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Linda M. G. Zerilli

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The Turn to Affect and the Problem of Judgment

Linda M. G. Zerilli

AN IMPORTANT STRAND OF CONTEMPORARY feminist theory is engaged in what has been called an “affective turn.”¹ Among other sites of inquiry, affect theorists unsettle strict cognitivist conceptions of the liberal subject and rationalist ideals of politics. In an effort to account for the tenacity of gender oppression in an era of formal legal and political equality, they explore the nonrational bases of political attachments that impede progressive social transformation.

As a feminist critic of strict cognitivist models of politics, I appreciate aspects of the recent extension of the affective turn into my own field of political theory.² I recognize as important the challenge to conceptions of liberal democratic and feminist politics that rely on exaggerated ideas of human autonomy and reason, and that remain in the grip of what ordinary language philosopher Stanley Cavell has called the “epistemological quest.” Like ordinary language philosophy, affect theory rightly questions the inherited Western philosophical idea that the fundamental relation of human beings to the world and to others is one of knowing—or at least what we think of as knowing. Exposing the complex ways in which citizens as embodied beings practically navigate their built environments, both schools of thought complicate this inherited view of human thought and action and open a space for imagining practices of democratic citizenship in terms quite different from those laid down by the rationalist (neo-Kantian) approaches that continue to dominate contemporary political thinking.

In this essay I focus on one such practice, the practice of judgment, and explore how the approaches to judgment advanced in theories of affect both resonate with and, in certain ontological iterations, depart from the conception of judging elaborated in ordinary language philosophy.³ My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive review of the now extensive literature in affect theory, nor is it to engage closely with any particular thinker. Rather, it is to draw out the intimations of the more recent ontological turn to affect for critiques of the epistemological ideal described by Cavell or what, following ordinary language philosopher Gilbert Ryle, I shall call the “intellectualist doctrine.”⁴ Bequeathed

by Descartes, it is a doctrine that tends to treat all aspects of human thought and action in terms of cognition. Accordingly, our orientation to the world is wholly conceptual, with “conceptual” understood here in the specific sense of the mental grasping of true propositions: practical knowledge (knowing how) is reducible to conscious theoretical knowledge (knowing that). On this view, you must *consciously* know that something is the case before you can know how to do it. I am interested in how a certain way of formulating and responding to the problem of intellectualism animates approaches that go under the sign of affect theory. Far from the radical departure from modern philosophical accounts of human action and judgment that its advocates often claim it to be, affect theory can be read as another chapter in a familiar debate about the relationship between conceptual and nonconceptual modes of orientation to the world. More precisely, affect theory extends a critique of conceptual rationality as inherently situation-independent and disembodied that has roots in the phenomenological tradition.

Rather than equate conceptual rationality with what phenomenologist Hubert Dreyfus calls “the Myth of the Mental,” ordinary language philosophy offers a way to refute intellectualism without sliding into what I argue to be a philosophically debatable and politically fraught nonconceptualism.⁵ A feminist ordinary language critique of intellectualism, as I shall try to develop it, would advance an understanding of intelligent action and judgment in which affect and reason are understood to be mutually imbricated in modes of conceptuality, rather than distinct. To see them as distinct—or, as I shall put it, as occupying different ontological layers—is to remain entangled in the Cartesian conception of the subject as a disembodied intellect that affect theory and phenomenology would have us refuse. Ordinary language philosophy allows us to see that there are better and worse ways of arguing the anti-intellectualist case and, in so doing, to raise pressing questions about the stakes for democratic feminist politics in the idea of “how much of perception and judgment is prior to consciousness,” as political theorist William Connolly puts it.⁶

“Knowing That,” “Knowing How,” and the Critique of Cartesian Dualism

The critique of the intellectualist view of judging (and acting) that serves as the departure point for affect theorists of all stripes has deep roots in the phenomenological tradition. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to name just two legendary figures, are said to have

foregrounded what Dreyfus, speaking on behalf of that tradition, calls “the nonconceptual embodied coping skills we share with animals and infants.”⁷ According to Dreyfus’s architectural metaphor, “overcoming the myth of the mental” entails a challenge to the intellectualist conceit that “philosophers [can] successfully describe the conceptual upper floors of the edifice of knowledge while ignoring the embodied coping going on on the ground floor; in effect declaring that human experience is upper stories all the way down.”⁸ Contemporary neo-Kantians such as John McDowell, argues Dreyfus, “claim that perception is conceptual ‘all the way out,’” and in this way remain trapped in the intellectualist inheritance. Any serious response to this inheritance would affirm conceptuality to be an “upper story” that is supported by a “ground floor” of nonconceptual but intelligent bodily experience.

