Relational Affect: Perspectives from Philosophy and Cultural Studies

Jan Slaby

Introduction

Philosophers usually do not pay much attention to work on affect in cultural studies.[1] Cultural 'affect theory' aligns with the tradition of *Spinoza*, Nietzsche, Bergson and Deleuze in that it construes affectivity as a pre-personal, dynamic relationality between bodies of various kinds.[2] With this orientation, it operates at some remove from the dominant philosophical view that affectivity is a matter of individual experiential states with intentional content (e.g., Goldie 2000; Helm 2001; Roberts 2003). Conceptually, cultural affect theory foregrounds movement, intensity, change—and the impacts and energies of situated dynamic relatedness instead of representational contents of categorical emotions. Methodologically, the most productive work in cultural affect theory draws on case studies of the affective dynamics in specific sites of everyday life, such as the home, the workplace, the domain of consumption, the venues of entertainment or the arenas and artifacts of mass media. These domains, practices and tools receive little attention from philosophers of emotion, who instead favor simpler examples—usually cases in which an individual faces a paradigmatic emotion—eliciting scenario, such as a dangerous, offensive or shame-inducing situation stripped of contextual detail. In this chapter, I explore the possibility of bringing the philosophy of emotion and cultural affect studies closer together. The focal issue is the dynamic situatedness of both affect and emotion in what I call 'social domains of practice'. A requirement for the success of this endeavor is a working

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1   An earlier version of this chapter was published in 2016 as part of the Working Paper series of the CRC Affective Societies at Freie Universität Berlin, entitled "Relational Affect." See http://www.sfb-affective-societies.de/publikationen/workingpaperseries/wps_2/index.html. The present text is a shortened and in some ways (hopefully) sharpened version of that earlier paper.

2   A good overview over these strands of work is provided by Melissa Gregg and Greg Seigworth in their introduction to the seminal *Affect Theory Reader* (2010).

concept of relational affect that can be brought to use in both affect studies and in the philosophy of emotion.

Accordingly, I will collect materials for an understanding of affect that is inspired by these trends in cultural theory, and then show how this notion of relational affect might inform and advance philosophical analyses of emotion. Affect, in this perspective, is construed as a relational dynamic between individuals and in situations—a dynamic that is prior to individual experience, even, in a sense, prior to the individual subject as such. I propose to view affect as an intra-active dynamic unfolding in—and variously framed and channeled by—social 'domains of practice'. This notion of affect can help explore the possibility that an individual's emotions are the transient products of the situated dynamics of relational affect within a socio-cultural domain. An individual's repertoire of emotion is then viewed as *constitutively* enmeshed with the sustained affective dynamics prevalent in such domains. Relatedly, the concept of relational affect can be used to explicate the domain-specific *rationality* of emotion, both in terms of a general account of 'emotional reason' (Helm 2001) and in terms of micro-analyses of the *affective arrangements* of transpersonal dynamics in specific domains of social life (cf. Slaby, Mühlhoff and Wüschner 2017). One important step within this endeavor is the explication of how situated affective dynamics contribute to realizing what philosophers thematize under the notion of 'affective intentionality' (cf. Slaby 2008). For these purposes, I will partly draw on work by Bennett W. Helm, whose approach on emotional intentionality is insightful but should be transformed in several respects in order to be applicable also to relational affect.

'Relational Affect' in Cultural Studies

As cultural affect theory might not be very familiar to readers from other fields, it is apt to start with a brief survey of some focal issues in this area. First of all, it is not surprising, given the wide scope of the cultural 'turn to affect' (Clough and Halley 2007), and given the contested state of most characterizations of affective phenomena in general, that a consensus understanding of affect is hard to come by.[3] Accordingly, I will tentatively sketch a small but important part

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3   Helpful acknowledgment of why this is so, combined with encompassing chartings of much
    of the relevant terrain is found in Blackman 2012 and in Wetherell 2012. Besides these two
    recent formidable monographs on cultural affect theory, there are a number of useful an-
    thologies and collections. I have found Gregg and Seigworth 2010 particularly illuminating.
    Good exemplars of affect theory at work and at its best, but not containing much in the way
    of overview, are Ahmed 2004; 2010 and Berlant 2011. See also Seyfert 2012.

of the cluster of ideas that cultural affect theory is oriented toward, in order to highlight those strands of it which will be relevant to the considerations below.

To begin with, affect is here not from the outset sorted into categorical types of the usual well-known emotions (such as fear, anger, happiness, sadness, envy, guilt and so on)—which means that we do not deal here with the standard understanding, prevalent particularly in psychology, that the affective is a specific assortment of clearly demarcated mental states. Instead, affect in cultural theory is construed as a dynamic and forceful processuality that traverses in and between bodies of various kinds, not yet consolidated into clearly bounded and thus nameable sequences. Accordingly, affect is here construed as what partly (sometimes even wholly) escapes the capture of reflective consciousness, at least initially. This furthermore implies a certain distance from language and signification, in the sense that affect is said to outrun or undermine at least the more conventional attempts at capturing it in words (although the relationship of affect and language is ultimately a much more complex one). An important strand of affect theory—the one that will be taken up here—frames affect moreover in terms of a *constitutive relationality* between bodies and bodies and objects, in the sense that the entities related cannot be understood in abstraction from these dynamic relations (see Mühlhoff 2015 and 2018 for elaboration).[4] The relationality thesis originates in the work of Spinoza, with later resonances in Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitehead, and Deleuze and Guattari—one might identify here something like an ontological backbone of cultural affect studies, namely the assumption that 'affect' does not initially refer to a class of mental states, but instead to dynamic force relations among transient entities of all kinds. This is what is meant by 'pre-personal dynamics,' often referred to in the Spinozian tradition as *relations of affecting and being affected* (see Seyfert 2012). A problem in this vicinity is the lack of a thorough theoretical elaboration of this strand of thought within cultural theory itself (Massumi 2002 might come closest, but this is far from a consensus account). The present chapter won't take up this particular process ontological strand of thought, but it is helpful to have these ideas figured as a heuristic orientation in the background (cf. Mühlhoff 2015 and 2018).

