

Immaterial Bodies  
Affect, Embodiment, Mediation

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## The Subject of Affect: Bodies, Process, Becoming

In a recent book bringing together work on affect across the humanities, affect is viewed as

integral to a body's perceptual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter. With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself – webbed in its relations – until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter. (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 3)

This quote encapsulates one of the key problematics that will be the subject of this book and that characterizes the entry of affect into body studies as a distinctive and important area of concern and study. As the quote suggests, bodies are not considered stable things or entities, but rather are processes which extend into and are immersed in worlds. That is, rather than talk of bodies, we might instead talk of brain–body–world entanglements, and where, how and whether we should attempt to draw boundaries between the human and non-human, self and other, and material and immaterial. The quote suggests that bodies are open, defined perhaps by their capacities to affect and be affected, and that this register of bodily affectivity is that which introduces a vitality into bodily matters that demands attention and concern.

As this chapter will explore, the focus on affect also moves away from a distinctive focus on the human body to bodies as assemblages of human and non-human processes. The human body is potentially displaced, extending our concern with corporeality to species bodies, psychic bodies, machinic bodies and other-worldly bodies, for example. These bodies may not conform to our expectations of clearly defined boundaries between the psychological, social, biological, ideological, economic and technical, and may not even resemble the molar body in any shape or form.

This new trend of body theory, with its focus on affective energies and creative motion, characterizes bodies in two ways: by movement

and process. Rather than considering bodies as closed physiological and biological systems, bodies are open, participating in the flow or passage of affect, characterized more by reciprocity and co-participation than boundary and constraint (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). If talk of the natural body was displaced within the sociology of the body in the 1980s, then talk of the distinctly human, singular body is displaced within affect theory with its resounding focus on multiplicity and movement (see Manning, 2007, 2010). The problem that affect theory raises, and with which this book will engage, is how we live singularity in the face of multiplicity. The 'we' in the 'how we live' of course implicates a human subject, which at first glance flies in the face of the reconfiguration of the body as singular and distinctly human that affect theory challenges. However, without refusing this important shift I do want to suggest that our theorizations of affect require attending to the models of subjectivity that we implicitly and sometimes explicitly invoke in our reinventions of the human, the body, politics and life.

### The Sociology of the Body

The current conjuncture within which this book has been written is very different from the concerns which guided humanities scholars in the 1980s and which led to the delineation of a distinct subdiscipline of sociology known as the 'sociology of the body'. Since then the focus on the body and embodiment across the humanities has grown into a diverse transdisciplinary field of study. Body studies stretch from art to architecture, from biotechnology to medicine, from biomediation to health and illness, from science and technology studies to film, and from digital media to the neurosciences, to name just some of its travels. Studies of the body are no longer confined to the more social dimensions of what were taken to be a body's ongoing immersion in the world, characterized by all the areas within sociology which have shown the always already mediated nature of what we might take the natural or the biological to be. These areas include the sociology of health and illness and the sociology of medicine, which have contributed much to displacing the view that a body can be studied in isolation, abstracted from its very real conditions of existence and living. What was distinctive about this work was the focus on a 'human body', and introducing what were taken to be the dimensions of embodied experience neglected or obscured by biomedicine. This includes the review essay written by the sociologist Arthur Frank published in the journal

*Theory, Culture & Society* in 1990. This seminal essay developed his reflections upon his own experience of a heart attack and cancer diagnosis and the reconfigured sense of embodiment or 'morphological imagination' which followed this (see also Frank, 2010; Sobchack, 2010). These reflections were an important factor in the conditions which led to the inauguration of the journal *Body & Society* co-edited by Mike Featherstone and Bryan Turner in 1995. This was set up as a companion journal to *Theory, Culture & Society* and has published some of the leading work in this exciting and innovative field of study.

The sociology of the body, as it came to be known, was pioneered by a number of British sociologists who argued that understandings of and analysis of the body and embodiment should not be confined to what might be understood as the more obvious aspects of embodiment; such as research which took medicine or health and illness as its subject. Mike Featherstone (1990/2007) pioneered analysis and understandings of embodiment which linked work on consumer culture with attention to ageing, seeing the body as much more than surface and appearance. Bryan Turner (1996) painstakingly showed how some of the sociologists who have shaped the sociological imagination were making implicit assumptions about bodies in their analyses of how social processes worked and took hold. Characterizing sociology's engagement with the body and embodiment as an 'absent present', he showed how an explicit rendering of the implicit assumptions made about bodily matters within the discipline (within the work of Durkheim, for example), might be a crucial way forward in analyses of key sociological concepts, such as power, ideology, agency, technology and discourse (see Blackman, 2008a, for further development). Chris Shilling (2003) and Nick Crossley (2001) have both made an important contribution to the further seriousness given to bodily matters, moving discussions to the myriad processes, practices, techniques and habits through which bodies are enacted and brought into being as particular kinds of entity. The concept of body technique is an established method for analysing embodiment within this work, recasting the body as process rather than fixed entity, whilst retaining a focus on the more lived or phenomenal dimensions of experience.

The sociology of the body is now an established subdiscipline of sociology, recognized by international sociological regulatory bodies as an important part of the sociological enterprise. This important tradition has brought corporeality into debates about identity and culture, communication, power and regulation, subjectivity, technologies,

performance, representation and discussions of race, class, ageing, disability, gender and sexuality. It connects with work in feminism, queer and post-colonial studies identifying normalization as being central to the body cultures which exist and circulate within neoliberal forms of governmentality. The body is now no longer peripheral to humanities study, and as we will see within contemporary work, further links and reconfigures how we might approach the human, life, technology and governance (see Blackman, 2008a, for an overview of the contemporary field of body studies).

Whilst this book departs from this tradition, it also builds upon the important work which has shaped this field of study. One of the distinctive shifts which characterizes contemporary body studies and which is reflected in the focus of this book is the subject of affect. Whether the focus on affect across the humanities becomes a shift or a turn remains to be seen, but it is clear that the intensification of work on affect across media and cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, science and technology studies, geography, philosophy, politics and related disciplines such as architecture, design and art is building at an exponential rate. This arguably discloses the humanities' contemporary 'absent present' – that is, a making explicit of those registers of experience that are at work in objects, artefacts and practices, for example, but which have been largely absent in theorizing. This is because, as many affect theorists have argued, for the last three decades the humanities have tended to privilege representation, discourse, signification and ideological processes as being the key to understanding subjectification.