Dreyfus’s claim that the mind is simply absent at the basic level of embodied experience, i.e., that in unreflective, practical activity, mental functions yield to a more fundamental, bodily, and nonconceptual mode of orientation to the world, seems to resonate with the work of Ryle, who famously attacked “the intellectualist legend” in his 1949 tour de force, *The Concept of Mind*. According to intellectualism, human capacities count as enabling of intelligent behavior only if they are “somehow piloted by the intellectual grasp of true propositions” (CM 26). The intellectualist assimilation of “knowing how” to “knowing that,” argued Ryle, is caught in a vicious regress, whereby “acting intelligently requires a prior action of considering a proposition, and considering a proposition intelligently requires a prior action of considering a proposition intelligently,” and so on in an infinite number of prior actions, as Jason Stanley summarizes Ryle’s account.⁹ Sarcastically noting that “intelligent practice is not a step-child of theory” (CM 26), Ryle went on to distinguish knowing how from knowing that. Intelligent action of some kind (e.g., knowing how to swim, how to cook, how to play chess) does not require that we engage in a prior mental act of consulting a proposition in Ryle’s view (and in the view of the now extensive literature in epistemology, philosophy of mind, critical theory, and political theory that has taken up some version of the knowing that versus knowing how distinction).

Ryle’s distinction between knowing how and knowing that represents an enduring contribution to debates on rule-following and the ongoing critique of Cartesian dualism, which finds two of its most important contemporary expressions (in science) in neurobiology and (in the humanities) in affect theory. Broadly speaking, these critiques of the intellectualist model extend—even as they radically transform—Ryle’s insight. As affect theory critic Clive Barnett argues, they are based on “a widely shared intuition that propositional ‘knowing-that’ is a function of

embodied 'knowing-how.' Once it is acknowledged that 'knowing-how' involves all sorts of learned, embodied dispositions that are inscribed in various types of 'unconscious' disposition of anticipation and response, then theoretical traditions that are too partial to a picture of a social world governed by rules, principles and practices of reason seem constricted or even wrong-headed."¹⁰

On the face of it, then, the recent turn to affect takes place on the larger historical terrain carved out by an otherwise diverse group of postfoundational thinkers, including existential phenomenologists and ordinary language philosophers, all of whom conceive of propositional knowledge (knowing that) as connected to a indefinitely heterogeneous complex of dispositions and abilities (knowing how).¹¹ This shared background, however, obscures what I shall argue to be crucial differences regarding the very idea of nonconceptuality or embodied coping as the proper response to intellectualism.

The idea of know how as embodied coping has had great appeal for feminists like myself, who are interested in how social norms are taken up and reproduced through the repetition of unconscious ordinary modes of skilled embodied comportment.¹² The knowing that/knowing how distinction offers a valuable vocabulary for challenging rationalist approaches to power and social identities by making visible the everyday practices through which heteronormative ideals of gender are reproduced and challenged in embodied experience. Attention to know how or the attainment and exercise of skilled bodily comportment can facilitate critiques of the atmosphere of naturalness in which normative gender identities are housed.

As important as the idea of embodied know how has been for interrogating rationalist models, I now think feminists should question it. Claims about "the nonconceptuality of social norms" that characterize phenomenological accounts of intelligent behavior have given way to an unbounded celebration of nonconceptualism in affect theory, with reason playing an increasingly minimal and in any case ineffective role in critical judgment.¹³ Could it be that what was once a useful corrective to intellectualist accounts of human practice has become a picture that holds us captive, to speak with Ludwig Wittgenstein, the way things *must* be?