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4   It is sometimes even claimed (see, e.g., Massumi 2002; Mühlhoff 2018) that these relations are ontologically prior to the entities related, in the sense of a process ontological understanding of nature as advocated by Whitehead and pre-figured in the works of Spinoza. The important point, however, is that the entities do not preexist their *affective* relatedness, which is compatible with the less radical claim that relations and relata are on an equal footing, co-constitutive or equi-primordial.

A more recent empirical inspiration for relational accounts of affect comes from work on infant-caregiver attachment in developmental psychology (e.g., Stern 2010; Reddy 2008). However, affect theorists in cultural studies give their own interpretive spin on the—often contested—constructs and claims from these empirical fields.[5] Likewise, and not surprisingly given the overall interests of social and cultural theory, affect is often conceptualized with regard to complex social dynamics, such as interaction rituals, crowd behavior, media practices and, in general, the immersion of people into places, their resonant attachments to—or dissonant distancing from—nations, communities, groups, institutions and so on. In addition to this, there is a good deal of thematic overlap with recent work in philosophy on *situated affectivity*, although this has not been explored much on either side (see, e.g., Colombetti and Krueger 2015; Griffiths and Scarantino 2009; Stephan et al. 2014; Slaby 2016; Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner 2017).   AQ2

Work on affect in cultural theory has recently been criticized for its allegedly too uncritical allegiance to work in neuroscience, and more generally for its careless and incompetent mixing of different conceptual registers (Papoulias and Callard 2010; Leys 2011). In a similar vein, critics have found the enthusiasm of affect theorists for their subject matter politically problematic, given the involvement of affect in the maintenance of conditions of oppression and injustice (cf. Hemmings 2005). While adequate in some respects with regard to some authors in the field, by and large these critiques tend to be rather one-sided—for instance concerning the extent to which the field is presumably indebted to dubious borrowings from neuroscience. The political critique is equally in need of qualification as the orientation of much work in cultural affect studies is exactly centered on the contention that affect functions as a subtle but powerful stabilizer of social demarcations, as a marker of inclusion and exclusion, and as a shrewd mechanism of keeping subjects attached to oppressive or otherwise pathological conditions (again, Ahmed 2004; Gregg 2011; Berlant 2011; also Butler 2009). An important motivation for the present endeavor lies exactly here: to be able to make visible and analyze with precision the nature and role of affect to implicate individuals and populations in the workings of social domains even if that runs counter to their avowed

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5   A careful assessment of both the relational or transindividual understanding of affect and the practice of borrowing concepts, insights and ideas from various scientific disciplines and paradigms is, again, provided by Blackwell 2012. A recent proponent of a relational understanding of emotion is sociologist Ian Burkitt (Burkitt 2014; see also Wetherell 2012 and Parkinson et al. 2005).

AQ2: The cross-reference "Stephan et al. (2014)" is not been provided in the reference list. Please check and provide the same.

interests or is in other ways detrimental to their well-being or flourishing (see Slaby 2016).

Relational Affect: Pre-theoretic Examples

In this section, I will pre-theoretically sketch two example scenarios of relational affect: affect-rich dyadic encounters in situations of dialogue and affective dynamics in groups and crowds. These examples will provide an intuitive grip on the concept of relational affect, bringing to attention features that will be relevant in what follows. Thereby, the present endeavor resonates with phenomenological work on affectivity, especially with efforts to bring phenomenology back into the philosophy of mind and moral psychology (e.g., Gallagher and Zahavi 2008; Ratcliffe 2008; Colombetti 2013), and also with regard to recent work on *situated affectivity*, as referenced in the last section.

Relational affect transpires in scenes of animated mutuality between two people interacting dialogically. Relational affect inheres these dyadic encounters in the form of an enthralling interplay of gaze, gesture, posture, movement rhythm, tone and pitch of voice, through which an immersive sphere of relatedness is established and then jointly lived-through. One might speak of an *affective atmosphere*, buzzing with forces and tendencies and charged with meaning (Anderson 2009; Schmitz et al. 2011). Joel Krueger has captured this tangible sense of a shared experiential field by introducing the concept of 'we-space': a dynamic realm enacted jointly by two or more interactants, in existence only for the time the interaction lasts (Krueger 2011; see also Fuchs and Koch 2014).