Affect refers to those registers of experience which cannot be easily seen and which might variously be described as non-cognitive, trans-subjective, non-conscious, non-representational, incorporeal and immaterial (see Blackman and Venn, 2010). Seigworth and Gregg (2010: 9) extend this further where affect might figure across different perspectives as 'excess, as autonomous, as impersonal, as the ineffable, as the ongoingness of process, as pedagogico-aesthetic, as virtual, as shareable (mimetic), as sticky, as collective, as contingency, as threshold or conversion point, as immanence of potential (futura), as the open'. Affect is not a thing but rather refers to processes of life and vitality which circulate and pass between bodies and which are difficult to capture or study in any conventional methodological sense. As Seigworth and Gregg (2010) show, although studies of affect have been marginal to humanities concerns, the reference to those dispositions, largely immaterial and incorporeal, which circulate and bind communities, can be found in the early work

of Raymond Williams's (1977) and his reference to 'structures of feeling'. Affect is not a new process or phenomenon, but it is now taking form within the interstices of a number of disciplines and approaches which take the subject of affect as their concern.

### Body Studies and Affect Theory

Affect theory presents a number of challenges to body studies, whilst equally body studies present a number of challenges to theorizations of affect. Affect theory enacts and brings together a number of approaches to affect which differ in the place they accord the 'human' within their analyses. This differentiation is often made explicitly in relation to the kind of body or view of bodily matter presumed within different approaches to affect. I want to start by outlining in some detail a seminal approach to affect which has been brought into the humanities primarily by Patricia Clough (2007, 2008, 2010a), Erin Manning (2010), and Brian Massumi (2002a). This approach brings together the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza, Whitehead and Bergson and puts these thinkers into dialogue with work in the contemporary sciences, particularly computational science, quantum physics, cybernetics, evolutionary science and the neurosciences. This perspective refigures our conceptions of bodies, life, technology and the human in its argument that takes discussions of affect beyond the body-as-organism. The body-as-organism is a concept used to characterize distinctly human bodies (however technically mediated they might be seen to be), from those which introduce a 'post-biological threshold' into our theorizing. The 'post-biological threshold' refers to a view of bodily matter which displaces the distinction between the organic and inorganic, material and immaterial, and living and non-living where, rather than talk of bodies, we might talk of human/machine assemblages (Thacker, 2004, 2005, 2010).

Clough uses the concept of the biomediated body, in preference to the body-as-organism, in order to refer to the way affect participates at every level and scale of matter, from the subatomic to the cultural, such that matter itself is affective; what she terms the 'affectivity of matter' (2010a: 210). The concept of the biomediated body resonates with Spinoza's conception of an *individuum*, which 'is a composition of differential relations between bodies/things, and it can refer to human and non-human forms alike' (Williams, 2010: 249). The biomediated body is never distinctly human and thus affect is tied to non-intentional, pre-personal forces that reveal the

‘imperceptible dynamism of matter’ (Clough, 2010a). The distinction between the body-as-organism and the biomediated body is further distinguished according to the concept of *autopoiesis* and its limits. It is worth spending some time outlining this distinction as it is crucial to the approach to affect being developed within this challenging perspective.

### Autopoiesis

Autopoiesis is a term within cybernetics used to study thermal dynamics and the assumption that bodies strive to achieve equilibrium and homeostasis. The limits of autopoiesis revolve around the extent to which the body can be thought of as either a closed or open system. Clough draws from recent engagements by Deleuzian philosophers such as Ansell-Pearson (1999) with concepts of evolution, arguing that change and genetic diversity are difficult to comprehend within a model which is seen to emphasize continuity and stability over movement and transformation. Ansell-Pearson has turned to work within evolutionary science by Lynn Margulis and Dorian Sagan (1986) whose writings on ‘machinic evolution’ and endosymbiosis offer a crucial qualification on the limits of autopoiesis (see also Parisi, 2004). In short, bodies are not closed and might be thought of more as ‘symbionts all the way down’ (Hird, 2010: 37). Although Clough does not explicitly consider Hird’s work, there are interesting parallels between Margulis and Sagan and her approach to co-evolution. That is, if we take what Hird terms micro-ontologies of the body, particularly bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi, what we see are bodies understood more as communities than as individual closed entities (see also Cohen, 2009). Hird takes Donna Haraway’s (2007) figuration of companion species and applies the concept of co-evolution and co-enactment to those relations that are less difficult to see. Where Haraway focuses on dog–human relations, Hird (2010) as well as Margulis and Sagan (1986) focus on ‘not-species’, such as bacteria, which reveal how bodies at a cellular level, in terms of both genetics and morphology, should be thought of in terms of intra-action (Barad, 2007), rather than in terms of interaction, which presumes the ideal maintenance of self–other boundaries and distinctions.

Ed Cohen (2009) also makes this point in his recent genealogy of the concept of immunity-as-defence. Immunity-as-defence relates to the assumption that self–other boundaries are enacted at an immunological level and that problems in cellular defence explain immunological

disorders. However, auto-immune diseases and phenomena such as microchimerism (see Martin, 2010) remain inexplicable from this view of the immune system which is primarily seen to be involved in boundary-making and defence. The concept of the fortress defended self that is enacted through immunity-as-defence is a form of biopolitical individualization (Cohen, 2009). Cohen traces this concept back to the legal specification of personhood which became enacted within the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679. Within this Act the human organism was reconceived as a form of property imagining bodies as having distinct insides and outsides, for example. The work referred to so far, from immunology, molecular biology, quantum physics, mathematics, cybernetics and neuroscience, all either confounds this distinction or offers views of bodily matter which are primarily informational and which present bodily matter as inherently 'lively' (Clough, 2010a).