To open a space in which feminists might better assess the consequences of embracing nonconceptualism as if it were the only alternative to intellectualism, we might question the assimilation of ordinary language philosopher Ryle's knowing that/knowing how distinction to Dreyfus's phenomenological difference between mentalism and embodied coping. We could read Ryle as arguing that cases of knowing how do not fit the strictly intellectualist picture of propositional knowledge,

not because knowing how is nonconceptual, but because the strictly intellectualist conception is a wrongheaded account of conceptuality or propositional knowledge that mistakes a very narrow range of cases of knowledge with the general case.¹⁴

The Concept of Mind does not so much refute the idea that conceptual or cognitive capacities are at work in knowing how as it rejects the intellectualist conception of what the use of those capacities entails. On this more unfamiliar reading, Ryle's main target is not propositional knowledge or conceptualism as such but, as Robert Stalnaker writes, "an intellectualist picture of propositional knowledge—one that tends to identify propositional knowledge with conscious awareness of a linguistic expression of a proposition that corresponds to the fact that one knows."¹⁵ It is just this intellectualist picture of conceptualism that holds us captive—captive to the nonconceptualist alternative that is really the flip side of the intellectualist idea that the concepts involved in propositional knowledge must be consciously grasped by the mind before any action can be taken. Keeping open the possibility that our conceptual or cognitive capacities normally do not require conscious awareness, we will be able both to appreciate the different ways in which affect theory and ordinary language philosophy criticize the intellectualist view and to question the stark distinction between affect and reason that characterizes affect theory in some of its ontological iterations and feminist appropriations.¹⁶

Within the ordinary language strand of theory represented by Ryle and (albeit differently, as we shall see) by Wittgenstein, we do not have concepts as mental entities. We learn what things are through action. To know that *this* is a chair is to know how to do things with chairs: how to sit on them, arrange them in a circle, offer them to guests, decorate one's space with them, etc. By foregrounding the background of "affective dispositions and desires" against which such practical reasoning takes place, affect theory (as one among many postfoundational theories) "could be expected to reconfigure what, with Ryle, we might call 'the logical geography of action [and judgment],'" writes Barnett (PA 188).¹⁷ And in certain iterations of affect theory, this reconfiguration not only obtains but is deepened to take a far more nuanced account of affective dispositions than most postfoundational thinkers have done, and certainly more than Ryle ever did.

The groundbreaking writing of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for example, complicates the debate over queer publics and the need to develop reparative practices of reading in relation to affects such as shame.¹⁸ Lauren Berlant develops a historical and literary account of the formation of affective publics that brilliantly tracks how attachments to certain

objects can facilitate but also cripple emancipatory projects—what she has most recently called “cruel optimism.”¹⁹ And Sara Ahmed powerfully explores how feelings of happiness and unhappiness, “good feelings” and “bad feelings,” can carve out an affective landscape that allows “historical forms of injustice to disappear.”²⁰ These and related affect theorists such as Heather Love and Ann Cvetkovich can productively be read in tandem with the extensive literature in feminist and democratic political theory that explores the nonrational emotions and sentiments that influence the formation of democratic publics, political judgment, and practices of legitimation.²¹ Notwithstanding important differences, affect as a field of study shares with this literature a concern to expose the lingering Cartesian assumptions that shape modern theory, keeping it tethered to an unwarranted dualism of body and mind, affect and reason. The shared critique of rationalist models does not create a new hierarchy (affect over reason) but rather insists on the irreducible entanglement of thinking and feeling, knowing that and knowing how, propositional and nonpropositional knowledge.

Put somewhat differently, the aforementioned authors “all focus on the affective aspects of life *without* adopting a vocabulary of ontological layers,” to speak with Barnett (PA 189). It is just this vocabulary that distinguishes the rather different form of affect theory that shall concern me in the next part of this essay.

Layer-Cake Ontologies of Affect and Reason

The productive overlap described above between affect theory and democratic political theory on the central role played by nonrational sentiments and feelings in political life indicates a shared understanding of the affective character of reason and cognition that is seen by some affect theorists as interesting but not innovative. When understood as an attempt to theorize embodied subjectivity, certain iterations of the affective turn, argues Patricia Clough, “extended [rather than transformed] discussions about culture, subjectivity, identity, and bodies begun in critical theory and cultural criticism under the influence of poststructuralism and deconstruction” (*AT* 206).²² Indeed, “in the early to mid-1990s,” she continues, “many of the theorists who turned to affect often focused on the circuit from affect to emotion, ending up with subjectively felt states of emotion—a return to the subject as the subject of emotion” (*AT* 206–7). Rather than make a clean break with these already established attempts to foreground “the subject’s discontinuity with itself,” affect theory may have deepened but in any case continued them (*AT* 206).

