultaneously united and disjoint in a relation that is at once firm and flexible. (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 127)

The third literature to which I want to make an appeal is concerned with the issue of how *power* is constructed, enacted and exerted. Theories of practice have undoubtedly tended to avoid this issue; in a world of violence, oppression and cruelty they too often tend to the anaemic. The work of Bourdieu on the social field and habitus and on what he calls 'symbolic violence' and the writings of de Certeau on the interplay between the strategies of the powerful and the tactics of the weak have clearly begun to address the issue of agonistically constructed power more forcefully, but I am going to consider power instead through the body of work

known as actor-network theory,[16] or sometimes the sociology of 'translation', where translation is defined as 'the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form' (Callon, 1986, p. 224; 1991; Latour, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993; Law, 1991, 1994).

Actor-network theory is not, of course, only concerned with how power is constructed. It also, and rather usefully, fills in other lacunae in theories of practices; of which five are particularly noteworthy. First, it provides a means of understanding how everyday practices are transmitted into wider processes of *social* formation, but without falling back on either an all-encompassing theoretical order of the kind that is so deeply suspect or a (sophisticated) restatement of the problem, as in Giddens's notions of time-space distanciation, and social and system integration. Second, it points to the way in which social *agency* is constructed *in* these social processes, rather than being assumed to be a property of them. Third, it identifies the process of construction as one that requires constant *effort*, and is always halting. (Thus, for example, actor-network theory recognises the importance of the work of maintenance of networks: constant, unrelenting work that has to be invested simply to keep networks together – as any glance at the Yellow Pages, with its vast lists of repairers, shows. Actor-network theory also recognises the importance of mistakes, and as creative as well as negative moments.) Fourth, it problematises *subject–object* relations because of its catholic view of what can count as actors. Then, fifth and finally, it demonstrates how *reality* is constructed through processes of translation, association and alliance which strengthen particular positions/accounts of practices at the expense of others. In other words 'building reality and truth, like building a freeway or a super-computer, must be recognised as intricately organised socio-political processes' (Ward, 1994, p. 89). Let me now expand on these points.

Actor-network theory uses the 'topological presupposition' (Mol and Law, 1994) of the network to consider how social agency is constructed. The bloodline of actor-network theory is poststructuralism (and especially Foucault), by symbolic interactionism out of network philosophies of science. As Law (1994, p. 18) has it:

> The provenance of actor-network theory lies in poststructuralism: the vision is of many semiotic systems, many orderings, jostling together to generate the social. On the other hand, actor-network theory is more concerned with changing recursive *processes* than is usual in writing influenced by structuralism. It tends to tell *stories*, stories that have to do with the processes of ordering that generate effects such as technologies, stories about how actor-networks elaborate themselves, and stories which erode the analytical status of the distinction between the macro- and micro-social.

Actor-network theory has three main characteristics. First, agents – which can vary in size from individual human subjects to the largest organisations – are treated as relational effects. Second, however, agents are not unified effects. They are contingent achievements. Many of the stories of actor-network theorists recount 'how it is that agents more or less, and for a period only, manage to constitute themselves. Agency, if it is anything, is a precarious achievement' (Law, 1994, p. 101). Third, the social world is conceived of as fragmentary. It is a set of more or less related bits and pieces which are the result of endless attempts at producing networks, some of which are currently relatively successful, some of which are currently the social equivalent of the faded silk flowers in the attic. The 'social' is the outcome of this 'recursive but incomplete performance of an unflavourable number of intertwined orderings' (Law, 1994, p. 101). Thus in actor-network theory 'modes of production', 'structures', 'classes', 'interests', and the like, are not treated as the carriers of events but rather as a set of *effects* arising from a whole complex of network relations: 'translation is a process before it is a result' (Callon, 1986, p. 224).

It is often written that actor-network theory is an attempt to combine the insight of economics, that it is *things* that draw actors in relationships, with the insight of sociology, that actors come to define themselves, and others, through *interactions*. Thus, 'actors define one another in interaction – in the intermediaries that they put into circulation' (Callon, 1991, p. 135). These intermediaries – usually considered to be texts, technical artefacts, human beings and money – allow networks to come into being by giving social links shape and consistency and therefore some degree of longevity and size. But they are not passive tools. For example, texts and technical artefacts can clearly define the role played by others in the network – both humans and non-humans. In other words, the 'material' and the 'social' intertwine and interact in all manner of promiscuous combinations.

A network is, therefore, defined by the actors and by the circulation of intermediaries in interaction. But that still leaves open the question of how networks are established and stabilised. Murdoch (1995, pp. 747–8) provides the best explanation of this process:

> In order for an actor to successfully enrol entities (human and non-human) within a network their behaviour must be standardised and channelled in the directions desired by the enrolling actor. This will entail redefining the roles of the actors and entities as they come into alignment, such that they come to gain new identities or attributes within the network. It is the intermediaries which act to bind actors together, 'cementing' the links. When there is a perfect translation, or redefinition, of actors'

> identities and behaviours, then these are stabilised within the network. The stronger the network, the more tightly the various entities (human and non-human) are tied in. Despite their heterogeneity they work in unison. Each actor is able to 'speak for all, and to mobilise all the skills and alliances within the network' (Callon, 1991, p. 151). The more stable the network, the more irreversible the translations. The links and relationships would be predictable, standardised; the network would be 'heavy with norms' (Callon, 1991, p. 151). However the 'power' of the intermediaries may be curtailed by actors modifying or appropriating them in accordance with their own projects. When the translation process has been weakly executed, the enrolling actors find their states continually in question and find it hard to mobilise other parts of the network. Thus successful or strong networks might be considered to be those where the processes of translation have been effectively executed, allowing the enrolling actor to consolidate the network on its own terms.

These successful, strong networks will clearly often involve action at a distance and this kind of action is in itself an achievement, one that can often only be guaranteed by socio-technical innovations which circulate intermediaries – from postal systems to long-distance navigation to modern computerised telecommunications. In other words, in actor-network theory, scale is an ongoing and transient achievement and the world is one in which 'actors have only relative size and are fighting hard to vary the size of everyone else' (Latour, 1988, p. 174).

Such an account of the struggle to achieve scale leads easily on to the question of power (Law, 1991). In actor-network theory, power is conceived of as the continuous outcome of the strength of the associations between actors and 'understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances' (Callon, 1986, p. 224). As Murdoch (1995, p. 748) again puts it

> The stronger the network the more powerful the translating actor. Thus, those who are powerful are not those who 'hold' power but are those able to enrol, convince and enlist others into networks on terms which allow the initial actors to 'represent' these others. Powerful actors 'speak for' all the enrolled entities and actors and control the means of representation (they 'speak for the others that have been deprived of a voice, that have been transformed from objects that spoke for themselves into new shadows of their former selves' (Law and Whittaker, 1988, p. 79)). The controlling actor grows by borrowing the force of others; it can inflate to a larger size. … Power is, therefore, the com-

> position of the network: if it lies anywhere it is in the resources used to strengthen the bonds.

Thus actor-network theory, as a sociology of *ordering* rather than order, is, at least in its later forms, 'all about distribution, unfairness and pain' (Law, 1994, p. 134). But, most importantly of all, it is about how these are *done in practice*. So,

> When the sociology of order complains that inequality is absent what I now hear is a different kind of complaint: an objection to the fact that the sociologies of ordering (like actor-network theory) do not buy into a reductionist commitment to some final version of order; that they are not, for instance, committed to a particular theory of class or gender exploitation; that they refuse to adopt what some feminists call a 'standpoint epistemology'; that their materialism is relational rather than dualist; that there is no *a priori* distinction between the macro-social and the micro-social. These complaints are right but I don't believe that they are justified. For ordering sociologies, whether legislative or interpretative, prefer to explore *how* hierarchies come to be told, embodied, performed and resisted. But to choose to look at hierarchy in this way is neither to ignore it, nor to deny it. Rather it is to tell stories about its mechanics, about its instances, about how we all do it, day by day. (Law, 1994, p. 134)

Clearly, activating networks of actors, and therefore agency, requires mobilisation of all manner of things and this is probably where actor-network theory makes its most original contributions (*1994g*). In actor-network theory things other than human agency are given their due, with two main results. First, and as a matter of principle, actor-network theory recognises networks as collectivities of all manner of objects which all contribute in their way to the achievement (and attribution) of agency. In other words, actor-network theorists argue for a 'symmetrical anthropology'[17] which is more likely to recognise (and value) the contribution of the non-human by shifting our cultural classification of entities. Latour (1993, p. 67) goes so far as to argue for the necessity of a new constitution which will complete 'the impossible project undertaken by Heidegger', both by correcting Heidegger's archaic bias, and also by restoring the part of the 'anthropological matrix' which has been lost. Thus, says Latour (1993, p. 107),

> All collectives are different from one another in the way they divide up beings, in the properties they attribute to them, in the mobilisation they consider acceptable. These differences constitute countless small divides, and there is no longer a great divide to tell them apart from all the others. Among these small, small divides, there is one that we are now capable of recognising as such, one that

> has distinguished the official version of certain segments of certain collectivities for three centuries. This is our Constitution, which attributes the role of non-humans to one set of entities, the role of citizens to another, the function of an arbitrary and powerless God to a third, and cuts off the work of mediation from that of purification.