This reconfiguration of matter, including biological matter as *informational*, comes as much from molecular biology as it does from some of the new and novel technical framings of the body to be found across the sciences. Increasingly through the use of digital and 3D virtual technologies the human body is being reimaged within molecular biology, for example, as digital information. This often forms the basis of quite fantastical projects to image and imagine what bodies might become. This includes their enhancement, alteration and transformation at the molecular level (at the level of codes, enzyme activities, neurotransmitters and transport genes, for example). Nikolas Rose argues in his book, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the 21st Century* (2007), that increasingly within biomedicine itself, the singular, bounded, carbon-based body is being replaced by the proliferation and emergence of technologies and practices which enable the enhancement, alteration and even invention of new bodies. Even within medicine, the body-as-organism is itself being challenged by new medical technologies and imaging devices, which introduce movement into our conceptions of the body. These technologies enable the body to travel beyond the boundary of the skin recast as mobile information to be altered, engineered, and transformed within laboratory and computational settings. Rose calls this a delocalized and mobile conception of life that is not housed or contained by conceptions of the body as a closed, functional living system; the body-as-organism, for example.

Clough (2010a) uses the term 'post-biological' to describe the common ontologies which are linking some of the work that she discusses within the sciences with approaches to affect within the humanities.

This term is useful as it refigures biology as dynamic and open such that boundaries between the self and other, inside and outside, living and non-living, and material and immaterial are seen as porous and permeable; as commune rather than immune systems, for example (Cohen, 2009). One other important element to Clough's approach is that matter is always subject to a fundamental technicity. The focus on technology within Clough's approach to affect is one that is shared across studies of digital and new media (Hansen, 2006; Stiegler, 1998) where the body is seen to always already be subject to technological mediation. However, one of the key differences for both Massumi (2002a) and Clough (2010a) is in relation to the extent to which studies of technological mediation trouble or disrupt the body-as-organism. As I have already outlined, this is framed by Clough in relation to the concept of autopoiesis – that is, relationality (which we might find in the work of Haraway, for example), with its concept of intra-action, does not go far enough in displacing the human and the living in our understandings of affect. Clough (2010b) is explicit about the problems she suggests are inherent to relational ontologies in an afterword to the journal *Body & Society's* special issue on affect (Blackman and Venn, 2010). This claim deserves some attention as it is an important differentiation and one that is crucial to understanding the view of bodily affectivity being proposed.

Clough explicitly relates the problems with relational ontologies to the concept of autopoiesis. She argues that work on relationality does not go far enough in displacing the human, because often the 'autopoietic organism-milieu' is presumed (2010b: 226). Although relational perspectives recognize that entities do not pre-exist their relating and that indeed relation is the generative principle of becoming, what are often also given attention within relational perspectives are the 'psychic dynamics of subjectivity and sociality' (Clough, 2010b: 226; see Walkerdine, 2010, for example). These psychic dynamics, for Clough, are often seen to revolve around the establishment of maintenance and boundary, and therefore are seen to reproduce stability and fixity. The focus on the maintenance of boundary is equated to the limits and problems with autopoiesis.

I will deal with this problematic in the book by shifting the discussion away from autopoiesis to what I am going to term, following the work of Anna Gibbs, the problem of mimetic communication (2010, 2008). Mimetic communication is equated in Gibbs's (2010: 186) formulation to 'corporeally based forms of imitation, both voluntary and involuntary'. The formulation that I am going to develop links

mimetic communication to nineteenth-century conceptions of affective transfer, linked to telepathy, hypnotic suggestion and phenomena such as delusions and hallucinations, rather than to work in infant research and animal studies that primarily locates mimesis within the brain and nervous system (see Gibbs, 2010). Before I turn to this in more detail, I want to remain with debates about technicity and autopoiesis, which are central to differentiating some of the diverse approaches to affect that we find across the humanities.

### **Bodies, Affect, Technicity**

In this section I want to turn to the vexed question of technicity and how we can think of mediation in the context of bodily affectivity. As Clough has argued, mediation or the technical framing of bodily matters differs in the extent to which approaches are able or willing to conceive of the limits of the body-as-organism. Although approaches to affect are diverse and far from forming a coherent affect theory, one explanatory principle might be to differentiate according to the distinctions made between the biomediated body and the body-as-organism. Gregg and Seigworth's (2010) *Affect Theory Reader* provides a useful overview of some of the different traditions and orientations to affect that can be found across the humanities, and they draw on this distinction in their meta-commentary on the status and place of the human within theorizations of affect.

The first approach that they differentiate refers to a field central to body studies which is characterized by work on bodily integrity (see Blackman, 2010b). Body studies has a rich tradition of phenomenological and post-phenomenological work which explores the dynamic, kinaesthetic processes that enable bodies to respond to changes in both morphological structure and environment. Bodily integrity is the term coined by researchers interested in the incorporations and extensions that enable bodies to live and respond to changing conditions and that challenge any notion of bodies as being fixed or stable, for example. The term 'body' is usually replaced by the concept of body-subject within these traditions, which displaces a mind-body dualism but does not reduce bodies to material (physiological, neurological, biological) processes. The incorporations enacted by a body-subject include technical, material extensions which articulate the body in new ways (a prosthetic limb, for example), but do not occlude the complex psychic incorporations that enable new bodily configurations to be brought into being.

Vivian Sobchack (2010) uses the term ‘morphological imagination’ to refer to the more *affective* dimensions which characterize these incorporations. Within these perspectives bodies are considered psychically or psychologically attuned, where the potential for psychological action is distributed throughout bodies – to nerves, senses, the gastric and perceptual systems, for example (see also Wilson, 2006). In other words, the concept of body-image, with its ocularcentrism and inherent cognitivism, is replaced with a more kinaesthetic, non-visual sense of incorporation which is derived from work in psychoanalysis and phenomenology. I will spend some time later in the chapter qualifying how I am going to use the terms ‘psychic’ and ‘psychological’, but my argument from the outset is that these terms are still important as they identify something about the status of the human (however contingent and historical the human is taken to be) that is crucial to understanding affective processes. In discussions of bodily integrity psychic incorporations are not simply reduced to autopoiesis, nor to a pre-existent perceiving subject experiencing the world through consciousness.