The real challenge to Cartesian intellectualism, or so it would seem, was not the work of thinkers who turned to affect qua emotion but those who understood “affect as pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body’s capacity to act and who critically engage those technologies that are making it possible to grasp and to manipulate the imperceptible dynamism of affect” (AT 207). Inspired primarily by the work of Gilles Deleuze (and his reading of Spinoza), “the most provocative and enduring contribution of the affective turn,” argues Clough, is to be found in the work of those writers who focus on affect but do not follow “the circuit from affect to subjectively felt emotional states” (AT 207). Whatever their differences, the “autonomy of affect,” a phrase coined by Brian Massumi and associated in different ways with the nonrepresentationalist theory of Nigel Thrift, with the political affect theory of John Protevi and the neuropolitics of Connolly, and with the new materialist sexual difference theory of Elizabeth Grosz, the neurological body of Elizabeth A. Wilson, and the biomedicated body theory of Clough herself, among other thinkers, does not simply deepen but radically refigures the critique of intellectualism as described thus far.²³ Its distinguishing mark is its ontology.

Broadly speaking, the ontological innovation that breaks the circuit tying affect theory to poststructuralism and other theoretical predecessors is what Barnett (citing Robert Brandom) calls a “layer-cake interpretation of the relationship between practice and expression.”

Layer-cake interpretations present propositional intentionality as resting upon a more basic level of pre-conceptual, practical intentionality in such a way as to present propositional intentionality as derivative of this layer of practical attunement. On this view, the practical presupposition of the available, ready-at-hand qualities of environments in embodied actions that treat these environments as merely occurrent, or present-at-hand, is interpreted as implying an order of *conceptual priority* of the practical. This model of conceptual priority puts in place a view of practical attunement that is autonomous of propositional intentionality. It is treated as a layer [as Brandom writes] that “could be in place before, or otherwise in the absence of the particular linguistic practices that permit anything to show up or be represented as merely *there*.” (PA 188)²⁴

The reinterpretation of the postfoundationalist foregrounding of “knowing how” against the intellectualist focus on “knowing that” in terms of layer-cake ontologies of practice, then, involves a crucial departure from the thought of ordinary language philosophers and existential phenomenologists, who show not only that propositional intentionality is entangled in and unthinkable apart from practical intentionality, but also that there is no sharp line between unarticulated know how and

explicit knowledge. As I have already suggested in relation to Ryle and shall develop more closely below with Wittgenstein, what is unarticulated (i.e., prepredicative), however, is not by definition nonconceptual, not in the way that Dreyfus argued it to be for the phenomenological tradition (about which there can be some dispute). The key point I wish to develop now is that affect theory has radicalized the phenomenological idea of nonconceptual embodied coping, radicalized it in such a way that the latter no longer supports but instead undermines rational judgment and claims to knowledge.

According to this layer-cake version of affect theory, affect is not a synonym for feeling, emotion, or sentiment, expressions of which are semiotically mediated and at once public and personal (as Wittgenstein shows in his private language argument).²⁵ That was the so-called error of theorists who turned to affect only to reinstate the subject as the subject of emotion. Affects are not understood in this ordinary sense. Rather, they take place below the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning. They are, in Massumi's words, irreducibly bodily and autonomic. As Donald Nathanson puts it, affects are "completely free of inherent meaning or association to their triggering source."²⁶ Citing Nathanson, affect theory critic Ruth Leys explains, "There is a gap between the subject's affect and its cognition or appraisal of the affective situation or object, such that cognition or thinking comes 'too late' for reasons, intentions, beliefs, and meanings to play the role in action and behavior usually accorded to them. The result is that action and behavior are held to be determined by affective dispositions that are independent of consciousness and the mind's control" (TA 443). Affect is seen, then, as a distinct layer of experience that is both prior to and beneath language and intentional consciousness, an irreducibly bodily and autonomic force that shapes, without the subject's awareness, conscious judgment. As Connolly puts it, "Affect is a wild card in the layered game of thinking [acting and judging]."²⁷