Take the example of a lively conversation between two friends. Both partners jointly live through a scene that might possess a unique character insofar as a shared experience of this particular kind would not happen if other people were present or if the surroundings were different. To see this, consider what happens when such a scene of engaged dialogue is suddenly interrupted, for example when another person steps in unexpectedly. What was a scene of intensive togetherness a moment ago, immediately breaks down. In case the newcomer is welcome and adequately disposed, his stepping in might lead to a different sequence of affective connection. But the outsider's entrance could as well result in a scene of 'broken sociality'—an intrusion whereby the affective energy of the interaction quickly wanes, giving way to a routine, distant, matter-of-factual conversation. But as likely is that an awkward, cumbersome, strenuous connection might ensue—a situation of mutual irritation and dissonance that has its own affective intensity and captivating force so that you

might feel noticeably relieved once the conversation is over. Even irritating, awkward encounters might grip and enthrall us and even bind us together in certain ways—they put us under a sort of spell, albeit in a draining, energy-consuming way. Many scenes of everyday interpersonal interaction have at their core such a tangible relationality; shared zones of immersive relatedness are routinely set up and jointly lived-through.[6]

Another example concerns the conspicuous affective dynamics in groups or crowds, such as those unfolding in protests, riots, parties or events of mass entertainment. It has often been described how a crowd can work itself into a collective frenzy, a mass panic or collective rage or aggression, so that individuals, even if disposed quite differently prior to entering the crowd, are likely to be swayed into rolling with the dominant 'wave' of affect.[7] As in the case of a dialogical encounter, the experience here is one of encompassing immersion into what can seem like an energetic sphere or field of force, so that it is as if one's limps are moved not through one's own initiative but by the crowd's collective dynamic. Of course, there are also forms of discordance and a-synchrony, where an individual is exactly not drawn-in by the surrounding frenzy but left with a marked feeling of disconnection. But special cases aside, it is clear that engaged, active collectives are capable of exerting a forceful affective pull on individuals. Descriptions in terms of energy and intensity seem adequate, also those that focus on rhythmic coordination and bodily entrainment.[8] Similar to the case of the affect-intensive dialogue, a multi-modal sphere of energetic relatedness is set up and jointly enacted by the crowd members. Most conspicuous on part of the individuals involved in these mass dynamics is the feeling of being gripped, literally carried away, of being 'operated' from without by what then feels like the force of the collective as such. What comes to the fore here—and will occupy us below—is an element of active *disowning* effected

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6   Importantly, this does not mean that in these scenes both interactants will necessarily have exactly similar experiences. The joint relational scenes in question allow for individual ways of being-in-relation, for individual ways of resonating affectively, although both will still have a marked sense of 'being in this together.' See Mühlhoff (2015) for elaboration.

7   It would be worthwhile to re-read some of the classics of crowd psychology and mass sociology, such as Gustave Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde and also Sigmund Freud's work on group psychology—in these authors' writings, a remarkable descriptive proficiency and sense for phenomenological detail is fused with often unabashed elitist prejudice, establishing the long-lasting images of crowds as raucous, degenerate, suggestible and thus politically dangerous. See Blackman 2012 for a contemporary critical reading of these materials.

8   Collins (2004), working in the tradition of Durkheim and Goffman, is a good choice for an encompassing sociological approach to the emotional dimension of interaction rituals. Von Scheve (2017) charts the terrain between cultural affect studies and various sociological approaches to affect and emotion, including those in the Durkheim lineage.

by the overall affective dynamics. And it can be exactly this aspect of the situation that is experienced as satisfying: for a few moments at least, the putative boundaries of the self seem to become porous, one's standing attitudes and orientations no longer hold sway, and we might be driven into feelings, thoughts, expressions and acts that are alien to what we are normally and individually inclined to feel, think or do.

While the example of the 'agitated crowd' is a case of high-intensity affect, and thus might be seen as exceptional, it is important to acknowledge that something similar is going on in much less intense cases of an individual's involvement in organized collectives. For instance, consider a shared workplace, such as a corporate office. Co-workers routinely interact in ways that are affectively animated through and through. In fact, key aspects of both examples so far discussed come together here. On the one hand, contemporary office workplaces present many occasions for dialogical interaction among co-workers, often notably affect-involving, as an important element of the work routine itself. On the other hand, shared workspaces are not unlike crowds in that individuals are actively constellated into a group-like arrangement, into a 'crowd' of sorts. Being part of such a professional collective likely engenders forms of affective involvement on part of the individual members, where the collective atmosphere exerts a notable influence over individual comportment (cf. Gregg 2011). This will often not be as overwhelming and absorbing as in the case of an energized crowd in a street protest or a riot, but nevertheless such that the 'affective climate' in the shared office sets the stage—this time in more subtle and unremarkable ways—for individual affective involvement. The key characteristics observed in the frenzied crowd case can be found here too, albeit in toned-down varieties: the collective dynamic enters into and pervades an individual's comportment, there can even be a sense of loosing oneself in the surrounding atmosphere, and also the notable pleasures that affective involvement in some overarching structure often brings. If all this unfolds in the form of a moderate affective background orientation instead of a violent rush of affect, then it is all the more likely that it will not be accompanied by much in the way of conscious reflection and thus might go largely unnoticed by those concerned (or, at any rate, they will not actively acknowledge, consider or think about it). In light of this, it is not far-fetched to think of such interpersonal affective arrangements as *devices of governance*. They are ways of exercising control over—or at least subtly influencing—the members of a workforce, for example (cf. Slaby 2016). This is an important part of what the present proposal is aiming at: to develop conceptual tools that can make visible and help us critically assess devices and arrangements for such modes of 'governing by affect'.