As we will see in Chapter 7, the very concept of consciousness, aligned to a perceiving subject, is one that is challenged by work on bicameral consciousness and the double brain. In Chapter 7 we will turn to work on the double brain within neuroscience which, when read alongside work on bicameral consciousness (Jaynes, 1976; McGilchrist, 2009), points towards a more distributed embodiment than that which attempts to house the brain and consciousness within a bounded, unified individual. This work suggests that ‘consciousness’ and brain function might be said in some cases to be shared, or at least to point towards the fundamental connectedness of the self to the other – human and non-human. Post-phenomenological work on bodily integrity also challenges the idea that incorporations are about re-establishing fixed, stable bodily schemas or morphological imaginations, which are tied to a perceiving subject experiencing the world through consciousness. Some examples taken from a special issue of *Body & Society* might be instructive in this respect as they draw out some of the challenges for thinking about bodies, technicity and affectivity that this work introduces.

### **Bodily Integrity**

Within work on bodily integrity the capacity for psychological action does not remain with a singular human subject. This is not a closed psychological subject, but includes a more trans-subjective

sense of the psychic or psychological as a shared, collective encounter or event. Slatman and Widdershoven (2010) discuss the case of Clint Hallam, who was one of the first recipients of a hand transplant in 1998. Although functionally the hand enabled Hallam to perform everyday actions, such as brushing his teeth, some three years later he asked for the hand to be removed. The medical decision to remove the hand was forced by Hallam who stopped taking the immuno-suppressant drugs that prevented his immune system from rejecting the donor body-part. Bodily integrity is an issue for bioethics, as the extent to which a donated organ or body-part can be successfully incorporated is not just a cellular or immunological matter.

Organ donation has become an accepted practice, made possible by the cocktails of drugs that enable donor organ and host to acceptably co-exist. However, transplant of a visible body-part, such as a hand or even face, makes the issue of co-existence much more an intersubjective and intercorporeal event. Although many accounts of kidney, heart and liver transplantation draw attention to the reconfiguration of bodily integrity as being about twoness, being able to accept a donor organ which is often experienced as foreign, and in some cases reconfiguring one's morphological imagination as being singular-plural (Nancy, 2000), a visible body-part locates this process of incorporation much more in relation to the other. Hallam's rejection of his transplanted hand was about its *feel*, and how it literally did not feel right despite its functional performance in relation to particular acts and practices. Hallam literally experienced his hand as monstrous and this monstrosity was also felt by his intimate others. The touch of Hallam's donated hand always incorporated the touch of the host, a malign presence that could not be eradicated from the exchange.

Slatman and Widdershoven (2010) draw attention to the euphemisms surrounding this case and a medical team who were very aware of the possibility for what they termed the 'Frankenstein syndrome' (p. 73). As they argue, as 'a transplantation patient, you have to live with the thought that a piece of a dead person's matter is now part of you – and imagine that this strange part may take over control' (p. 73). The idea of the double and possession was popularized by cinema, literature and science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in relation to hypnotic crime and the dangers of hypnotic trance and suggestion (Andriopoulos, 2008). These cultural fantasies were about an 'imperceptible being with a will and agency of its own' (Andriopoulos, 2008: 3) and a set of fears and anxieties

generated about being governed by 'foreign powers' (see also Hustvedt, 2010). Andriopoulos (2008) argues that these cultural fantasies have not gone away and, in a fascinating analysis of law, science and art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cogently shows how the theme of possession is central to the cultural history of modernity. We might therefore not be surprised by the inability of Hallam and his intimate others to incorporate the transplanted donor body-part, where, as we will see throughout the book, the fear and dangers of possession exist in close proximity to arguments which suggest that bodily integrity can never be grafted onto the singular, atomized individual.

As Andriopoulos cogently argues, the history of possession as an integral part of cultural histories of modernity opens up certain paradoxes in our understandings of the body. Possession discloses the porous and permeable nature of embodiment and the coupling of the human with the non-human, including machinic, species and other-worldly entanglements such that distinctions between the natural and unnatural are destabilized. However, these couplings are also fraught with anxieties and cultural fears and fantasies which perhaps introduce caution into our considerations of how we live singularity in the face of multiplicity.

Slatman and Widdershoven (2010) use the case of hand transplantation and particularly the success of Hallam's graft at a cellular and immunological level, in contrast to its failure at an intersubjective and intercorporeal level, to comment on our understandings of bodily integrity. Although the limits of body-image as a concept for understanding bodily integrity have a long history within phenomenological and post-phenomenological work (see Ferguson, 1997), Slatman and Widdershoven are keen to retain the importance of the visual and appearance for understanding the strangeness of Hallam's grafted hand. However, they also recognize that images, in this case the image of a foreign hand grafted to one's body, also work *affectively*. Slatman and Widdershoven emphasize the affective, haptic dimension of the visual in their engagement with the concept of body-schema (Gallagher, 2005).

Haptic, or affective, communication draws attention to what passes between bodies, which can be felt but perhaps not easily articulated. The more non-visual, haptic dimensions of the lived body distribute the idea of the lived body beyond the singular psychological subject to a more intersubjective and intercorporeal sense of embodiment (see also Csordas, 2008). This is embodiment as intercorporeality (see also Weiss, 1999). As Weiss (1999: 5) argues,

to describe embodiment as intercorporeal 'is to emphasise that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and non-human bodies'. The concept of body-schema, which is central to Weiss's engagement and reconfiguration of practices such as anorexia, is one that draws attention to the limits of the concept of body-image for analysing the lived body.

### From Body-Image to Body-without-an-Image

As many people have argued, we do not live our bodies photographically (see Coleman, 2008). That is, that although the mirror and the visual are emphasized, particularly within makeover and consumer culture, based perhaps on popular physiognomic assumptions (Wegenstein and Ruck, 2011), this closes down our understanding of bodies to static, two-dimensional things or entities. Massumi (2002a) terms this 'mirror vision', where, as the term suggests, what is emphasized is the look or appearance of the body, where bodies might be looked at as if they are static images. The concept of body-schema introduces a non-visual or non-representational sense of the body, what is often referred to as haptic communication. This is not just about how a body looks either to oneself or others, but rather about how a body *feels*, where that feeling does not simply emanate from within (in relation to a psychological measure such as self-esteem, for example), but is rather an intensity generated between bodies. Massumi (2002a) uses the concept of movement vision to capture the energies, sensations, forces and intensities which are always in movement between bodies, such that bodies are always in transport. Indeed, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009, 2011) argues that movement, or what she terms 'animation', is the foundation of living or life (see also Manning, 2007, 2010; Stacey and Suchman, 2012).