Affect matters politically in the view of Thrift, Connolly, and Protevi because it forms a new means through which "masses of people become primed to act."²⁸ All three thinkers agree that the determining force of affect on cognition and judgment takes place in "the half-second delay between action and cognition."²⁹ The manipulation of affect, then, becomes the central mechanism for securing the status quo. If a striking feature of any false ideology is its resistance to rational revision, to speak with Stanley, one can see why this account of affect as a form of unconscious priming would have significant explanatory power, not least for feminists, who have struggled to make sense of the tenacity of gender oppression in the face of increasing critiques of prevailing gender norms.³⁰

The problem is not that oppressed groups consider feeling or its availability for manipulation when accounting for such tenacity—that is something that feminists in particular have been doing in their various ways for decades, and rightly so. Instead, the problem is that the theory of affects as radically outside meaning and signification and free of their triggering source leaves us with no way to link an affect to the judgment the affect presumably primes.³¹ So-called “tactical work on dispositions installed below consciousness” and the “application of techniques” to populations with the aim of promoting new forms of responsiveness, which is put forward as a strategy of resistance, must pale in the face of the kind of manipulation that is described.³² Indeed, it is difficult to see how there could be any political resistance at all. The “wild card” of affect has lost any connection to our power of judgment: affect and cognition are posited as being two different systems, entirely distinct. This is the shared anti-intentionalism that Leys has identified as being at the nexus of neuroscience and affect theory, exemplified in the work of Connolly. Insofar as intentionality entails the relationship of thought to the world or the power of the mind to represent and be about something in the world (properties, states of affairs, etc.), the radical separation of cognition and affect, argues Leys, leaves us with no way to connect affective experience to anything in the world that could possibly be symbolized or shared by others. Affect would be on this view no better than a private language in Wittgenstein’s critical understanding of that term, on the order of the classical philosophical conception of pain.

When we think about propositional intentionality as derivative of practical attunement, as the layer-cake model of affect theory invites us to do, we are drawn into a way of thinking about action and judgment as the mere effects of already primed dispositions, for which the giving of reasons is little more than window-dressing on what was going to happen in any case. The layer-cake model fully elides the aspect of embodied knowing that involves the capacity to take part in the language game of giving and asking for reasons. Affect theorists such as Connolly, argues Barnett, are “cryptonormativists,” that is, individuals who have political views—such as the value of democracy—that they cannot defend in any meaningful way, for reasons, on their account, always trail after affect-driven preferences (PA 195). Leys, too, is critical of the politics of affect theory, although she sees the problem as one of an inability to take a normative position at all (TA 452). Preferring democracy to despotism or feminism to patriarchy is like preferring coffee to tea; there is no rational basis from which we could possibly agree or disagree. An affect-driven preference, then, is really no better than an avowal, a merely subjective matter of taste—only now the subject of taste itself has been dissolved into the inhuman anonymity of affective forces.

Problems With the Critique of Anti-Intentionalism

I agree with Leys that the anti-intentionalism of affect theory wrongly reduces cognitivism to “the human capacity for producing linguistic propositions” (TA 470). But if we want to understand the break with the earlier theorizations of affect in which the relation to conceptuality still played some role, we need a clearer account of this misconception—what Ryle called intellectualism—than what is offered by either Leys or Barnett.

Leys—and the same could be said for Barnett—seems to think that the corrective response to affect theory would reaffirm a proper understanding of intentionality. Replying to Connolly’s response to her essay, Leys writes, “From my perspective, intentionality involves concept-possession; the term *intentionality* carries with it the idea that thoughts and feelings are directed to conceptually and cognitively appraised and meaningful objects in the world. The general aim of my paper is to propose that affective neuroscientists and the new affect theorists are thus making a mistake when they suggest that emotion or affect can be defined in nonconceptual or nonintentional terms.”³³ Commenting on Leys’s reply, Charles Altieri remarks that “one does not have to share William Connolly’s vitalist affiliations” to question her account of intentionalism, which refuses to countenance the possibility that “there are diverse and valuable forms of nonconceptual emotions and that these are present in moods and in esthetic experiences.”³⁴