It is this constitution that Latour wants to say farewell to. He wants a new constitution that recognises hybrid, or variable, geometry entities, which restores 'the shape of things', and which redefines the human as 'mediator' or 'weaver'. Second, and following on from the latter point, because things are so intimately bound up in the production of networks that will last and spread, actor-network theory conjures up the idea of a world where 'the human' must be redefined as highly decentred (or as reaching farther) and as unable to be placed in opposition to the non-human: 'The human is not a constitutional pole to be opposed to that of the non-human' (Latour, 1993, p. 137). Thus some of our most cherished dualities – like nature and society – fall away to be replaced by new hybrid representations and new ethical considerations:

> the human is in the delegation itself, in the pass, in the sending, in the continuous exchange of forms. Of course, it is not a thing, but things are not things either. Of course it is not a merchandise, but merchandise is not merchandise either. Of course, it is not a machine, but anyone who has seen machines knows they are scarcely mechanical. Of course, it is not in God, but what relation is there between the God above and the God below. … Human nature is the set of its delegates and its representatives, its figures and its messengers. (Latour, 1993, p. 138)

Finally, the mention of the influence of poststructuralism on actor-network theory allows me to comment briefly on this area of theoretical work in relation to theories of practice. In part, I do this because theories of practice share some of the same theoretical forebears – Heidegger being perhaps the most obvious (though read in a different way). In part, I do it because it allows me to make clear where theories of practice differ not only from conventional sociologies of order but also from certain poststructuralist readings. And, in part, I do it because I also want to identify certain forms of poststructuralist work which are, I believe, quite close to the theories of practice I have been expounding, and can add significantly to them.

It is possible to identify two different schools at work in poststructuralist thinking (Shotter, 1993a). One of these we might call the 'representational–referential' strand. Primarily influenced by the work of Saussure, it consists of the works of writers like Derrida and Lyotard who look on language as 'working in terms of already existing, decontextualised systems of conventionalised meanings of usages, characterised either by systems

of differences, or in terms of rule-governed language games' (Shotter, 1993b, p. 13). In other words they focus on 'already spoken words'. Shotter (1993a) claims that this strand of work is still tainted by the 'systematic spirit' of the Enlightenment. I think that it is hard to disagree with this judgement. In particular, Shotter and others have pointed to the warning signs in this work; a certain inherent representationalism, a certain idea of a theoretical account that can speak ahead of time, the over-valuing of the lexical and the systematic linguistic form, the retention of a privileged centre for the intellectual but now as the interpreter of analytical language games, as signalled by, for example, 'Derrida's continued allegiance to classical values of theory, rigor, system, precision and control' (Wood, 1987, p. 287), and so on. One cannot help but suspect that the continuing commitment of writers like Derrida and Lyotard to the register of theory stems from their social investments in a very specific practical world;

> Since the Second World War there has been a vast proliferation of academic activity, such that the academic realm has become far larger than any individual can grasp in their lifetime; thus, for all practical purposes, academia has become an infinite semantic universe. Growth has altered the people within this universe; whereas Wittgenstein never read other philosophers as they said nothing to him, Derrida writes only by commenting on other people's writings. Derrida works in a textual arena composed of philosophy, literature and the arts, and is not often called upon to think about how words and things relate. (Gosden, 1994, p. 60)

As I hope I have made clear, this first strand of thought is a long, long way from the kind of modest account I want to offer of a world of inherently dialogical joint action, a 'spontaneous, unself-conscious, unknowing (although not unknowledgeable) kind of activity' (Shotter, 1993a, p. 47).

But there is a second non-representational-practical strand of poststructuralist work, represented by writers like Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. I do not want to take up Foucault's banner: enough has been written about his work already and, in fact, I have severe problems with some of it (including the incompatibility of his conceptions of individuality and subjectivity, his over-emphasis on the discursive production of humans by language at the expense of the practical production of language by humans, the outdatedness of his analysis of biopolitics,[18] the implicit Eurocentrism, identified by Bhabha [1994] and others, and so on). Instead I want to concentrate on the work of that dissident poststructuralist Gilles Deleuze (and Felix Guattari). In part, I want to do this because the kind of vivid, moving, contingent and open-ended thaumaturgy that Deleuze conjures up others seems to be not so very far from the vision offered by some other theorists of practice. For example,

the echoes of Latour can be clearly heard here:[19]

> the Deleuzian framework insists on the flattening out of relations between the social and psychical so that there is neither a relation of causation (one- or two-way) nor hierarchies, levels, grounds, or foundations. The social is not privileged over the psychical (as crude Marxism entails); nor is the psychical privileged at the expense of the social (common charges directed against psycho-analytic theory). They are not parallel dimensions or orders; rather, they run into, as, and through each other. This means that individuals, subjects, microintensities, blend with, connect to, neighborhood, local, regional, social, cultural, aesthetic, and economic relations directly, not through mediation of systems of ideology or representation, not through the central organisation of an apparatus like the state or the economic order, but directly, in the formation of desiring-machines, war-machines, etc. Questions related to subjectivity, interiority, female sexual specificity, are thus not symptoms of a patriarchal culture, not simply products or effects of it, but are forces, intensities, requiring codifications or territorialisations and in turn exerting their own deterritorialising and decodifying force, systems of compliance and resistance. (Grosz, 1994b, p. 180)

Then, in part, I want to concentrate on Deleuze, because he provides what Grosz (1994b) has called the element of 'voluptuous passion', which some theorists of practice tend to miss, or underplay, and which allows me to incorporate into my account of theories of practice an erotics of thinking, sexuality and a sort of promiscuity that unites the two.[20] And finally, in part, I want to concentrate on Deleuze because of his writing strategy, with its attention to a poetics of folding and unfolding, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and, in general a constancy marked only by its inconstancy.

Deleuze wishes to write a baroque 'theory' of practice, one which, like his almost ecological notions of subjectivity, is full of swirls and whorls, pleats and folds, 'not an essence, but rather … an operative function' (Deleuze, 1993, p. 3). In other words, Deleuze is pointing to ways of writing the world that are continuous, that do not flatten into a concept or world picture and which allow the maximum of 'tactical resourcefulness' (Conley, 1993).

Deleuze offers a number of insights for theories of practice. First, he produces a theory of practice out of an almost entirely different theoretical bloodline (Bogue, 1989; Broadhurst, 1992; Boundas, 1993; Hardt, 1993; Boundas and Olkowski, 1994). His mentors include a recast Bergson (who enables Deleuze to displace con-

sciousness, with its function of casting light upon things, by a new field of 'nomadic' singularities, intensive magnitudes which are pre-individual and pre-personal), a reworked Spinoza (who provides an ethology of striving passions that can energise this field), a refitted Nietszche and Foucault (who enable Deleuze to reflect on how subjectivity is constructed from the internalisation of 'outside' forces *without* reproducing a philosophy of interiority) and, latterly, a renovated Leibniz (who provides an account of the constitution of the 'individual').

Second, Deleuze concentrates, most especially via Spinoza and Nietszche, on qualities of force and affect that have sometimes been neglected in other theories of practice that we might call, after Brennan (1993), the 'energetics' of 'activity, joy, affirmation and dynamic becoming' (Braidotti, 1994, p. 164). Most particularly, that means that life is refigured as a slip-sliding flux of intensity and impersonal forces. This allows Deleuze to rework ideas of the body, thinking and the self. Thus the body becomes a 'complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces. The body is not an essence, let alone a biological substance. It is a play of forces, a surface of intensities: pure simulacra without originals' (Braidotti, 1994, p. 163). Thinking itself becomes an interplay of forces. Deleuze brings to the fore

> the affective foundations of the thinking process. It is as if beyond/behind the propositional content of an idea there lay another category – the affective force, level of intensity, desire and affinity – that conveys the idea and ultimately governs its truth value. Thinking, in other words, is to a very large extent unconscious, in that it expresses the desire to know, and this desire is that which cannot be adequately expressed in language, simply because it is that which sustains language. (Braidotti, 1994, p. 165)

And the self becomes both disjunctive and nomadic, a highly variable speaking stance attuned to Deleuze's basic message that 'everything in the universe is encounters, happy or unhappy encounters' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 79).