The areas of body-image and bodily integrity are interesting for affect studies as they offer a convergence between phenomenological and post-phenomenological work, based on the lived (human) body, with theorizations of affect, which as we have seen in the work of Massumi (2002a) and Clough (2007, 2008, 2010a) emphasize the workings of affect within conceptions of the body which are never distinctly human or singular. So although Massumi's concept of movement vision draws attention to the registers of affect, feeling and intensity and their fundamental trans-subjective and intercorporeal nature (the more affective, haptic dimensions of images, for example), the biomediated body is both organic and inorganic, living

and non-living, material and immaterial. It is not just that the human body is technologically mediated but that affect does not require a distinctly human body in order to pass and register.

Mike Featherstone (2010) has developed aspects of this work to understand the relationship between body, image and affect, particularly within consumer culture. It is worth spending some time with his argument as it gives us another opportunity to consider the complexities of the relationship between bodies, affect and technicity. He argues that 'the relationship between body image and self-image may not work in such a simple way as the visual rationality of mirror-vision implies' (p. 196). Featherstone's (2010) development of Massumi's concepts of movement vision and his corresponding reconfiguration of body-image to body-without-an-image provides an interesting way of reframing the makeover and body-transformation projects within consumer culture. Featherstone's critique of body-image discourse focuses upon those forces which are generated and pass between bodies that are more difficult to see – what he terms the 'affective image' and the 'affective body'. He argues that these forces or intensities are part of body-image discourse, and stylists and makeover experts are very aware that the makeover is much more than simply changing appearance and the visual register of bodies.

The reformation of bodies, within the context of the ubiquitous before and after transformation so beloved of the makeover, is one that is also about im/material processes – those that increase the body's capacity to affect others. This affective charge is aligned to the development of a 'look', which is as much about generating charisma, presence, atmosphere and what Thrift (2010) terms 'allure'. Thrift argues that glamour and beauty practices, which are part and parcel of celebrity culture, are characterized by particular technologies that work affectively to generate allure. As Featherstone (2010: 196) similarly argues

the transformation demands not just the reforming of the body surface and volume through fitness regimes and cosmetic surgery, but a complete transformation also requires something akin to a course in method acting, to learn to play the part of the new person one has elected to become. To have a body and face that has the capacity to stop people in their tracks and make them take a second look, to make them want to verify, note and even record the persona which has instigated the shock of beauty.

Both Featherstone (2010) and Thrift (2010) draw attention to the mediated nature of those processes and practices that generate such allure. Featherstone examines how the concept of body-image or

mirror vision is very reliant on photographic technologies which produce the body as a static, two-dimensional, bounded image captured most tellingly by the portrait. However, the portrait itself is more than just image. As Featherstone argues, following the work of Annette Kuhn (1985), the image is also imago; the look perhaps which is generated beyond the image as a 'prosthetic for imaginative work' (Featherstone, 2010: 198; see also Coleman, 2008; Lury, 1995). Thus, to look or think photographically also requires an attunement to the affective work of images; to their suggestive capacities of captivation and enchantment. This might be described as the more ineffable quality of presence or style often used to describe some Hollywood studio photographs of film stars in the inter-war years (Featherstone, 2010). This ineffable quality is also represented by the proliferation of photographs of streetstyle that circulate on blogs and in books, such as *The Sartorialist* (Schuman, 2009), which are said to capture the cultivation of presence.

Featherstone equates the affective image/body to Massumi's concept of 'movement vision', aligned to a body in process, and focuses on how developments in media and digital technologies now allow or even create 'new possibilities for the visualization of affect' (Featherstone, 2010: 194). Featherstone turns to the work of Mark Hansen (2006) and his discussion of video artists such as Bill Viola who have used digital recordings to slow down images so that what is normally imperceptible can be registered on the screen. This allows those intensities which are felt rather than seen to be registered, mediated and visualized via digital technologies. This is a view of the image as informational which requires both body and image to take form (Featherstone, 2010). Bodily affectivity for Hansen relates to the way in which images must be embodied in order to be actualized, and do not exist as static, preformed images.

The shift from body-image to body-without-an-image is important for refocusing our attention on bodies as processes, but, as we have seen within this work, the question of how affect is mediated is one that tends to oscillate around the status of the body within different perspectives. Although Featherstone acknowledges the assumptions embedded within the concept of the biomediated body, most of his discussion is very much centred on the human body, albeit a human body that is always subject to mediation. As he argues, what we need to take account of rather is how people move between different registers, between body-image and body-without-an-image, between 'the mirror-image and the movement-image, between affect and emotion, between the subject-object and the

sensation of visceral and proprioceptive intensities' (2010: 213). This suggests a certain 'doubling' (see also Chapter 7 of this book), rather than the move from either a closed to an open body, or from a distinctly human body to one that troubles any such distinction. The question of how we might approach this 'doubling', where the subject can be both 'one yet many' (see Blackman, 2008b) or 'more than one and less than many' will be explored in Chapter 7 by focusing on recent interdisciplinary engagements with the 'double brain' (see McGilchrist, 2009). This work, which spans art, philosophy, neuroscience, sociology and literature, opens up the question of the *milieu* and technicity in the context of affective processes (see also Venn, 2010). The question considered in Chapter 7 is precisely how we can analyse different brain–body–world couplings that might enact being both singularity and plurality in complex ways.

I want to approach this 'doubling' by considering a related debate within affect studies over the extent to which affect can be considered non-intentional (see also Leys, 2011a). This debate returns us to the question of whether affect requires a (human) subject in order to register or materialize. Some people have explicitly related the idea of 'affect without a subject' to the influence of Spinoza's philosophy on Deleuzian ideas (Williams, 2010). As Williams argues (p. 246), affect

is also de-subjectifying in an important respect as for Spinoza it is also a kind of force or power that courses through and beyond subjects. Thus, it cannot easily be inscribed within the borders of subjectivity. For Spinoza, affects are forms of encounter; they circulate – sometimes ambivalently but always productively – between and within bodies (of all kinds), telling us something important about the power of affect to unravel subjectivity and modify the political body.

It is for this reason that affect is considered autonomous, pre-personal, non-intentional and a force that exceeds the psychological subject (Massumi, 2002a). Affect within this perspective does not require an anthropocentric or psychological subject to understand or register its workings. Affect relates to 'processes without a subject' (Williams, 2010: 247).