Why does Altieri (or any of the related theorists we have been discussing) think he *has* to insist on experiences outside the sphere of the conceptual? Responding to the anti-intentionalism of affect theory by insisting on the irreducibility and ubiquity of intentionality qua concept-possession, Leys never seriously entertains this question and more or less ignores the worries that pull affect theorists, like phenomenologists, in the direction of nonconceptualism.³⁵

Leys’s critics would affirm the reality of experiences that exceed our conceptual capacities. For them, it simply cannot be that “to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing,” as Wilfrid Sellars famously put the Kantian idea of intentionality as concept possession.³⁶ Our ability to discern fine shades of color, for example, when having the aesthetic experience of gazing at, say, Claude Monet’s “The Gardens at Giverny,” seems far more capacious than our ability to name what we see. Surely our perceptual experience exceeds color concepts such as “red,” “green,” “lilac,” or “burnt sienna.” The intentional encounter with an object elaborated by Sellars seems to involve the situation-independent subsumption of an intuition under a

concept in what Kant calls a determinative judgment.³⁷ The judged particular (“*this shade*”) is the mere instantiation of a general kind (“red”). Regarding this Kantian picture of intentionality as concept possession, how would we know whether our concepts are really responsive to the heterogeneous, embodied character of human experience, truly open to the world? How could we ever come to discern anything new in the world at all? These are the sorts of worries that are raised in affect theory, just as they are in phenomenology. Although ordinary language philosophy will help us answer them without taking flight into nonconceptualism, such worries must first be understood as expressions of longstanding philosophical issues about the relationship of “mind and world” that are not answered by reiterating intentionality as concept possession.

These issues (of the new, of singular reference, of embodied responsiveness) circle around the central question of what it means to-be-in-the-world and to-be-open-to-the-world. Though the anti-intentionalism Leys decries was surely radicalized in layer-cake ontologies of affect, I have suggested that its roots lie in the nonconceptualism of the embodied coping celebrated by Dreyfus as the lasting achievement of the phenomenological tradition and ascribed—wrongly in my view—to ordinary language philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Ryle. (I also think it is ascribed wrongly to existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger, but that is another story.) The key difference, of course, is that in theories of affect, nonconceptual embodied coping is no longer in the service of any rational action or judgment at all. But that danger was in some sense implicit in the architectural model of understanding proposed by Dreyfus, according to which the upper conceptual floor of human understanding rests on a ground floor of “absorbed coping” that is outside the scope of conceptual rationality.

The danger was already implicit because, as Dreyfus sees it, the upper floor is not continuous with the ground floor but is rather a radical transformation of it.³⁸ Although this phenomenological account of the relationship between conceptuality and nonconceptuality does not adopt the ontological layers of affect theory—i.e., in keeping with the metaphor, there are stairs leading up from the embodied realm of mute attunement to the rational mental space of concepts—it nonetheless claims that what takes place on those upper floors amounts to “situation-independent” or “detached” rule-following. Given this understanding of conceptuality as strictly intellectualist tout court, it follows that any attempt to foreground the role played by our embodied affective propensities would require a radical undoing of the very notion of rational conceptuality itself. Put differently, it is not just a matter of questioning whether “all intelligibility is *rational* intelligibility, or is there a form of intelligibility . . . that falls

outside the reach of reason,” to borrow Joseph Schear’s formulation of what is at issue in the McDowell-Dreyfus debate.³⁹ Any answer to that question will be based on what one thinks “rational intelligibility” or “conceptuality” necessarily entail. Only then will we be able to make sense of Leys’s claim that “intentionality involves concept possession.”

Though I too question the view of affect and embodied coping skills as nonconceptual—and here I agree both with Leys against her critics and with McDowell against Dreyfus—we need a better understanding of the temptation to embrace nonconceptuality as the *only* adequate response to intellectualism. If the fascination with neuroscience, for example, that characterizes the work of affect theorist Connolly is shared by phenomenologist Dreyfus, that may well be because both are responding to similar concerns about what conceptualist models of intelligent action and judgment must entail. For both thinkers, what is conceptualist is by definition strictly intellectualist, i.e., fully detached from embodied affective propensities. Can ordinary language philosophy respond to these concerns without yielding to the temptation of nonconceptualism as the only real response to intellectualism?