Felt Evaluations: a Normative Pragmatic
Account of Intentional Feelings

The following proposal is importantly inspired by—but in key respects different from—how a particular strand of work in the philosophy of emotion has dealt with *individual* emotional experience. The guiding intuition, expressed pre-theoretically in the above examples but now to be explicated in more theoretical terms, is that it would be a mistake to construe relational affect as an *individual* mental state that then *also*, in addition, possesses certain relational properties. Instead, relational affect as such will be taken to be *ontologically relational* in that the whole phenomenon is realized in a distributed manner between interacting individuals and between these individuals and their environments. However, obviously, relational affect is also such that its various manifestations are experienced by individuals, i.e., it *feels* a certain way *for me* to be part of a vibrant collective or engaged in an affect-intensive dialogue.[9] But this felt dimension does not exhaust the phenomenon, but is only a fragmented part of it. From the individual's perspective one might compare this with the situation where one is grasping one end of a stick without seeing nor having command over the other end of the stick (assume the stick being held into a murky pond of water). There *is* only this one undivided stick, and I 'have' its one end in hand, but the stick is not mine alone nor is it me alone who directs its operations. In fact, I am never totally sure to what extent, if any, I am influencing the situation or whether it is me who gets 'played' in such an arrangement. *My* feeling in those scenes of relational affect is a feeling of being *part of* and partly *absorbed by* something larger which I neither fully grasp nor have full command over. This is why terms such as 'involvement', 'absorption' or 'immersion' seem apt for describing relational affect from an individual's point of view.

If this intuition is on the right track, then it would be a mistake to approach relational affect in the manner of standard approaches in the philosophy of emotion—that is, solely from the perspective of an individual's felt experience. What is required is an approach that does justice to affective experience without cutting off the rest of the dynamic relation. But there is a complementary danger that must likewise be avoided: the switch to the other extreme, namely to a detached outsider's perspective, where the analyst positions herself at an external vantage point observing putative affective relations from

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9   As we have seen in the examples above, some of these experiential manifestations are rather unremarkable and 'in the background of consciousness' (for an account of such affective background orientations, see Ratcliffe 2008).

AQ3 'sideways-on,' to use John McDowell's term (1994). The mistake in choosing this external perspective is that it assumes a determinateness of the affective relation and the entities related that belies the ongoing, dynamic and co-constitutive nature of many instances of real-life affect. The external, objectivist vantage point is too far on the outside while the individualist perspective is positioned too far on the putative 'inside' of the relational dynamic. In other words, we have to reject the forced choice between a first-person phenomenologist perspective and a third-person objectivist-naturalist perspective.[10] But just like in the case of individual affective experience, we can adopt an outsider's perspective of sorts and *also* approach instances of relational affect from the vantage point of the social domains in which they presumably inhere. In what follows, I take inspiration from the inferentialist approach to individual emotions developed by philosopher Bennett W. Helm and then transpose some aspects of this framework to relational affect (see Helm 2001; 2002;

AQ4 2009; 2010).

Helm wants to reconcile the emotions' intentionality with the hedonic, bodily, physiological, passive and, at times, unruly and erratic nature of situated emotional experience.[11] In order to do this, Helm construes emotions such as fear, anger, pride, sadness, shame—the commonly acknowledged categorical emotion types—as temporally extended projectible *patterns* of coherently related felt evaluations. Viewed in isolation, felt evaluations are relatively simple situational feelings of pleasure and pain experienced in response to a certain object, person or situation. What determines whether such a felt evaluation is an instance of fear, sadness, anger or of some other emotion type, is the overall pattern into which they systematically coalesce. So, for example, whether my feeling bad or adversely *towards something*, is an instance *of fear*, depends on that feeling's position in a temporally extended systematic pattern of adequately related felt evaluations with the same focus.[12] This requires

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10   I use the cumbersome gloss 'objectivist-naturalist' because I am reluctant to identify the external, third-person perspective with naturalism outright, as there are varieties of naturalism—within the tradition of pragmatism, for instance—that are neither objectivist nor crudely scientistic.

11   Other important works on bringing the intentionality and the phenomenality of emotion together in an 'organic' account are: Goldie 2000; Roberts 2003; Döring 2007; and Ratcliffe 2008. Some of the phenomenological strands of this, particularly with regard to the lived body's role in the intentionality of emotion, are insightfully developed by Colombetti 2013. A good recent analytical introduction into most of the prevalent issues is Deonna and Teroni 2012.

12   An emotion's focus is that object or person whose value makes intelligible the emotion's specific directedness at its target object. For example, when I fear the arsonist that roams

feeling acutely *pained* by the danger that the dreaded object presents, feeling relief when the feared object has passed us by, feeling grateful toward a friend who helped avert the danger, feeling hopeful that the danger might not recur—and so on, and all these situational feelings are themselves felt evaluations. All these individual felt evaluations get their identities as instances of specific emotion types from their respective position in such systematic patterns. Accordingly, felt evaluations, the 'import' or value of objects and situations and a person's cares and concerns are co-constitutively related in a non-vicious circle of mutual referrals. None of these elements has priority over the others, each element depends constitutively on the others. No feeling is intelligible without the value it responds to and the concern it is based on. Nothing is valuable unless it is responded to systematically by feelings in the light of fitting concerns. Nothing is a person's concern if it is not systematically manifest in her felt responses to valuable objects.[13]