### Affect and Science

In order to consider the status of affect as non-intentional and the related question of the extent to which the human body should be granted equivalence to non-human forms, I want to turn to the work

of Ruth Leys, the historian of science. Her most recent work has focused on the problems with constituting affect as non-intentional (see Leys, 2011a). Leys (2010b, 2011a) argues that one of the beliefs driving affect theorists within the humanities is that affect is non-cognitive – separate from cognition, meaning and interpretation. This separation often grants the non-cognitive primacy, where the focus often becomes the material body, and the bioneurological mechanisms through which affect might register and pass. As other writers such as Claire Hemmings (2005) have argued, there is a danger with this view that there might become a disconnection between *ideology* and the body and meaning and affect. This might produce, as one of its consequences, ‘a relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics in favour of an “ontological” concern with people’s corporeal-affective experiences of the political images and representations that surround them’ (Leys, 2010b: 668).

Leys (2007, 2011a) illustrates one possible consequence of this ontological commitment in her engagement with an approach to affect within the humanities informed by the work of the American psychologist, Silvan Tomkins. As she illustrates, this work is contested within the psychological sciences and the context and parameters of such contestation are obscured in current work on affect. Tomkins’s theories of affect were introduced into the humanities by the late queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003). In 1995 Sedgwick and Frank wrote an introduction to a reader on Tomkins’s work which, as Leys (2007) argues, hailed Tomkins’s ‘neurocultural’ approach to affect as being important for humanities scholars. It was seen to offer a critique of constructionism and psychoanalysis, replacing anxiety and arousal with what was taken to be a more complex system of affective states and forces (see Gibbs, 2010). Constructionist approaches for a long time had struggled with how to understand investment within normalizing processes, turning to a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Foucauldian approaches to discourse to provide a theory of subjectivity (see Butler, 1993; Henriques et al., 1984, for example). However, the non-materialist approach to investment, which for many revolved around the discursive production of fantasy and desire, was seen to problematically produce the body as inert dumb matter (see Blackman, 2008a).

Tomkins’s work was seen to be exciting as it offered an account of motivation which bypassed meaning and interpretation in favour of a more materially grounded approach to investment which foregrounded the ‘biological’ as having an inherent dynamism or liveliness. Human subjects were *not* seen to be driven by complex psychic

dynamics of subjectivity and sociality, but rather by discrete affects which were innate states hard-wired into the brain. These states were seen to produce an energetic dimension to behaviour which operated outside of interpretive systems of meaning and cognition. In other words, Tomkins's work represents an anti-intentionalist approach to affect, where affects are produced as 'automatic, reflex-like corporeal' responses (Leys, 2007: 125). The question is whether the separation between the intentional and non-intentional can be mapped onto a distinction between the psychological and the biological or between the immaterial and the material. I am particularly interested in whether the immaterial can also be modelled materially without making such a split, hence my preference for the hybrid term 'im/material'.

Leys (2010b, 2011a) echoes an anxiety about making such a distinction and argues that the ontological commitment to non-intentionality as materiality enacted by some affect theorists within this tradition ignores or obscures the shaky empirical ground Tomkins's work rests upon. I am sympathetic to Leys's challenge and the crux of her argument, which as a historian of science is oriented towards the importance of genealogical study for analysing the context and contestation surrounding Tomkins's work within the psychological sciences. This raises the question of how, as humanities scholars, we engage with the psychological, life, biological and neurosciences in our engagements with affect, and what are some of the problems and possibilities generated by a closer alliance to the sciences. Gibbs (2010), an Australian cultural theorist, has extended Tomkins's work in the context of her approach to mimetic communication – that is, to those processes, such as the phenomenon of emotional contagion, which are seen to be more corporeally based and which circulate and pass between bodies. She argues that the mimetic capacity in humans is innate in order to explore the more immediate, visceral, non-intentional ways in which bodies are conscripted by media technologies. This might be through the use of particular devices such as the close-up shot of the face, for example. This approach to biomediation is one which theorizes the body and embodiment, rather than meaning and signification, as being central to how media technologies are seen to work and take hold (see also Blackman, 2012).

Gibbs (2010) is, however, very aware of the dangers of providing an empirical grounding for her approach to mimetic communication. Although she does assume that mimesis is a fundamentally innate capacity (drawing primarily from animal and infant research), she also refocuses our attention away from the potential positivism of this

statement towards the question ‘*what if* one conceived the world in this way?’ (p. 189). This is similar to Massumi’s (2002a) approach to the sciences which he terms ‘creative contagion’ (see Chapter 4 for an extended engagement with Massumi’s work). This approach brings into the humanities what might often be seen as rather positivist empirical research in the psychological, cognitive and neurosciences (see Chapter 7). The reductionism of this strategy is potentially destabilized through putting it into dialogue with quantum physics, Spinoza, Bergson and Deleuze. However, although I am sympathetic to this work and what it opens up, I am also aware of the importance of more genealogical approaches to both science and affect, which allow one to consider the wider contexts of complex and often contested circuits of debate, legitimacy and authorization within scientific theories and research. This is often overlooked in the humanities’ engagements with science, which is becoming much more characteristic of work within affect studies (see Thrift, 2004).

Callard and Papoulias (2010: 31) consider the inherent positivism that is sometimes invoked in the sizeable shifts that are being made in the humanities’ reappraisal of the sciences. This is also a concern for Leys (2010a, 2011a), who argues that the lack of historical engagement with the complexity of debates within the sciences often leads to a kind of cherry picking. This often obscures or ignores the contestation and complexity of the assertions of a particular theory or author. As Callard and Papoulias (2010) argue, science is often used to ‘ground the *content* of theorists’ claims (about what affect is and does, that is)’. That is, empirical studies are used as evidence to ground or authorize a particular definition of affect – that it is a non-intentional force, for example. This is a concern for Leys (2010a, 2011a) who in a series of articles offers a genealogy of the work of Tomkins, particularly as it has been taken up by the contemporary American psychologist, Paul Ekman (2006).<sup>1</sup>

This engagement with the histories of contestation over Ekman’s approach to the emotions and facial expression, Leys argues, are occluded by the recent engagement with Tomkins by affect theorists across the humanities. Leys considers why Tomkins’s work was seen to offer a radical overhaul of constructionism, given his alignment with evolutionary science and particularly the work of Charles Darwin. The production of the ‘naturalistic body paradigm’, associated with Darwin’s evolutionary account of human behaviour and development (Shilling, 2003), is one that for years has been refuted in the humanities for its essentialism and its alignment with the production and reproduction of social inequalities and inequities. The

more cautious and circumspect approach to the sciences that I will develop in my engagements with science does not refute the common ontologies that are emerging across the sciences and humanities. This is where in many theories within both science and the humanities 'social' and 'natural' phenomenon are now viewed as more complex, indeterminate, relational and constantly open to effects from contiguous processes (see Blackman and Venn, 2010). It is, however, important to open up the debate as to how we use, read and deploy practices of experimentation within the sciences. We need to consider what we might be ignoring in our own engagements with affect when we turn to and engage mainstream positivist empirical research and theory to analyse affective processes.