Third, Deleuze produces a radically different idea of subjectivity,[21] one which privileges intensity, multiplicity, productivity and discontinuity, one which is pitted against Lacan's negative vision of desire as lack, and one which hunts down all notions of interiority 'in search of an inside that lies deeper than any internal world' (Deleuze, 1993, p. 163). One might argue that what is left is simply the classical poststructuralist subject without much subject, but this would be unfair. It would be more accurate to write that, just like Latour, Deleuze wants to redefine 'human' around a new 'ethical' constitution:

> In the wake of Spinoza's understanding of ethics, ethics is conceived of as the capacity for action and passion, activity and passivity; good and bad refer to the ability to increase and decrease one's capacities and strengths and abilities. Given the vast and necessary interrelation and mutual affectivity of all beings on all others (a notion, incidentally, still very far opposed to the rampant moralism underlying ecological and environmental politics, which also stress interrelatedness but do so in a necessarily prescriptive and judgemental fashion, presuming notions of unity and wholeness, integration and cooperation rather than, as do Deleuze and Guattari, simply describing interrelations and connections without subsuming them to an overarching, wider system or totality), the question of ethics is raised wherever the question of a being's, or an assemblage's capacities and abilities are raised. Unlike Lévinasian ethics, which is still modelled on a subject-to-subject, self-to-other, relation, the relation of a being respected in its autonomy from the other as a necessarily independent autonomous being – the culmination and final flowering of a phenomenological notion of the subject – Deleuze and Guattari in no way privilege the human, autonomous, sovereign subject: the independent other; or the bonds of communication and representation between them. They are concerned more with what psychoanalysis calls ‘partial objects’: organs, processes, and flows, which show no respect for the authoring of the subject. Ethics is the sphere of judgement regarding the possibility and actuality of connections, arrangements, lineages, machines. (Grosz, 1994a, p. 197)

Modest Theory

I have now outlined a background. In this section I want to propose a theoretical synthesis. But it is important to note that I am not trying to offer a fully finished theoretical programme. What I want to provide here is theory with a lighter touch. In part, this is because I do not want to participate in ‘fantasies of an unimpeachable method, of adequate representations of reality, [or] of an intellectual “turn” that will enable the critics to write the world newly, free of the prejudice of the past’ (Bordo and Moussa, 1993, p. 122). In part, it is also because I want to avoid a theory-centred style which continually avoids the taint of particularity.[22] Such a style seems to me to perpetuate the kind of critical imperialism that so many writers have been at such pains to banish. And in part, it is because I want to point up the importance of practices as valid in themselves, existing without need of validation by some fully settled, monochromatic theory. In stressing the importance of practices I also hope to make a clearing for voices that speak from outside the authorised scholarly discourse whilst simulta-

neously recognising that this ambition is only necessary to an extent, since the scholarly discourse-network is but one of many forms of practice. In other words, I want to point to the perpetually inadequate (but not thereby unnecessary) powers of theory. In 1987, I wrote that my vision of theory was closer to a hand torch than a floodlight (*1987p*). I would not make this analogy, with its emphasis on a single-sourced vision, in quite the same way now, but the sentiments still hold.

Thus, in what follows, I want to provide some nearly aphoristic guidelines, most of which are prefigured in the earlier section of this chapter, which are intended to summarise a particular *style* of thought (Wood, 1990), which, like certain kinds of poststructuralist thought, stresses radical incompleteness and contextuality (*1992a*), but which, unlike these same forms of thought,[23] also stresses the limits and boundaries to that kind of thought.

(1) *Ontology*. The ontology I want to offer is best described as a 'weak ontology' (but not in Vattimo's [1988] sense), based upon the existence of an inherent order of connection, a non-subjective logic of encounters, a 'mindful connected physicalism' consisting of 'multitudinous paths which intersect, which works through things rather than imposes itself upon them from outside and above'[24] (Brennan, 1993, p. 86). Brennan claims that this kind of 'energetic ontology' is already recognised in Spinoza's philosophy of a basic physical logic of presences and absences but has subsequently been obscured by the too easy equation of any order of connection with constraint, rather than with positive creation:

> Because Spinoza sees logic as existing independently and prior to the human subject, because he does not split thought and matter, Spinoza's philosophy is in fact not guilty of most of the charges levelled against the 'metaphysical systems of the transcendental subject of reason' (supply your favourite reference). He expressly dispossesses the subject of exclusive claims to the logos, in a magnificent dispossession. (Brennan, 1993, p. 88)

It follows that this kind of energetic ontology is based on a commitment to activity, affirmation and dynamic becoming. Following Deleuze, I want to get away from the guilt-ridden and life-denying tone of much western thought. However, this does not have to mean too enthusiastically embracing a kinetic vision of nomadism, for three reasons. First, although an energetic analysis is necessarily future-oriented, this does not have to mean a denigration of the present (a sin of which Andrew Benjamin [1993] accuses Heidegger). It is only to suggest that activity is future-oriented because performative. Second, although an energetic ontology is oriented to

movement, this does not mean that *it* has to ignore spatial fixity or the matter of boundaries. Space is striated, which is both a negative *and* a positive condition of existence. Third, an energetic ontology is committed to multiplicity but the process of multiplication is not unconstrained or infinite. In particular, recognition has to be given to the importance of physical presences and absences (as well as linguistic presences and absences) in producing breaks, lacunae and emissions which interrupt and transmute encountering.

Traces of this kind of energetic ontology can be found in a number of quite diverse authors. For example, it is there in Deleuze (although it is, perhaps, too quickly transferred into pulsing flows). It can be found in Giddens (for example, Giddens, 1984) as interaction in contexts of co-presence. It can also be found in Bhaskar's (1993) most recent exposition of the dialectic. For Bhaskar (1993, p. 53) ‘all changes are spatio-temporal, and space-time is a relational property of the meshwork of material beings’, and he is sure that this in turn means that as much attention needs to be paid to absence as presence. For example, practices involve observing from situations as much as they involve being present within them.

(2) *Epistemology*. This weak ontology is shadowed by a weak epistemology. It has become increasingly clear that there are very strong limits on what can be known and how we can know it because of the way human subjects are embodied as beings in time-space, because of our positioning in social relations, and because there are numerous perspectives on, and metaphors of, what even counts as knowledge or, more precisely, knowledges. This does not mean that it is necessary to opt for an unabashed nihilism or relativism, but it does mean that we cannot do much better than Haraway in arguing for

> politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives; the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (Haraway, 1991a, p. 195)

Haraway's idea of ‘situated knowledges’ argues for the existence of an archipelago of radically contingent knowledges (Serres, 1982) but she still believes that a kind of objectivity can be attained through acknowledging embodiment and by framing ‘the object of knowledge as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of “objective” knowledge’ (Haraway, 1991a, p. 198). In practice, such a stance (and I mean to indicate the resonance with theories of practice with this term) must mean a number of things. First of all, it requires an attitude of suspicion towards totalising accounts (*1987p*). As Meaghan Morris (1992a) has put it, in her critique

of David Harvey's Enlightenment cravings in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), the ‘remedy of wholeness’ is not a remedy but a disease and, in any case, it is usually a sign of an author intent on constructing an other.

Second, it follows that concepts should be seen in a different way. Most particularly, they need to be seen as ‘open’ or indefinite (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As Wittgenstein (1980, p. 653) put it, ‘if a concept depends on a pattern of life, then there must be some indefiniteness to it.’ In practice, this means that concepts must be ‘polymorphic, supple and adaptable, rather than defined, calibrated and used rigidly’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 23). Further, they must remain relatively general and circuitous:[25] spinning out ‘middle-range’ theories is likely to be unproductive because it produces both an illusion of decideability and a tendency to calcification; too much rigour produces rigor mortis (Lakoff, 1987). (We might even go farther still and write concepts as Deleuze and Guattari [1983, 1994] do, as image-concepts – fragmentary wholes whose main purpose is to resonate, intensities whose main purpose is to set up new events; ‘hitherto unsuspected possibilities of life and action’ [Braidotti, 1994, p. 165]. For Deleuze and Guattari thinking is about finding these new passions and letting them rip.) But equally, as Haraway makes clear, this does not mean that it is necessary to drop all pretensions to evidentialisation of concepts. One of the blights of the recent rise of cultural studies has been the paper which is founded on the principle of ‘if you can say it, it's so’ (Saunders, 1995, p. 396), a principle to which Haraway would undoubtedly be opposed.

Third, because what we know and how we know it is situated, it follows that a practical or situated way of knowing is contextual, and rooted especially in embodiment (*1995c*). In particular, this can mean a new role for bodily image-concepts like experience and self as critical *practices*, as ably mapped out by authors like Game (1991) and Probyn (1992). It also means the working up of new figurations of the subject, hybrid figurations like Haraway's ‘cyborg’, which can articulate new relations of experience and self. Further, this line of argument suggests a much greater decentring of academic accounts than has heretofore been accepted. If we live in joint action with others, then it is clear that our discourses cannot be privileged. We might go farther and consider the ways in which academic accounts have not only downgraded the importance of practical activity by trying to represent it as representations (M. Morris, 1988), but may also have understated its power: the historical trace of practical intelligibility still remains in our gestures and in our stances.

Fourth, and relatedly, I take it that any situated epistemology must be reflexive; but at the same time I do not believe that this has to mean the author's ‘subjective’ experience has to be inexorably written into accounts,

as is the vogue in certain of the current crop of autoethnographies: ‘this merely reinscribes, not only the privileged place of experience, but the privileged place of the author's experience’ (Grossberg, 1988, p. 67).

To summarise, a situated epistemology would renounce systematic theory in favour of a stance much more like Shotter's (1993a, p. 15) ‘practical theory’:

> the equipping of an image ‘tool-kit’ [which] respects the unfinalisable nature of dialogue, and even the fact that dialogic forms of talk occur within ‘a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses’ (Bakhtin, 1984 [1968], p. 9). For although these may draw upon resources (to an extent) held in common, every voice, every way of speaking, embodies a different evaluative stance, a different way of being or position in the world, with a differential access to such resources. It is this that keeps everyone in permanent dialogue with everyone else, which gives all the processes of interest to us their intrinsic dynamic. And by studying the different ways in which different people, and different times in different contexts, resolve the dilemmas they face *in practice*, we can both characterise the resources available to them in these contexts at those times and ‘plot’, so to speak, their political economy, that is, the fact that they are very much more scarce in some regions and moments of our social ecology than others.