So part of the elegance of Helm's account lies in the fact that it manages to do equal justice to what may seem contrary intuitions about the nature of emotions: the seemingly discordant qualities of the phenomenal character and the intentionality of emotion. On the one hand, an emotion is a momentary episode of feeling in a certain qualitative way toward something, a hedonic bodily experience, usually coming with some bodily upheaval. On the other hand, emotions often have complex intentional contents, they involve sophisticated conceptual understandings, they might respond even to fine nuances in their objects and often draw on subtle narrative scenarios as their formative back stories. The theory of felt evaluations does justice to both these dimensions. While the individual felt evaluations are salient conscious episodes with hedonic qualities, the overall systematic pattern of felt evaluations is what instantiates potentially highly complex intentional contents. The pattern in general is *disclosive* of import, so that individual feelings—that may seem mere bouts of affective upheaval if seen in isolation—can be understood as individually and episodically *responsive* to that import here and now. Commitment to the import of the emotion's focus rules the pattern—the focus' import is the overall 'point' of the pattern, so that the particular normative profile of a

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my neighborhood (my fear's target), the focus of my fear may be my house or those of my neighbors or friends. See Helm 2001, ch. 3 for a detailed explication of emotional intentionality in terms of target and focus.

13   As might be gleaned from these formulations, Helm's co-constitution scenario resembles Charles Taylor's Heidegger-inspired approach to self-interpretation and human value. I have reconstructed Helm's approach in more detail and with explicit reference to Heidegger and Taylor in Slaby 2012.

person's affectivity becomes intelligible. Given a person's concerns (say, for her family, for her career, her community, or for a type of art, etc.), it will be more or less clear, at least in broad strokes, what it is rational for her or him to feel under various circumstances now and in the future.

This talk of emotional commitments and entitlements reveals the profoundly normative character of Helm's account: as rational evaluators, we cannot just feel anything and not feel in the way we capriciously happen to be inclined to—we are normatively *bound* to feel according to our standing value commitments (which might of course change, but again in accountable ways), and other members of our social community will hold us to these evaluative patterns by way of critique and sanctioning. Helm's account is thus seamlessly geared to the social normativity of human emotion, as it makes intelligible practices of critique, sanctioning, the myriads attempts at regulation, and ubiquitous discourses that value and prize certain emotional habituations while shunning others.

From Felt Evaluation to Relational Affect

While I find Helm's account quite illuminating, I will now propose a transformation of it that makes it adequate to capture the fundamentally relational character of affect. What remains in place is the overall theoretical architecture, namely the co-constitutive interplay of systematic patterns and situational instances of affect. The key transformation concerns a change of perspective from individual evaluative outlooks—and thus from a focus on the individual person and her affectivity in general—to forms of affective interaction, affectivity in social-relational settings, and thus to a more general orientation towards social relatedness, jointly enacted intelligibility and the diagrams and mattering maps—the *affective arrangements*—of interactive dynamics.

I propose we put relational affect where Helm has felt evaluations. Thus, the starting point of my approach is not an individual's intentional feelings of pleasure or pain, but rather affective intra-actions in relational scenes, either between two or more interactants or between an agent and aspects of her socio-material environment—relational dynamics of the kind described in the examples above.[14] Like felt evaluations, instances of relational affect are

14   Here and elsewhere I speak of 'intra-action' instead of the more common 'interaction' in order not to be forced to assume from the outset fully bounded individuals that interact. Instead, I leave open the possibility that the interactants take shape in—or emerge out of—these relational scenes. This way of indicating a strong as opposed to a weak

clustered into systematic patterns. These patterns display intelligible internal coherence. That means that they often have 'a point': patterns of relational affect are organized according to some (often tacit) principle, are oriented toward a certain operational goal or institute a type of value. Accordingly, by considering the concrete forms these patterns take, we understand what particular type of relational affective episode, what social 'structure of feeling' is instantiated—relationally enacted—in a given situation. The present approach thus keeps Helm's basic logic of pattern and instance in play, but almost everything else changes: relational affect is not primarily a matter of the affective experience of *individual persons*. Instead, it is an interactive dynamic that for the most part inheres in *social domains of practice*.[15] Accordingly, it is not individual *valuing* that provides the pattern-forming rationale, but the various operating logics or normative principles prevalent in—often even constitutive of—these practical domains, which might be quite contrary to the concerns and values of the individuals implicated in them.[16] From this it should already be clear that it will usually not be categorical emotion types such as fear, anger, shame, pride (etc.) that are instantiated in these systematic patterns of relational affect.

Instead, it will often be forms of affective coalescence, affective relatedness as such—in countless varieties—that bind individuals together and let them jointly comport themselves in ways that are conducive to the smooth operation of the domain in question. The particular 'logic' of the domain unfolds in part in and through the affective relations and interactive dynamics between the domain-participants, so that what the individuals feel and do is part of these transindividual dynamics. The individuals, in turn, become focal anchors, enablers and facilitators for the domain's operating principles—often by exerting subtle (or not so subtle) normalizing pressures on one another in order to continue to feel and act in line with these principles.

So just as in Helm's account, in my proposal the overall domain-specific patterns do impose normative demands on the particular instances of affective relatedness. It is in virtue of its belonging to a normative pattern that a given

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relational ontology—where relations have priority over the entities related—has been introduced by philosopher of physics Karen Barad (2007); see Rouse 2004 for helpful elaboration. In the context of a theory of affectivity this brings issues of ontogenesis and subjectification on the agenda (see Mühlhoff 2015 and 2018).