One of the focuses of this book will be on more marginal work in the sciences which engages with phenomena, such as voice hearing, suggestion, rhythm and work on the double brain. I will argue that these phenomena are important because they always already imply relationality and operate as 'threshold phenomena'. That is, these phenomena already suggest some kind of transport between the self and other, inside and outside, and material and immaterial. This transport cannot be understood by the concept of social influence with its presumption of pre-existing entities interacting. However, an important focus of the phenomena I analyse throughout the book is that they also tend to be viewed as signs of irrational perception within the psychological sciences and neurosciences; this is particularly so when we consider suggestion and voice hearing. As I outline in the preface to this book, I approach these phenomena as modalities of communication, rather than irrational forms of perception, that disclose our fundamental connectedness to each other, to our pasts, and even to past histories that cannot be known (see Cho, 2008; Davoine and Guadilliere, 2004).

My focus in relation to these phenomena will be genealogical, considering how detailed historical engagement is important for engaging science in the context of contemporary work on affect (see also Blackman, 2010a). In Chapter 6, I will consider practices of experimentation in the context of voice hearing, framing my engagement with affect through developing work on diasporic vision (Cho, 2008), embodied remembering and transgenerational haunting (Davoine and Guadilliere, 2004). This tradition of work on affect retains the importance of the psyche or the psychological, seeing bodies as more than material substrates of affective transfer. However, the psyche that is invoked is trans-subjective, material and immaterial, living and non-living, and organic and inorganic. This work rejects from the outset

the kind of psychological subject that is often brought in through the back door in work on affect. This is the assumption, as we have seen, that affect does not require a subject – that affect relates to processes without a subject. I will show in the next section that although this represents a view of affect held by many affect theorists, this often does not hold up when we consider a genealogy of such a statement as it is enacted in different theories. I will argue that some kind of capacity for mediation aligned either to the brain, nervous system or more general theory of subjectivity is often required in order to make such a statement. These concerns reflect some of my own training within the psychological sciences, and my subsequent excursion through critical and discursive psychology, and latterly within the disciplines of media, cultural and body studies.

### **Affect and the Psychological Subject**

The 'turn to affect' is often positioned as a counter to the psychological subject, and more specifically as a rejection of the need for theories of subjectivity (see Hemmings, 2005; Massumi, 2002a). This relates to the assumption, particularly within the shift from the body-as-organism to the biomediated body, that affective processes do not require a subject. Affect within these perspectives often becomes constituted as immaterial forces or incorporeal sensations understood through the concept of (virtual) flow or movement. The potential of affect once registered by a human subject is often closed down or arrested in some way, reflected in the assumption that once affect is experienced as emotion or feeling, for example, its virtual potential is thwarted (see Massumi, 2002a). As Clough (2010: 209) suggests, following Massumi, if conscious perception equates to a narration of affect, there is always 'a never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder'. This assumption is often made by separating affect from cognition and presuming that affect bypasses cognition and is registered prior to its translation into emotion or feeling. The registering of affect is often aligned to the action of the central or autonomic nervous system, for example, or to concepts such as the mirror neuron, which are seen to grant affect its potential autonomy from meaning and interpretation. This is often equated to the half-second delay between affect and cognition (see Thrift, 2004). This statement is often authorized through borrowing from psychology and the neurosciences and using theories on the affective, social and emotional brain, or on image reception in psychology in order to grant immediacy to affect.

This work is very important for undermining the autonomous rational subject of psychology and for opening up discussions of subjectification to processes which pass between subjects and which problematize the interiorized self (see also Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). Clough (2010a) suggests that theories of affect thus challenge nineteenth-century models of the body which, she argues, were assumed to be informationally closed to the environment. Affect thus opens up analyses of subjectification to the realm of potential, 'as tendencies or incipient acts, indeterminant and emergent' (p. 209). Although affect is pre-individual or trans-subjective in this sense, this does not mean that affect cannot be materialized or mediated. Indeed, one of the focuses of work on the biomediated body is precisely to explore how affect can be captured through strategies of biopolitical governance. Clough argues that although affect within such approaches is always seen to produce 'the chance for something else, unexpected, new', capitalism has developed more strategies and techniques for modulating and augmenting affect in ways that might close down hope and extend biopolitical racisms (see Berlant, 2010; Clough and Wilse, 2011; Massumi, 2010). This is one of the ambivalent dualities that work on affect makes visible.

Although affect is primarily considered pre-individual, it is always subject to mediation, or what Clough calls 'technical framing'. Affect is materialized in ways which reveal both the potential for change and hope, as well as the more insidious ways in which populations might be governed beyond normalization (see also Hauptmann and Neidich, 2010). The important point when considering subjectivity within these perspectives is that investment or the capture of affect does not require a human subject governed by psychic dynamics of subjectivity or sociality, but a nervous attunement or synchronizing of body with technology. Thus the psyche is often foreclosed and replaced by a lively nervous system or bodily materiality that is viewed as dynamic, responsive and autonomous from intentionality and cognition. Indeed, a range of mechanisms for registering affect have been proffered which all replace psyche with a more lively biology or neurophysiological or psychological body. This might include mechanisms aligned to the brain, endocrine system, nervous system, olfactory system and so forth.