The ontological and epistemological stance I have outlined might be termed a kind of historicism, in that it stresses the historical and geographical variability of systems of social practices. Certainly, I agree with Castoriadis (1987, p. 3) that:

> There exists no place, no point of view outside of history and society, or ‘logically prior’ to them, where one could be placed in order to construct a theory of them – a place from which to inspect them, contemplate them, affirm the determined necessity of their being – thus, constitute them, reflect upon them or reflect them in their totality. Every thought of society and of history itself belongs to society and to history. Every thought, whatever it may be and whatever may be its ‘object’, is but a mode and a form of social-historical *doing*.

However, if this is a historicist stance, it is a pretty weak version of it, since, rather like the work of the new historicists (Veesev, 1989), its aim is a stance which rejects some of the fundamental tenets of historicism. First, I reject strong historicist programmes which construct grand schemes of historical development and progress, and protean temporalities. Then, second, I make no claim to an absolute historical transcendence

in the sense that there is always something that escapes. There is always something that lies outside knowledge. There is always something that cannot be described. In other words, the claim to an absolute historical transcendence has to be rejected, and for two reasons. One is, quite simply, that social space cannot be reduced to the relations that fill it. The other is that, as Copjec (1994b, p. 3) puts it,

> What's common to both the Lacanian and Foucauldian [view] is a distinction between two sets of existence, one implied by the verb *exister* and the other by the phrase *il y a*. The existence implied by the first is subject to a predicative judgement as well as to a judgement of existence; that is, it is an existence whose character or quality can be described. The existence implied by the second is subject *only* to a judgement of existence; we can say only that it does or does not exist, without being able to say what it is, to describe it in any way.

The point about transcendence deserves further expansion. For if it is clear that the reasoning outlined above implies 'the whole of something will never reveal itself in an analytical moment; no diagram will ever be able to display it fully, once and for all' (Copjec, 1994b, p. 8), then, as Copjec goes on to write, the consequences of such a statement are not. For example, such an acknowledgement does not compel us

> to imagine a society that never quite forms, where – as the deconstructionists would have it – events never quite take place, a society about which we can say nothing and do so in an endless succession of statements that forever fail to come around to the same relevant point. To say that there is no metalanguage is to say, rather, that society never *stops realising itself*, that it *continues* to be formed over time. (Copjec, 1994b, pp. 8–9)

Copjec's answer to the innate temporality of the institution of the social is Lacanian, involving the diagramming of society's generative principle as located in the order of the real, outside everyday reality. But I want to travel another road, one that starts with Husserl's phenomenology, which was, of course, introduced primarily as a means of escaping historicism. Husserl wanted to lead philosophy back to the pursuit of incontrovertible truths by means of the description of the things presented to our experience and the description of our experience of them: 'back to the things themselves!', as Husserl puts it. Because Husserl's phenomenology 'bracketed' or suspended belief in all metaphysical constructs in order to focus solely on what shows up as it presents itself in our experience, its findings were supposed to be apodictic. The standard story has it that this enterprise gradually runs into the sand:

> the early Heidegger came along and raised questions about the viability of Husserlian phenomenology by taking an 'interpretative' turn. What is most important about Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology, so the story goes, is his recognition of the significance of the finitude, worldliness, and historicity of our human predicament – the recognition that our access to things is always coloured and preshaped by the sense of things circulating in our historical culture. The story then concludes with poststructuralist and various postmodern thinkers detecting a nostalgia for metaphysics even in such Heideggerian concepts as worldliness, finitude, and history. Jacques Derrida, especially, points out that Heidegger still seems to be trapped in essentialism and totalisation, twin sins of the very 'metaphysics of presence' that his hermeneutic approach was supposed to displace. (Dostal, 1993, p. 141)

But what I hope I have shown in the preceding section of this chapter is that the story is not that simple (see also Dreyfus, 1991; Game, 1991; Dostal, 1993; Shotter, 1993a, 1993b). Another story can be told which can both presuppose the phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty and also move beyond it. This is a story which is based on seeing the agent as 'shaped' by her or his form of life, history (or culture) or bodily existence, but the notion of shaping employed here is one that implies a quite different notion of relation to the world from the ordinary casual link that it sometimes gets confused with. Shotter's and Taylor's (1993b) use of Heideggerian-Wittgensteinian notions like engaged agency and background perhaps come closest to describing this relation; their concern is with 'witnessing' the *conditions of intelligibility* of certain terms of experience, and 'how the terms in which this experience is described are thus given their sense only in relation to this form of embodiment' (Taylor, 1993b, p. 319). This 'evaluative sensibility', what Castoriadis (1987) calls the work of 'elucidation', is what I am trying to cultivate, but it is not a sensibility which should be confused with the standard philosophical quest for elucidation, which relies on the notion of a fixed semantic space, chosen freely from all the possible combinations, which I can then mean. Or, to put it more succinctly still:

> The demands we make for philosophical explanations come, seem to come, from a position in which we are, as it were, looking down onto the relation between ourselves and some reality, some kind of fact or real possibility. We think that we mean something by our questions about it. Our questions are formed from notions of ordinary life, but the ways we usually ask and answer questions, our practices, our interests, the forms our reasoning and inquiries take, look from such a position to be the 'rags'. Our own linguistic constructions, cut free from the constraints of their ordinary functioning, take us in: the characteristic form of the illusion is precisely of philosophy as an area of inquiry, in

> the sense in which we are familiar with it. (Diamond, 1991, pp. 69–70)

(3) *Ethics*. This ontological-epistemological stance also implies a certain notion of ethics. It should be clear by now that I have an antipathy for grand theories which abstract and decontextualise by extracting and then reapplying a set of principles from one set of practices to another (Butler, 1994), and this antipathy extends to theories of comprehensive social ideals.

> It seems to me that ideal theories – theories of the principles that perfectly just societies would implement – often distract attention from pressing social problems and that, when these problems are addressed through ideal theories, the ideas they commend are too stringent to be helpful for purposes of devising feasible solutions in a profoundly nonideal world. Abstracting from the realities of pervasive and persistent injustice and historical animosity between social groups, ideal theory overlooks the problems of entrenched domination and oppression, offers (at best) vague guidelines for eliminating these evils, and even obstructs social change by locking in place ostensibly neutral standards that in fact disadvantage some social groups. (Meyers, 1994, p. 1)

It is no surprise, then, that the account that I would want to offer of moral reflection emphasises the body, affect and expressiveness, emotion and rhetoric. Most particularly, I look toward three sets of writings. First, there are the psychoanalytic feminists like Jessica Benjamin who object to moral philosophy's conception of people as monastic subjects who are essentially rational and homogeneous bearers of duties and seekers after rights and who stress ‘the role of culturally transmitted imagery in shaping people's moral perception, the contribution of empathy to moral reflection, and the potential of a complex moral identity to enhance moral insight’ (Meyers, 1994, p. 3). For these writers, moral reflection demands mutual recognition, to use Benjamin's (1988) phrase, an empathy with others which, in turn, requires: counter-figurational strategies which symbolise the practices of disadvantaged groups in productive ways; notions of the responsible act as heterogeneous; and concepts of moral identity as able to take into account capacities and limitations. Thus,

> instead of seeing moral reflection as the application of an overriding philosophically approved criterion of right and wrong to a set of available options, the latter view sees moral judgement as a process of interpreting the moral signficance of various cases of conduct that one might undertake both in light of one's own values and capabilities and also in light of one's understanding of others' needs and circumstances. (Meyers, 1994, p. 17)

Second, there are ‘materialist feminists’ like Noddings (1984) and Ruddick (1990) who, drawing on the work of Gilligan (1982) amongst others, lay emphasis on an ‘ethics of care’, derived from the example of mothering, which stresses receptiveness to others, pragmatism as a distinctive way of dealing with real life rather than theoretical situations, and nonviolence (Lovibond, 1994a). This approach, which has much to commend it, also has serious flaws (Lovibond, 1994b). But these flaws can be overcome by a turn to the third set of writings: intuitionist or neo-Aristotelian ethics (Platts, 1979; Anscombe, 1981; Hurley, 1985; R. Williams, 1985; Nussbaum, 1990; Wiggins, 1991; Dancy, 1993). This is an active and practical form of ethics founded in an evaluative sensibility arising from the concrete experience of specific situations (what Dancy [1993] calls the ‘authority of the present case’), which is not, however, the same as a total particularism:

> Since intuition (from the Latin *intueri*, ‘to look at, to observe’) means a way of acquiring knowledge not by inference but directly, ‘by looking and seeing’, the central epistemological notion within such a theory would be that of *sensitivity to the particular moral fact* – for example, the fact that to make a certain remark would be insensitive or presumptuous or sycophantic, or that to act in a certain way would be to sacrifice friendship to personal ambitions. However in order to gain acceptance for this notion, its proponents must say something to disarm the objection that the very idea of a ‘moral fact’ is incoherent, an objection likely to be made by anyone under the sway of the expansionist view of facts as (by definition) evaluatively neutral. To this end, the new intuitionism reintroduces certain themes from the moral philosophy of Aristotle. … First, there is the idea of the individual's *initiation* into a particular set of prevailing social forms, a process seen as issuing in a certain range of sensibilities that dictate appropriate emotional and practical responses to particular situations. Second, and building on this presumed basis of specialised evaluative sensibilities, there is the idea of *phronesis*, or ‘practical wisdom’. This is the capacity for correct judgements, often without the support of any explicit theory, as to which value considerations have the strongest practical claim on us in any given deliberate situation: for example, whether or not the given situation is one in which truthfulness matters more than the avoidance of causing distress. (Lovibond, 1994a, p. 794)

(4) *The human subject*. These brief thoughts on ontology, epistemology and ethics make it easier to consider the subject and the subject's understanding of the world. What I am looking for here is a conception of the subject which is multiple and dynamic but only partially decentred: a trace which is not just a cipher, a figuration that still configures a ‘life-enhancing fiction’ (Bordo and Moussa, 1993). In other words, I am looking for a relation between outside and inside which is lisible and problematic but which still allows each human subject

to become ‘a master [*sic*] of one's speed and, relatively speaking, a master of one's molecules and particular features, in [the] zone of subjectivation: the boat as interior of the exterior’ (Deleuze, 1988, p. 123). I wish to make five points only.