15   I say more on my understanding of 'social domain of practice' in the next section.

16   They might institute other values instead: those prevalent to—or constitutive of—the relevant domains, for example profit-making in case the domain is a company or cost-efficiency when the domain is a corporate hospital or university.

scene is to be continued in a certain way—for example, in the manner of in-group solidarity, mutual affection and encouragement, or rather adversity; or whether the episode will in some cases unfold as an instance of a specific emotion type such as collective fear, sadness, or anger, after all—in which case it will be jointly enacted between various people through a sequence of relational affects in a situated encounter. Accordingly, the resulting emotions would not be *individual* emotions but *collective* emotions, brought about and enacted jointly by the domain-participants.[17]

However, as pointed out already, categorical emotion types are not the most adequate examples here. Relational affect is most often more a matter of specific modes of interaction—various ways of being- and acting-together in a situation, modes of joint or co-comportment (as in forms of team work, team play, orchestrated behaviors of various kinds)—regardless of whether these modes of interaction assume the shape of a specific emotion type or not. The concept of 'participatory sense-making,' productive in social cognition research (see de Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007), might find application here: local meaning is enacted jointly between two or more interactants and in line with the functioning principles and 'mattering maps' of the social domain in question, but not necessarily according to pre-conceived categorical types of individual intentional comportment.[18] Likewise, notions from the phenomenology of emotion—such as the recently prominent concepts of 'existential feeling' or 'affective atmosphere'—are helpful here. The interactive dynamics in a given domain are often specifically framed by an enabling background, 'structure of feeling,' which accordingly are often the target of conscious efforts in domain-design (architecture, decoration, various 'technologies of allure', etc.). Participants in the domain—such as co-workers in an office, consumers in a mall or the members of a school class or a sports team—find themselves in a conspicuous atmosphere, a sphere of affective intensity, that inheres in the domain and that contributes to preparing, structuring and enabling certain modes of affective relatedness while making other such modes less likely, in ways that are often not reflectively conscious, let alone explicitly articulated (see Anderson 2009; Ratcliffe 2008; Reckwitz 2012; Thrift 2010).

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17   I cannot go into the recently much-debated issue of collective emotions here. The present approach has an affinity to Hans Bernhard Schmid's phenonomology-inspired account, as Schmid gears his proposal explicitly to the operative logic of organizations, such as companies (see, e.g., Schmid 2014). This debate is well captured by the contributions in von Scheve and Salmela 2014.

18   I have taken the concept of 'mattering map' from the work of Lawrence Grossberg (e.g., 1992: 82).

A lot of detail will have to be added to this sketch to make it adequate to its target phenomena. However, I hope that the overall theoretical design of the relational affect account has become clear enough. Relational affect is a matter of socially implemented patterns of interactional dynamics within practical domains, in which individuals are affectively related in structured and normatively regulated ways, often regardless of—or even contrary to—what the individuals would presumably deem significant for themselves or what they would feel if left on their own or within other such normative domains. Bennett Helm's account is an excellent approach to individual affective intentionality, elucidating the relationship between emotion and value in normative and rational terms from an individual's perspective. But in view of the paramount importance of social-relational affectivity Helm's approach turns out to be incomplete, as it lacks resources to come to terms with a crucial dimension of the sociality of affect. Accordingly, Helm's approach needs to be 'socialized.' This can be done by turning relational affect into a conceptual primitive, on the same footing with 'felt evaluations,' but with different key characteristics. Only then will an approach to affectivity be capable to expand its reach to include the ways in which individual affect is both a part of and normatively beholden to overarching patterns of interpersonal relatedness in socio-material settings. The intuition behind this is that even in the domain of feeling—long thought to be a sphere of paramount individuality—the social is making its presence felt from the start. In countless situations of our being affected, what we feel is not fully 'our own' but from the outset part of a relational tangle that exceeds our individual reach (cf. Slaby 2017).

The concepts proposed so far—relational affect, domain of practice, intra-active dynamics—provide resources that aid in grasping this essential dis-owning and in-forming at work in affectivity, in order to theorize the ways in which what we feel encompasses in many cases more than what we manage to grasp consciously here and now, and also what is in direct physical proximity to our individual organism. Involvement, absorption, immersion, rapture are further terms that help characterize an important segment of our affective lives—instead of terms that indicate a closed loop of self-referentiality, where everything person presumably feels—and most of what is relevant *about* their feelings—remains within the ambit of an individual's reflective grasp.

Relational Affect and 'Domains of Practice'

A central feature of the proposed account is the embeddedness of single instances of relational affect within encompassing social constellations. This

perspective also highlights the strong normative pull these social constella-
tions exert over the concrete displays and scenes of affect. The possibility of
analyzing affect in terms of this domain-specific embeddedness in normative
patterns and constellations is what sets the present account apart from those
approaches to affective intentionality that remain tied to the evaluative per-
spective of individual actors.