In Chapter 7 we will consider the grounding of sociality within the brain or neurosciences, which is a distinctive feature of affect studies. Although this work is interesting and important, I want to contend that the displacement or foreclosure of the psyche is neither entirely achieved nor accomplished within this work. There are a number of

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aspects to my contention that will be discussed throughout the book. I hope I will contribute to discussions of affect and the body by modelling embodiment not only as expressing a lively materiality but also as psychologically or psychically attuned. The conception of psychological or psychic attunement I seek to develop is one which does not separate mind from body, self from other, or even human from non-human and material from immaterial. My approach to the psychic or psychological will start with a more subliminal subject that can be found in nineteenth-century models of personhood which were not assumed to be informationally closed to the environment. These models which are often referred to as vitalist (see Cohen, 2009; Fraser et al., 2005), revolved around the concept of affective transfer that can be found in discussions of telepathy, suggestion, mediumship and so-called psychotic phenomena such as voice hearing or delusions (see Blackman, 2010a). The psychic was presumed to be a threshold experience produced at the interface or intersection of the self and other, material and immaterial, human and non-human, and inside and outside such that processes which might be designated psychological were always trans-subjective, shared, collective, mediated and always extending bodies beyond themselves.

The key focus of much of the reflection in relation to these phenomena was not so much whether bodies were open or closed, singular or multiple, but rather how subjects lived singularity in the face of multiplicity. This is what William James referred to as the 'problem of personality' (see Chapter 2), and I will contend that this problem has not gone away, but has rather resurfaced in contemporary discussions of affect. If the subject is neither entirely open nor closed, then we need some way of theorizing and conceptualizing the threshold conditions, what I am going to term the conditions of 'psycho/mediation', through which affect flows and circulates, in ways that do not reduce either to the idea of intensive forces or to movement understood as flow (see Henriques, 2010, 2011). If my contention persuades, then equally the positing of some generic mechanism of affective transmission or transfer, whether the autonomic nervous system, endocrine system or brain, which is seen to produce synchrony between body and technology, also seems too general and causal. I will argue that too much work on affect presumes that affect flows through synchrony and alignment, where mechanisms of affective exchange are seen to augment or diminish such flow (seen as the body's capacity to act and be acted upon). Rather I want to explore different conceptions of affective exchange which do not presume flow (see Chapter 5), and which do not

reduce the complexity of relationality to a neurophysiological body (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The approach I develop throughout the book suggests that the definition of affect as the body's capacity to affect and be affected is too broad. It could also be interpreted as some 'thing' that bodies have: a quality, a vital element – a capacity existing independently of relationality, that is expressed through affect, or is a substratum for it (see Blackman and Venn, 2010). This is even so in approaches which posit affect as processes without a subject, and can be found, for example, in the positing of imagination 'as an anonymous conductor of affects within and between individuals' (Williams, 2010: 248). This allowed Spinoza to conceive of affect as a generative force which flows through and between bodies. Williams's (2010) genealogical engagement with aspects of Spinoza which have been left out of Deleuze's work suggests that in order to construct affective processes in this way, Spinoza required a general theory of imagination which takes his work much closer to psychoanalysis than might be presumed. In other words, the non-subjective nature of affect requires, however minimally, a theory of subjectivity, and these mechanisms are still very much the subject of debate and contestation. I say this as one of the aims of this book is to open up discussions of the psyche and psychology within the spirit of the trans-subjective, in ways which are in keeping with the destabilizing of the distinctly human, and singular psychological subject that affect promises.

My approach is not an attempt to *psychologize* affect, but rather to open up the psychological to post-psychological work that allows the complexity of brain–body–world couplings and entanglements to be analysed. This requires a decoupling of memory, perception, the senses and the psyche from a bounded, singular and distinctly human body, and the development of an analytic that can engage with the intergenerational and intercorporeal transmission of affect, the status of the non-knowing or non-conscious in our theorizations, and the importance of attending to experiences and practices which challenge the foundational model of autonomous subjectivity at the heart of the psychological sciences. This is a processual approach to both the materiality and *immateriality* of the body, something that is perhaps lost if we frame affect as a 'processually oriented *materialism*' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 14, my emphasis). Throughout the book I will engage with work at the margins of the neurosciences and psychological sciences which deal with forms of knowing that exceed rational, conscious experience. This will include work that is often subsumed within the 'psychology of anomalous experience', such as

the placebo effect, voice hearing and practices of suggestion, as they might be enacted within particular brain–body–technology couplings. This is a post-psychological project that takes experiences that offer a ‘puzzling challenge’ to the psychological sciences, and relocates them within the complex brain–body–world entanglements that produce particular kinds of ‘psychological’ effects and affects.

### Conclusion

The approach I will develop throughout the book is transdisciplinary, drawing from work across the neurosciences, physiology, study of narrative and discourse, media and cultural studies, body studies, art, performance, psychology and psychoanalysis. This approach not only entails a dialogue across science and the humanities, but also suggests that the circulation of concepts across such boundaries is one that has been crucial to science-in-the-making, and which continues to be despite the current attack on the humanities (in its funding in terms of research and teaching) by many neoliberal governments.

This chapter suggests that a genealogy of affect must recognize affect’s long history that pre-exists Sedgwick and Frank’s (1995) validation of Tomkins’s work in the humanities, and Massumi’s (2002a) publication of *Parables for the Virtual* (see also Leys, 2011a). Although, as Seigworth and Gregg (2010) suggest, both books present a watershed moment for affect’s emergence within the humanities, by placing affect as the subject of genealogical inquiry I hope to show its much longer history of emergence, verification, oscillation, formation and circulation. This is a deeply political project given the current status of the humanities *vis-à-vis* the sciences, and is one which I hope will interest humanities scholars as well as those working in the sciences who know, intuitively or otherwise, that the work of the humanities is important for the invention of new ways of being human, and new concepts for exploring such processes of self and subject-making.

### Note

- 1 Leys (2011a) argues that this paradigm, which she refers to as the Basic Emotions Paradigm, is ‘seriously flawed’ (p. 439). She goes on to suggest that it is striking how compatible ‘Deleuzian-inspired ideas about affect as a non-linguistic, bodily “intensity” turn out to be with the Tomkins-Ekman paradigm’ (p. 442). And that what ‘fundamentally binds together the new affect theorists with the neuroscientists is their *shared anti-intentionalism*’ (p. 443).