First, I take it that the subject's understanding of the world comes from the ceaseless flow of conduct, conduct which is always future-oriented. In theories of practice, understanding does not come from individual subjects moving deliberately and intentionally through spaces in a serial time. That would be to revive the subject–object relation. Rather, subjects display ‘absorbed coping’, ‘engaged agency’ or, to use a Heideggerian term, ‘comportment’. Comportment differs in at least five ways from an action-directed view of understanding (Dreyfus, 1991). First, it is an open mode of awareness which ‘is not mental, inner, first person, private, subjective experience … separate from and directed towards normal life objects’ (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 68). Second, it is adaptable. Comportment manifests dispositions shaped by a vast array of previous dealings, but does so in a flexible way. Third, comportment is understanding as ‘aspect-dawning’ (Wittgenstein, 1980). That is, it depends upon the orientation, what Heidegger calls the ‘towards-which’, and is typified by instant recognition/description. Fourth, if something goes wrong with comportment, it produces a startled response because future-directed certainty is being interrupted. Fifth, and related, if something goes awry, conduct becomes deliberate and acquires a sense of effort.

A second characteristic of the subject's understanding of the world is that it is intrinsically corporeal. Following Merleau-Ponty, the socialised body is not an inscribed but an inscribing object, the generative, creative capacity to understand, ‘kinetic knowledge’ (see I.M. Young, 1990; Grosz, 1993), which is founded in the prevailing ‘sensory order’ (Claasen, 1993), which places more emphasis on some senses than others (it hardly needs to be said that many of the current problems of western styles of thought are connected with its ‘ocularcentric’ (Jay, 1993) bias,[26] and in the particular contextualities of action (Giddens, 1984). How can this be?

> Adapting a phrase of Proust's, one might say that arms and legs are full of dumb imperatives. One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, *made* body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can instil a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as ‘sit up straight’ or ‘don't hold your knife in your left hand’, and inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing and physical manner, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 63)

Further, embodiment also produces spatiality and temporality (Giddens, 1984). As Merleau-Ponty (1962, pp. 239–40) wrote, ‘In every focussing moment, my body unites present, past and future. … My body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for a present, it is not a thing but creates time instead of submitting to it.’

But, as Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 416) also points out, the temporality that the body creates tends to be future-oriented because ‘ahead of what I can see and perceive there is, it is true, nothing more actually visible, but my world is carried forward by lines of intention which trace out in advance at least the style of what is to come.’

A third characteristic of the subject's understanding of the world is that it is worked out in *joint action* and is therefore *inherently dialogical*. Many actions require co-operation to complete. In other words, the flow of dialogical action is a fundamental determinant of the intelligibility of social life: understanding comes from the between of ‘we’, not the solitary ‘I’. But this understanding has to be continually worked at, argumentatively, on the basis of differentially distributed communicative resources. Thus, firstly,

> we must note that all our behaviour, even our own thought about ourselves, is conducted in an ongoing argumentative context of criticism and justification, where every argumentative move is formulated in a response to previous moves. This accords, secondly, with a familiar aspect of rhetoric, to do with its *persuasive* function, its ability to materially affect people, to move them to action, or affect their perceptions in some way. Thirdly, we must also note that … what we have in common with each other in our society's traditions is not a set of agreements about meanings, beliefs or values but a set of intrinsically two-sided topics … or deterministic theories or commonplaces for use by us as *resources*, from which we can draw the two or more sides of an argument. Finally, we most note another, more unfamiliar aspect of rhetoric related to those aspects of languages to do with ‘giving’ or ‘lending’ a *first form* to what otherwise are in fact only vaguely or partially ordered feelings and activities to do with the study of how common understandings are established *before* one turns to their criticism. It is this fact – that we ‘see’ just as much ‘through’ our words as through our eyes that is, for us here, rhetoric's most important characteristic. For even in the face of the vague, undescribable, open, fluid, and ever changing nature, appropriate forms of talk can work to ‘make it appear as if’ our everyday lives are well ordered and structured. (Shotter, 1993a, p. 14)

Further, and crucially, the dialogical flow of action presupposes the making of *moral* judgements:

> we can see that in ordering the two-way flow of activity between them, people create, without a conscious realisation of the fact, a changing sea of moral enablements and contrasts, of privileges and entitlements, and obligations and sanctions – in short, an ethos. And the changing settings created are practical-moral settings because the different 'places' or 'positions' they make available have to do, not so much with people's 'rights' and 'duties' (for we might formulate its ethical nature in different ways, at different times) as with the nurturance or injury to the basic being of a person. For individual members of a people can have a sense of 'belonging' in that people's reality only if the others around them are prepared to respond to 'reality', only if the others around them are prepared to respond to what they do and say *seriously*. (Shotter, 1993b, p. 39)

Thus, often language's function is simply to set up the intersubjective spaces of common actions, rather than represent them as such. And, through language's fluid and ever-changing nature, appropriate forms of talk can work to 'make it appear as if' our everyday lives are well ordered and structured (Shotter, 1993a, p. 14).

A fourth characteristic of the human subject's understanding of the world is its situatedness. The subject can only 'know from'. Therefore abstracting human subjectivity from time and space is always an impossibility. Temporally, practices are always open and uncertain, dependent to some degree upon the immediate resources available at the moment they show up in time and space. Thus, each action is lived in time and space, and part of what each action is is a judgement on its appropriateness in time and space. Further, following any kind of social 'rule' about practice always involves some measure of openness and uncertainty associated with each moment. As Taylor (1993a, p. 57) puts it in classic finitist terms:

> A rule doesn't apply itself; it has to be applied, and this may involve difficult, finely timed judgements. This was the point made by Aristotle and underlay his understanding of the virtue of *phronesis*. However situations arise in infinite varieties. Determining what a norm actually amounts to in any situation can take a high degree of insightful understanding. Just being able to formulate rules will not be enough. The person of real practical wisdom is marked out less by the ability to formulate rules than by knowing how to act in each particular situation. … In its operation, the rule exists in the practice it 'guides'. But we have seen that the practice not only fulfils the rule, but it also gives it concrete shape in particular situations.

Spatially, the human subject must be thought of as both inside and outside. Thus writers like de Certeau and Deleuze clearly view real, external space as a precipitate of the division between the inside and the outside

of a subject strung out in time-space. Defining inner and outer space and the relation between them through notions like ‘the fold’ allows these writers to ponder the mismatch between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ and ‘desire’ and ‘reality’.

Fifth, and finally, the subject's understanding of the world depends on a sense of self which we can, most generally, define as ‘not an objective thing as such, but a mobile region of continually self-reproducing activity’ (Shotter, 1989b, p. 139). A number of consequences stem from this definition. It becomes possible to turn away from current characteristics of the person as possessing a psychic unity, which we call ‘self’, and from the whole ‘inner’ vocabulary that supports it (see Taylor, 1988). It also becomes possible to cease talking primarily in terms of motives:

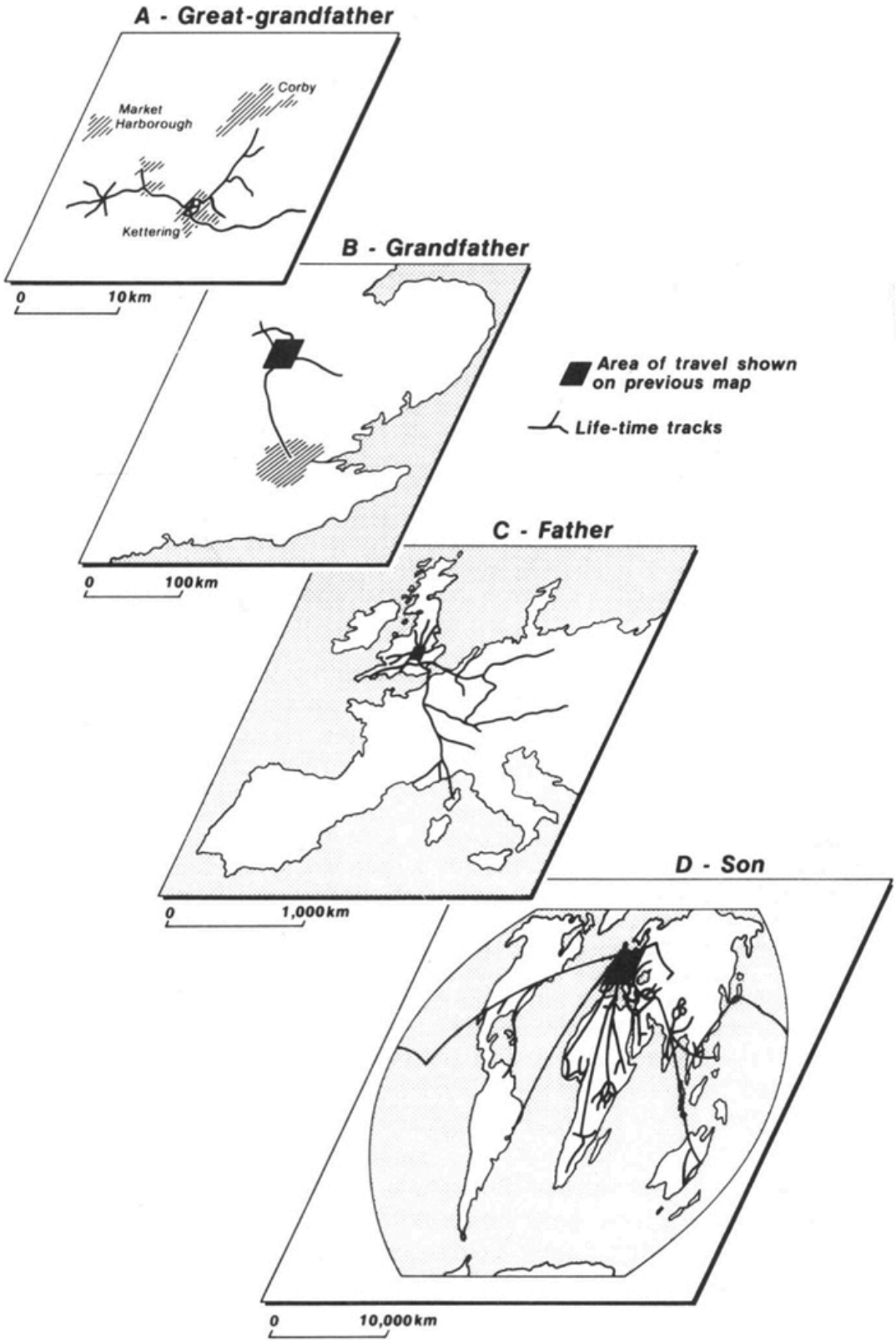
> many of our motives are the products of our activities, not the other way around … in this view just as we talk of Godot because we wait, not of waiting because of Godot, so (for instance) we talk of motives because we act, not of acting because we have motives – crazy though it may sound to say it. While our talk of motives may act back upon the disorderly activities of our social lives to ‘lend’ them some order, the search for motives as such is illusory. It is an attempt to explain our self-formative activities in terms of a product of these self-same activities. (Shotter, 1989a, pp. 95–6)

It becomes possible, too, to turn towards a more pluralistic, multiplex conception of the self, ‘to a view which recognises that “I”s in being “me”s must inevitably be intermingled with the “you”s of many “others” ’ (Shotter, 1989a, p. 96). And it becomes possible to recognise context as formative in the formation of self, as the sign of how we construct along with others.

(5) *Things*. These thoughts on ontology and epistemology also make it possible to dwell on (and in) things. In too much theory there is an implicit separation of human subjects from objects. As I hope has already been made clear, I believe that there is a need for a new ‘constitution’ (Latour, 1993) which recognises the power of objects as ‘semiophores, or carriers of meaning (bearing witness) to a positive and instrumental materialism, (not just as) the passive drugs feeding our habit of consumption, but as cherished possessions’ (Stafford, 1994, p. 3). Certainly, but as more than this also. The new constitution is therefore a progressive re-cognition. First, it makes the simple acknowledgement of the extent to which the object world is intertwined with the subject: ‘Latour (1988) reminds us that even pure mathematicians … work with the tools of their trade. Everything we do, from epistemology to digging the garden, is a trade with its own tools’ (Law, 1994, p. 142). In a sense, then, we only know the world through/with tools, and this situation has became more rather than less

the case as the human body has been significantly augmented in ways that directly impact on subjectivity.[27] On one level, there is the physical extension of bodily capacities made possible through the various media of telecommunications. The body is able, as a result, to act at a distance. At another level, the body now has much greater opportunities for peripatetic movement through the development of new modes of transportation (Figure 1.1). Then, finally, the body can be physically constructed in ways that were not available before. 'Medical' developments like IVF and plastic surgery mean that the body can be augmented and even re-presented (Stafford, 1991, 1994).

Figure 1.1 The expansion of subjective experience: increasing travel over four generations of the same family (Bradley, 1988, Figures 1–4, pp. 2–3)



Second, there is a need to recognise the degree to which objects become a crucial part of the performance

of subjects, the kind of principle embedded in actor-network theory. Thus,

> Andrew's rank is strategically performed in a series of materials. No I don't want to say that it is reducible to the materials. … This is the trouble with sociological myth-making: it tends to want to reduce too soon, to ask why someone is the boss or why there is no boss at all, rather than asking how bossing is performed. Thus if Andrew's office were gutted by fire and he were obliged to set up in the user's coffee room I guess that he'd still be performed as Director. But what could happen if they took away his phone? And his secretary? And the stream of papers that crosses his desk? And what would happen if he were no longer able to travel south to London or to Head Office at Swindon? Or receive visitors? Would he still be Director then? And what would it mean if he were? (Law, 1994, p. 142)

But, third, there is more to the act of recognition than this. This act also involves giving to objects a 'life' of their own. This is the kind of balancing act which Latour, and those who work on the 'ecological self' (Mathew, 1991), have been trying to perform:

> life in active dialogue with earth others is exhilarating and many dimensional. Many of the issues and difficulties of relationship and interplay which are familiar from the ethics and politics of the personal appear here also. We must interact, but how far am I entitled to assert myself against or impose myself on the other? We must adapt to one another, but is one party always to be the one who adapts and the other to be adapted to? How much must we leave for the other? How much can we expect to share? Here there is not just *one* play of exchange between self and other, but multiple and contextual ones. We cannot, any more than in the human case, stereotype the relationship as one of love and harmony, excluding all disharmony and conflict. Although we may aim for a relationship of mutual enrichment, cooperation and friendship, we may often have to settle for that of respectable but wondering strangers (not necessarily second best). (Plumwood, 1993, p. 139)

(6) *Context*. I want to finish this chapter by turning again to the notion of context. As I hope I have made clear, the approach I am taking to problems of ontology, epistemology, the subject and subject–object relations is radically contextual. However, as I also hope I have made clear, I do not mean to imply by this that context is necessarily 'local'. Rather I take context to be a performative social situation, a plural event which is more or less spatially extensive and more or less temporally specific. It is, in other words, a parcel of socially constructed time-space which is more or less 'elongated' (and in which socially constructed 'notions' of

time-space must play their part; ‘rather than living “in” space and time, we account for time and space practically, relative to our form of living’ [Shotter, 1985b, p. 449]). In each of these parcels of time-space ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ are aligned in particular ways which provide particular orientations to action, what in ecological psychology are called ‘affordances’ (Gibson, 1979) (properties of complings of the agent and the environment like ‘edibility’, ‘transversability’, ‘flyability’, ‘sittability’), and particular resources for action (which will be more open to some subjects than others). In other words, contexts are not passive; they are productive time-spaces which have to be produced. The nearest analogy I can think of to the vision of context I hold comes from work in the sociology of science using the idea of a ‘productive locale’.

Much of this work has centred on the invention of the experimental laboratory, a structured site of specific forms of social interaction with cultural and physical barriers to entry which in turn functions as a site for the production/validation of new empirical knowledges:

> The physical and symbolic siting of experimental work was a way of bonding and disciplining the community of practitioners, it was a way of policing experimental discourse, and it was a way of publicly warranting that the knowledge produced in such places was reliable and authentic. That is to say, the place of experiment counted as a practical answer to the fundamental question, why ought one to give one's assent to experimental knowledge claims? (Shapin, 1988, p. 344)

In turn, Shapin (1988, 1994; Shapin and Schaffer, 1985) shows how the laboratory was tied to another new rhetorical context, the public lecture theatre, with its own socio-spatial arrangements, which was meant to faultlessly demonstrate what had hitherto been tried out in the laboratory (those same contexts still exist in different forms nowadays, as the work of Bourdieu [1990a] and Law [1994] shows only too well).

It is clear that I see human subjects as highly contextual beings but it is also clear that human subjects transpose across contexts in various ways which add up to a person's ‘intentional style’ (or personality). These ways are numerous. They include language, narrative, imagined relations with objects, and memory. However, equally, context has strong effects on each and every one of these transpositions. So far as language is concerned, many commentators have pointed to the heteroglossic importance of contexuality, especially when language is conceived as language-in-use. As Bakhtin (in Todorov, 1994, p. 91) puts it, ‘in no instance is the extra-verbal situation only an external cause of the utterance; it does not work like a mechanical force. On the contrary, the situation enters into the utterance as a necessary constitutive element of its semantic structure.’ So far as narrative is concerned, it is clear that it is also strongly contextualised. One of the points

of de Certeau's notion of spatial stories and of his problematisation of writing and reading as practices is to make clear the double movement of these practices both out of and back into context.