We can distinguish two broad dimensions of embeddedness, one synchron-
ic, one diachronic. First, relational affect unfolds as part of 'domains of prac-
tice,' i.e., domains in which affect works as an ongoing forceful dynamic that
draws-in, captures, enthralls and binds together a number of interactants. Ex-
amples for this are lectures, sports games, artistic performances, or a family
dinner (synchronic dimension). Second, both the domains, their material and
discursive arrangements and the individuals involved in them have specific for-
mative histories of prior affective relatedness. These histories have sedimented
into differentially recurring patterns, dispositions and repertoires (diachronic
dimension). In and as part of such practical domains, various entities relate in
a situational constellation, and both the layout of the domain—its 'machinic
arrangement'—and the formative histories of the domain-components have
to be considered in order to illuminate a given instance of relational affect.[19]

I use 'domain of practice' as an umbrella term for the central organizing
entity of relational affect, a term that has a wide application covering all sorts
of social fields, organizations, groups and institutions with their respective ma-
terial settings. The concept encompasses all those settings and arenas where
people come together and interact in more than accidental and fleeting ways.
As long as there is some organization, temporal sustenance and discernible
boundary, however fuzzy and shifting, between inside and outside to those in-
teractions, the concept of 'domain of practice' applies.[20] It is important, given

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19   The ordering of affectivity's situatedness into a synchronic and a diachronic dimension
      has been suggested by Griffiths and Scarantino (2009) in a somewhat different theoreti-
      cal context.

20   I am using the term 'social domain of practice' in line with Ted Schatzki's employment
      of the term 'social formation' in his Wittgenstein-inspired practice theory (see Schatzki
      199–201). Schatzki furthermore speaks of 'integrative practices' (98–108) in the settings
      and places these practices are both located in and help constitute. Domains and prac-
      tices are co-constitutively interrelated so that we cannot simply assign some spatial or
      material setting to pre-existing practices (Heidegger on existential spatiality is the source
      in the background; see Heidegger 1927: §§ 23, 24). The focus of Schatzki's account is
      practices—and thus human agency in general—not affect. However, there are important
      parallels between the design of practice theoretical accounts of social life and the present
      approach. Ultimately, affect theory and practice theory need to be integrated in a way that

the wide scope of that concept, to supplement it with a more specific under-standing of the ways in which affect, interaction and agency are prompted and channeled within these domains. A crucial feature of social domains is that their material layout in concert with prevailing discursive structures—among them explicit rules, informal codes of conduct, favored styles of interaction etc.—implement arrangements that are such that they prompt, channel, structure and sustain relational affect. Over time, these *affective arrangements*, thanks to their reliability and iterability, exert formative pressures on individ-uals to habituate in line with the dynamic patterns prevalent in the domain. This idea, that concrete domain-specific material arrangements operate as intrinsic modulators of affectivity, conduct and bodily habits, has obvious af-finities to Foucault's understanding of the 'diagram' of power relations imple-mented in the prison or the clinic, exemplified by the figure of the panopticon (Foucault 1995). What needs to be added to the abstract notion of diagram—as a reproducible configuration of force relations—is concrete mechanisms for its situated realization. Here I opt for adapting Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of *machinic arrangement* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004) to the study of affect with the concept of 'affective arrangement.'[21]

Neither the metaphysical backgrounds, these authors draw on, nor very many of the details of how machinic arrangements are supposed to be im-plemented in practice matter much for present purposes. What matters is the general idea: social domains of practice make use of sophisticated dynamic arrangements that act as local conducers and channeling devices for affective interactions. This can be things as banal as the background music humming in a shopping mall and the specific—often elaborately tested—arrangement of shops, products, advertising billboards and other design features in those temples of consumption (see, e.g., Thrift 2010). Likewise, what I mean by 'af-fective arrangement' could be the organization of a corporate workplace into a space of dynamic affordances—the specific ways that cubicles are set up, how

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does not prematurely subordinate affect under practice or vice versa (for a start in this direction, see Reckwitz 2012; Scheer 2012; Wetherell 2012, esp. ch. 4, proposes 'affective practices' as a central orienting concept).

21   I speak of 'machinic arrangement' and not of 'machinic assemblage', which is the standard English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's term *agencement*, in order to keep some dis-tance from this very specific conceptual universe (see Buchanan 2015 for clarification). It is only the general idea that counts here: domains of practice need material-discursive apparatuses in order to effectuate their functionality, in part by regularly exciting and modulating the *feeling bodies* that are in sustained contact with these domains (see Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner 2017 for elaboration).

desks are outfitted in order to allow optimal workflow, how the architecture of the place makes certain casual interactions or forms of team work more likely while it effectively rules out others. More immaterial dimensions also play a role, such as a corporate culture or a code of conduct and also more informal aspects of the specific interactional practices, styles and demeanors that employers in the firm will have to adapt to (see Slaby 2016). Similar static and fluid arrangements are found in schools, in the military, and in the family home. Social media sites such as Facebook are another case in point, as a part of the success of these sites is the crystalline implementation of templates for interaction. It is evident that the layout of the sites works so as to grab and keep affective attention and to facilitate a range of affective interactions that users will experience as rewarding. Add the more aesthetic, stylistic and attention-channeling dimensions of website design and you end up with the multi-layered affective arrangements of the social web.[22]

Individual Perspectives and Repertoires of Emotion

It still makes sense, for certain purposes, to take an individual's evaluative perspective as a reference point in analyzing relational affect. In that case, we talk about a temporal career of relatedness that has crystallized into an individual *repertoire of emotions*, into states and attitudes and cares and concerns that jointly make up a more or less coherent evaluative perspective on the world. This is what Bennett Helm chiefly focuses on, and it is the obvious theme of much work in the philosophy of mind, in philosophical theories of personhood, in moral psychology and in ethics. One might characterize Helm's—distantly Kantian—approach as an effort to elucidate the emotional *auto-constitution* of personal agents. The transposition of his framework into social domains and relational constellations focuses instead on affective *hetero-constitution* of subjects: on how organized, domain-specific affective dynamics contribute to the coming about of specific types of subjects, and about how subjects are often implicated—swayed into, possessed by—the relational unfolding of affect in particular social domains. When I speak of the 'coming about of subjects,' this is meant in the Foucaultian sense of subjectification: material-discursive arrangements create cultural niches which set up possible ways of being a

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22   Colombetti and Krueger have moved the debate within the philosophy of emotion a good deal closer to these issues by discussing emotion in terms of theories of social niche construction (see Colombetti and Krueger 2015; Krueger 2014).

person, including ways of being socially recognized as one, that might then be occupied by flesh-and-blood individuals (cf. Butler 1997; Mühlhoff 2018; Slaby 2016).

The account proposed here does not deny or dismiss the standard individualistic perspective, but assigns it a derivative status. The focus on individual evaluative perspectives, on the possibility of personal autonomy and potentials for self-creation (see, e.g., Helm 2001: ch. 6), and on individually sedimented repertoires of emotion, is valuable as an analytical route into the complexities of real-life affect, agency, and practices of valuing. But it is neither a story of origins, nor a story of explanatory priority, nor in any way a privileged route to grasping how real-life affect unfolds both synchronically and diachronically.

Acknowledging this gives us room to analytically prioritize social domains and their complex machinic arrangements and the 'mattering maps' they lay down as the central organizing vector for situated relational affect. So, for example, a company, a sports club, a scientific discipline, the military, various social organizations, or even simply a family, or a circle of friends, can be taken to be the organizing plane upon which affect unfolds—as a densely situated, complexly orchestrated relational dynamic between individuals and between individuals and their surroundings. On that basis, then, individual affectivity, valuing, reflective self-consciousness, agency and habits can be approached as both diachronically shaped and synchronically prompted and channeled by these arrangements and their dynamic archives. It is then a further important question to what extent and at what points in the process individuals might come to exert something like autonomous choice on matters of personal value and thus, potentially, in matters of their self-constitution as persons.[23]

Against this background, it makes sense to introduce the concept of 'emotion repertoire' in order to refer to the relatively stable, habituated formations of affect that can be attributed to individuals.[24] An emotion repertoire is in the first instance an individual's career of affectively resonating, insofar as it has sedimented into routine ways of affective interaction that are now partly

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23   This touches on several recent debates in philosophy. Judith Butler's Foucault- and Freud-inspired *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) is an exemplary contribution in this area, as is the responding discussion in Allen 2008.

24   This term has not been widely used in the literature on emotion, let alone as a worked-out theoretical concept. Historian William Reddy employs the concept of 'emotional regime' that has some resonances with the concept of a repertoire (e.g., Reddy 2001: 124–26); Wetherell makes several references to repertoires (e.g., 2012: 135, 138), as do Scheer (2012) and Griffiths and Scarantino (2009). Gammerl's (2012) invocation of 'emotional styles' likewise fits the bill of repertoire thinking.

at the person's willful disposal, partly entrenched in the form of bodily dispositions. Derivatively, one might then add the discursively stabilized emotion types prevalent in a given emotional culture, in order to acknowledge the discursive and interactional legibility of an individual's range of affective reactions. I suggest to employ the concept of repertoire in a wide sense so that it is also applicable to domains, groups, organizations, even subcultures, perhaps even entire nations or historical epochs. This is because repertoires can be shared, transmitted, collectively worked-on, variously prized or policed, and one will encounter stunning forms of discordance up to hostile reactions once individuals or groups find themselves transposed into environments in which different emotional repertoires are prevalent. Details aside, the concept of a repertoire of emotion has purchase as a key supplement to the notion of relational affect, referencing the other side of the polar dynamic between the fluid, processual enactments of situated affectivity and its habituation in both, individual actors and the practical domains they are constitutively enmeshed in.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have taken hints from cultural theory's 'turn to affect' in order to make a case for why scholars and researches from various fields, importantly including philosophers of emotion with their to-date rather narrow focus on individual affective comportment, should pay attention to the complex ways in which the material-discursive arrangements of practical domains evoke, pre-structure and modulate episodes of relational affect and, via that route, impact on individual habitualities, repertoires of emotions and engrained modes of feeling. There is a deep framing and modulating at work in many everyday scenes of relational affect—and might be easily missed when the individual and its presumably 'inner,' reflectively accessible affective states are taken as the prime reference point in work on emotion and affect. Obviously, what I did in this chapter is not much more than a first take, an initial sketch of some conceptual resources and example scenarios roughly organized into the contours of a theoretical outlook.

As the case of affect in the contemporary workplace indicates, the relational affect perspective might help to bring the *political significance* of emotion and affect in contemporary societies onto the agenda of the philosophy of emotion. When it is true that emotions are profoundly shaped by and implicated in the social arrangements, practices and styles of interaction that make up the day to day commerce of human communities, then powerful conceptual tools are needed to make these entanglements visible. Only then can the study

of political processes be expanded to cover the micro-dynamics of everyday affect, moving in the direction of what I propose to call a 'political philosophy of mind' (see Protevi 2009; Slaby 2016). As I hope to have demonstrated, an alliance between the philosophy of emotion and cultural affect theory might be a promising way forward in this endeavor.

Acknowledgments

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