Imagined relations between subjects and objects are also contextual. Indeed, one of the insights of the British object-relations school of psychoanalysis has been precisely to point to the way in which early contexts are crucial in the development of the human subject. The subject's early prediscursive memory of the object of the ‘unthought known’ casts a shadow over her or his subsequent development, in that it culturally affects her or his style of being and relating.

> The reader of *Wind in the Willows* discovers in fact Rat and Mole are experiencing the sun rise, but they cannot see the sun, they only experience its effect on their environment. The object casts its shadow on the subject. In much the same way an infant experiences the mother as a process that transforms his [*sic*] internal and external environment, but he does not know that such transformation is partly sponsored by the mother. The experience of the object precedes the knowing of the object. The infant has a prolonged sense of the uncanny, as he dwells with a spirit of place the creation of which is not identifiable. (Bollas, 1987, p. 39)

Then, memory is also strongly contextual. For example,

> the retrieval of information from memory is sensitive to the particular categories of context in which the information was first acquired. When these are changed, memory is significantly hampered. Experiments demonstrated that the more similar the context of testing is to the context in which the tested information was acquired, the higher is subjects' level of recall. What is suggested here is that not only is information sensitive to context, its very definition is dependent on it. (Shanon, 1993, p. 45)

All of the aforegoing might be seen as a neglect of three challenges to this contextual approach. In what follows, I want to name these challenges and sketch the beginnings of a reply. The first challenge comes from the psychological literature. It is that the developmental process of the individual human subject is commonly thought of as the ability to think across (not outside) contexts by developing ‘inner speech’ (and therefore a self).[28] This kind of insight is probably strongest in the Vygotskian tradition. For Vygotsky thinking is initially a bodily process, which is limited in both spatial and temporal terms, closely attached to practical activity and socio-emotional attachments to carers, and bound up with ‘desires and thoughts, … interests and emotions.

Behind every thought there is an affective volitional tendency, which holds the answer to the lost “why” in the analysis of thinking’ (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 150). Emotion and desire remain the motivating forces behind thought but language presents a new realm for formulating them *and* a new, more open structure: ‘speech does not merely serve as the expression of developed thought. Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word’ (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 251). But later work in this and other traditions suggest that whilst Vygotsky was correct in suggesting that the ability to think across contexts is an important mark of the development of the child, its importance may have been overstated, as indexed by the way in which children learn practical activity as patterns of behaviour appropriate to particular situations, and expectations about the outcome of that activity in these situations, through a process of mutual adjustment between child and carer formed out of gesture and emotive signals like crying, by the way in which the use of objects prefigures the use of language, by the ability of children to construct a personality before they have acquired linguistic competence, and, finally, by the way in which non-verbal forms of communication are not displaced by verbal forms:

> rather, words are integrated into a sequence of looks and gestures which form the pattern of an overall communicative setting. Social meanings therefore pattern the child's communicative actions and structure their intentions before they have mastered language. (Burkitt, 1991, p. 153)

It is also worth pointing out that contextual sensitivity seems to differ cross-culturally, with many western cultures being less sensitive to context (and therefore more likely to Eurocentrically recognise contextual sensitivity as the early point in a developmental path). For example, in Japan sense of self seems to be dependent to a far greater extent on making appropriate adjustments to context (Rosenberger, 1992), a dependence which may be the result of a more collective culture (although recent writings have suggested that this emphasis on the collective self may in part be a conscious construct resulting from Japanese writers' attempts to distance themselves from western culture).

The second challenge to the contextual approach comes from the geographical and sociological literatures in the shape of concepts like time-space distanciation, time-space compression and globalisation, which, in principle at least, might seem to herald a new, decontextualised era in which the indirect triumphs over the direct. I do not want to deny the historical and geographical efficacy of these processes – there are good reasons to believe, for example, that more elements of contexts are now found in common across the world as a result of modern telecommunications and transportation innovations (see, for example, Clifford, 1988,

1992).[29] But, *in practice*, I am not so sure, for two reasons (*1994k*). To begin with, these concepts conjure up a world of over-arching, almost Godlike 'global' organisations 'adrift in a mythical sea' (Boden, 1994, p. 35). But these organisations are 'not supralunar organisations made of a different matter from our poor sublunar relations'; they are 'networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations' powered by every-day talk (Boden, 1994);[30] 'the only difference stems from the fact they are made up of hybrids and have to mobilise a greater number of objects for their description' (Latour, 1993, p. 121). Thus, for example,

> The capitalism of Karl Marx or Fernand Braudel is not the total capitalism of the Marxists. It is a skein of somewhat longer networks that rather inadequately embrace a world on the basis of points that become centres of profit and calculation. In following it step by step, one never crosses the mysterious lines that divide the local from the global. (Latour, 1993, p. 121)

Then again, these concepts often rely, either implicitly or explicitly on a cultural-psychological correlate which is summarised in this passage from Nietzsche:

> Our age is an agitated one, and precisely for that reason, not an age of passion, it heats itself up continuously, because it feels that it is not warm – basically it is freezing … In our time, it is merely by means of an echo that events acquire their 'greatness' – the echo of the newspaper. (1882, cited in Dreyfus, 1992, p. 290)

In other words, time-space compression leads to disorientation, distraction and the death of the authentic; as the world spins faster so the subject spins away. Such a correlate has a long history (Porter, 1993), typified by masculinist fears of loss of control and implicit technological determinisms. Most of all, it is a history which forgets that everyday practices are a part of time-space compression, not something set apart which is there only to react to a larger process. The socio-technical networks that have produced time-space compression are themselves made up of practices which have been sedimented over many, many years and which contain all manner of pre-discursive and discursive responses to and understandings of the spatial and temporal extension of the networks of the social. Similarly the erstwhile consumers of the emblems of time-space compression like the newspaper and now the cinema and television are involved in practices that, again, have evolved over many years and which are not simply reactive (Hermes, 1993; Silverstone, 1994). In other words,

> The linking of subjective disorientation and time-space compression is circumstantial. As in the case

> of the actual postmodern, Jameson or Harvey cannot guarantee that time-space compression will lead to disorientation. It is possible, for example, that the changes in the relation of time and space will lead to novel forms of subjective identity based on new perceptions of time and space. This type of transformation has already taken place in the use of motorised transport and telecommunications where the subject took on board new possibilities and became modern, that is, aware of a range of choices in terms of where to live, where to work, who to live with, etc. … There is no reason to believe in the impossibility of such a transformation now. Jameson and Harvey can always bemoan the passing of some 'authentic' identity, they cannot predict the passing of identity in general. (J. Williams, 1992, p. 59)

None of this, of course, is to say that processes like time-space compression do not have detrimental effects and do not contain fundamental asymmetries of power. It is to say that we need to locate these processes on a different ontological and epistemological level, and, in doing so, to refine our notions of what is local, authentic, and so on. In other words, we need new 'chronotopes' (Bakhtin, 1984, 1986), generalised bundles of spatio-temporal practices and concepts (the two cannot, of course, be divorced) which are part-practical and part-representational, like those that Gilroy uses in *The Black Atlantic* (1993a) (these are further explored in Chapter 7).

The third and related challenge to the contextual approach comes from the social theory literature, from those who want to produce two kinds of space of being. Such attempts include those of de Certeau, who makes a distinction between a geometrical order of place, in which two things cannot co-exist, and a practised order of space, in which they can, and also Deleuze and Guattari, with their distinction between a sedentary, geometric 'striated space' and a nomadic, localised smooth space. Such attempts have a useful symbolic resonance. They also point concretely to the generation of particular bounded spaces of 'exclusion', to deploy a Foucauldian term. But unless they are used with great care they can also come dangerously close to reifying power by allotting to it its own abstract spaces. In practice, all space is anthropological, all space is practised, all space is place. As Casey (1993) puts it, all being is 'im-placed', or, as I would put it, contextualised. It may be implaced in different ways and to different degrees. It may be implaced more or less securely. But being is never out of place.

Each of the six succeeding chapters in this book attempts to make this case. They have all been marinaded in space and the result, I hope, is that they convey certain priorities, priorities like care for contingency and

a consequent awareness of the importance of the multiple alternatives that exist in each moment (Bernstein, 1994), devotion to a situated multiplicity of perspectives, allegiance to numerous different and intersecting spatialities (Serres, 1980, 1982, 1987), and attention to detail. In other words, I have wanted, above all, to communicate the brightness of the event.

Notes

1. Parts of this chapter follow *1995e*.

2. Although I have always found the idea of a ‘structure of feeling’ an extraordinarily useful one (see *1981c, 1983c*, Chapter 7).

3. For example, recent studies of the landscape as text in cultural geography do not even seem to recognise that there is a problem, yet alone address it.

4. There is an interesting sociology of human geography to be written to account for this paucity of theoretical traditions. Urry (1989) notes that this comparatively small community has been much more heavily policed than many others, a tendency which still periodically manifests itself in sad and bad-tempered debates which pose as substantive but are chiefly, I suspect, about who controls this policing function.

5. Or, put another way, ‘Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a theme in music lies nearer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme. Why is just *this* pattern of variation in loudness and tempo. One would like to say “Because I know what it's all about”. But what is it all about? I shall not be able to say. In order to “explain”, I could only compare it with something else which has the same rhythm (I mean the same pattern)’ (Wittgenstein, 1958, part 1, no. 527).

6. Wittgenstein (1958, p. 154).

7. The nearest equivalent I can think of, apart from a musical score, is sign, a set of languages that fold time and space in remarkable ways (see Sacks, 1989). It is interesting that Hägerstrand's work is now becoming better known outside geography than in (see, for example, Gell, 1992).

8. One of Heidegger's grossest errors was, of course, his confusion of conformity with conformism (Dreyfus, 1991). This account avoids this trap, which is not a necessary corollary of Heidegger's work (but see Wolin, 1990, 1993).

9. Remarkably little has ever been made of de Certeau's comments on Wittgenstein.

10. Bourdieu also makes much of different kinds of capital, and although he denies (1993, p. 274) that this schema is a way of saying that ‘everything that people do or say is aimed at measuring their social profit’, I am not so sure. In any case, I believe that this side of Bourdieu's work can be dispensed with without causing undue harm to concepts like habitus (see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993).

11. However, as Bourdieu notes, at what we might call the Foucauldian limit, the field may start to function as an apparatus ‘when the dominant manage to crush and annul the resistance and the reactions of the dominated, when all movements go exclusively from the top down, [and] the effects of domination are such that the struggle and the dialectic that are constructive of the field cease’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 62).

12. These reasons mean that these authors are left open to the kind of charges that Turner (1994) makes in his (flawed) critique of the social theory of practices. See also *History of the Human Sciences* (1994).

13. I do not note here or elsewhere the vast literature which is now available on non-verbal communication, which now includes an interesting historical edge (see Bremmer and Rodenberg, 1991). As we will see later, in criticisms of Vygotsky's ideas, the notion that gesture is somehow more primitive than, or antecedent to, language has been challenged.

14. This can, of course, be interpreted as a variant on Wittgenstein's points about rule-following.

15. In this section, I hope it becomes apparent that I want to separate out the discursive psychology of writers like Shotter from more general textual turns (for example, Curt, 1994). Whilst quite clearly the body, the subject etc. can be constructed as text, this hardly exhausts all of the possibilities, as Curt (1994) in fact recognises.

16. I am well aware of some of the problems connected with actor-network theory, such as, for example, the practical difficulty of drawing boundaries around each actor-network, and the theoretical accusation that actor-network theory simply avoids the problem of systematic effects. However, there seem to me to be few viable alternatives.

17. The same kind of argument is effectively made by Taussig (1993) in his discussion of mimesis and alterity.

18. In particular, I am concerned that Foucault's history of the subject can be so easily collapsed into a general history of containment, which I think is quite incorrect.

19. Or, again, there are the similarities with Shotter: ‘There are several subjects because there is the other person, not the reverse’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 16).

20. Quite clearly, it is important to note here the criticisms made by feminist theorists of theories of practice, that these theories are gender-blind or, worse still, call only to male bodies. Like Grosz (1994a, 1994b, 1994c), in her discussions of Merleau-Ponty, I am not convinced that this is exactly the case, but that there *is* a case to answer seems undeniable (I.M. Young, 1990). That case is clearest in the case of sex, sexuality and sexual identity. Here I would want to follow Butler, against writers like Foucault, in arguing that sex, sexuality and sexual identity are marked, live and function quite differently according to whether it is a male or female body that is at issue: thus ‘sex is no longer the label of both sexes in their difference as in Foucault's writings, a generic term indicating sexed as opposed to inanimate existence; it is now the label and terrain of the production and enactment of sexual difference’ (Grosz, 1994c, p. 140). But, against Butler, I am concerned that too often she equates bodies with practices, rather than reading practices as embodied. (Thus, for example, she tends to omit conversational orders, or subsumes them under a too general concept of performativity.) Like Grosz (1994c, p. 152), I too am attracted to the work of Deleuze, in part because of the ability of his work to produce simulations of passion which are both legible and liquid:

> what one does, or how one does it, with whom and with what effects, are ontologically open questions, … sexuality in and for all of us is fundamentally provisional, tenuous, mobile, even volatile, igniting in unpredictable contexts with often unsettling effects: its power, attraction and danger, the fundamental fluidity and transformability of sexuality and its enactment in sexed bodies.

21. In fact, I often feel that Deleuze has produced a wonderful account of the subjectivity of babies, but that his account needs to go much further to take in other forms of subjectivity.

22. In particular, I want to make it clear that the particular does not have to be seen as the empirical; an equation that Bhabha (1994, p. 188), amongst others, comes close to making. Context acts as a means of theorising the particular.

23. In a sense, Derrida is the most radically contextual of all writers. After all, he holds to two key principles

that I would want to support: 'that meaning is always contextual and that no context is ever saturated, completely determinate' (Wood, 1990, p. 56). However, there the similarities end. I believe that Derrida does privilege textual (and other literary) context, albeit in a general structure of 'writing' that includes both speech and writing. I want to privilege everyday conversational contexts, and, ultimately, forms of life. Derrida argues, surely with some force, that each utterance has obtained its meaning in innumerable other contexts. I would want to agree but add an important supplement: that utterance still has to be deployed dialogically in use in a particular situation which restricts its meaning and its promise as a resource. Derrida would probably argue (see Wood, 1990, p. 57) that a practical approach excludes the realms of imagination, fantasy, dream, etc. I would argue that there is no reason why this should be the case (and my appeal to Castoriadis and Deleuze is, in part, a recognition of the need to incorporate these elements). Derrida would want to think about 'play'. I would want to talk about languages, which necessarily make a lot of free play because they are the result of many different creatively managed context-interactions, but which are not thereby unconstrained. Derrida wants to argue for the development of contexts of significance which have a degree of autonomy from everyday discourse, like 'fictional truth' or 'mathematical calculation'. I would argue that such a process has taken place but only to an extent, and that this extent has to be empirically investigated (see the chapters in this book). More generally, I would argue that Derrida too often gets close to a kind of scholasticism, ignores social science research (see Bernstein, 1992) and does not sufficiently frame reading and writing as *practices* (see Chartier, 1989, 1994).

24. I think that time-geography was, in part, an attempt to articulate this kind of ontology.

25. 'In the late twentieth century, we continue to find it difficult to esteem the wild, the atypical, the anomalous, the ungeometrical, the unclear, and the indistinct' (Stafford, 1991, p. 44).

26. It is clear that senses other than sight need to be strongly incorporated into our styles of thought, as writers from Heidegger through to Irigaray have all argued (see Jay, 1993).

27. 'Man [*sic*], instead of growing better eyes and ears, grows spectacles, microscopes, telephones, and hearing aids. And instead of growing swifter legs, he grows swifter motor cars. … Instead of growing better memories and brains, he grows paper, pens, pencils, typewriters, dictaphones, the printing press, and libraries' (Popper, 1972, pp. 238–9).

28. Clearly, the development of writing and texts has had an important effect on our ability to think across contexts, something I address in detail in Chapter 3. The extensive historical and anthropological work on oral

cultures and the spread of literacy and the literature on the interface between the reader and the writer paints a very different picture from that of Derrida, Foucault and others. It shows this work to be flawed because the process by which works take on meaning is something of a simplification (if that is possible) 'of the process by which works take on meaning' (Chartier, 1989, p. 161), as a result of not producing sufficient emphasis on the symbolic work of reading, and not giving enough attention to the productions of texts, and not paying enough attention to 'the text itself, the object that conveys the text, and the act that grasps it' (Chartier, 1989, p. 161). This body of work also emphasises the fluidity and complexity of meaning, but it does so in a way which is historically *and* geographically situated. Texts are not everywhere in all times, rhizomatically reproducing themselves. Instead,

> we have a choice between two models for making sense of texts, books and their readers. The first contrasts discipline and invention, presenting these categories not as antagonistic but as an interrelated pair. Every textual or typographical moment that aims to create, control and constraint always secretes tactics that tame or subvert it; conversely there is no production or cultural practice that does not rely on materials imposed by tradition, authority, or the market and that is not subjected to surveillance and censures from those who have power over words or gestures. …
>
> Discipline and invention must be considered, but so must distinction and divulgation. This second pair of interdependent ideas enables us to posit an understanding of objects and cultural models that is not reductive to a simple process of diffusion, one generally thought to descend along the social ladder. The processes of imitation or vulgarisation are more complex and more dynamic and must be considered, above all, as struggles of competition. In these struggles every divulgation, conceded or won, produces simultaneously the search for a new distinction. (Chartier, 1989, pp. 173–4)

29. But, although these elements may be the same, they are, of course, still *practised* very differently, as numerous reception studies in television have shown. Thus new 'hybrid' practices come into being, of the kind which are now frequently pointed to in cultural studies and elsewhere (see, for example, S. Hall, 1991a, 1991b; Gilroy, 1993a, 1993b; I. Chambers, 1994).

30. One particularly important point is that, too often, academics like to fantasise that talk in business organisations is somehow 'instrumental' whereas their own talk is authentic. How ridiculous. As Boden (1994, p. 51) points out, 'In most organisations, most of the time, people mix work tasks with sociable interaction and they do so largely through talk.'

- actor-network theory
- network theory
- habitus
- time-space compression
- ontology
- actors
- time-geography

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