The temptation to posit a nonconceptual given as the basis—either enabling or not—of intelligent action and judgment, I have argued, stands as the shared response of affect theorists and phenomenologists to what they both take to be the situation-independent and detached quality of conceptual rationality. Within phenomenology, the nonconceptual given would include those forms of skilled bodily engagement with the world for which we have and need no words; within affect theory, the nonconceptual includes “all those processes that are separate from meaning, belief or cognition and that occur at the level of autonomic, pre-conscious bodily reactions, responses and resonances,” as Lisa Blackman puts it.⁴⁰

Now if intentionalism involves a mode of concept possession that does not necessarily entail intellectualism, what might that be? Can we speak of affective propensities in ways that are conceptualist but non-intellectualist? Taking the basic case of perception, we might turn to Wittgenstein’s reflections on the phenomenon of aspect dawning in Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*, which offers a way to describe the conceptual character of our prepredicative mode of being in the world. Wittgenstein’s remarks on aspects takes up the startling experience of seeing a (gestalt) figure suddenly as, say, a duck when one has seen it all along as a rabbit. Since the object has not changed, how can we explain our change in view?

Wittgenstein’s account takes up various explanatory models including physiological, empiricist, and subjectivist. None of these approaches

adequately explains the peculiar experience of what he calls “noticing an aspect.” Against the empiricist, for example, Wittgenstein argues that the change in perception does not originate with a genuine change in the object. He also counters the view that ordinary acts of perception (expressed in the statement “I see a picture rabbit”) entail interpretation (“I am seeing the picture rabbit as a picture rabbit”), that is, the application of concepts to a bare given. As Stephen Mulhall explains, what appeared at first to be an investigation into an extraordinary experience of aspect dawning (suddenly seeing the rabbit as a duck) turns out to be a critical examination into the ordinary practice of seeing, one that brings out the irreducibly conceptual character of all embodied experience.⁴¹

Wittgenstein shows how we simply take for granted the status of certain objects, that is, we continually see them under an aspect (e.g., a rabbit or a duck) in an entirely unmediated way. We do not normally interpret what we see (“I see it as a duck but it could also be a rabbit”) but immediately grasp the object before us. Situations may arise in which we interpret (e.g., when the lighting is bad, when playing a game with gestalt figures, etc.), but in the normal course of events, we simply see the duck or the rabbit. The idea that we must interpret what we see, that there is something that mediates an indirect relationship of mind to world (inner images or representations, for example) is part of an idea of intentionality that Wittgenstein shows to be illusory. “One doesn’t ‘take’ what one recognizes as the cutlery at a meal *for* cutlery; any more than one ordinarily tries to move one’s mouth as one eats, or aims at moving it,” writes Wittgenstein.⁴²

The immediate grasping of objects can appear to be nonconceptual; after all, we are hardly seeing things neutrally and then bringing them under concepts in what Kant called a determinative judgment. The very idea of judgment here can seem out of place. There is a skilled embodied comportment at work when one uses cutlery, not a detached practice of rule-following. Just this thought leads thinkers such as Dreyfus, Charles Taylor, and others to assimilate Wittgenstein to the phenomenological tradition of embodied coping. And though it is right to say that the use of cutlery does not involve a subsumptive practice of rule-following, it does not necessarily follow that the skilled ability to eat with a fork and a knife is nonconceptual.

The conceptuality of embodied coping is what Wittgenstein reveals through the initially nonordinary example of the gestalt figure. The dawning of an aspect (e.g., “Now it’s a rabbit!”), Wittgenstein shows, is based not on a change in the object but in the use of another concept. On the nonconceptual reading, this nonordinary example is when concepts come first into play. But this reading misses what Mulhall shows

to be the crucial insight afforded by way of the nonordinary example. That I *now* see the picture as a rabbit reveals that I *had* been seeing it as a duck all along, that is, according to a concept. Ordinary embodied coping involves seeing and dealing with things continually under aspects, that is to say, conceptually. That the use of concepts that belongs to the prepredicative act of seeing is not intellectualist (in the way criticized by Ryle and associated with all conceptual thought by Dreyfus) becomes clear in the distinction Wittgenstein draws between interpreting and seeing. As Mulhall explains, "It is one of the fundamental aims of Wittgenstein's treatment of aspect perception to show that aspect-dawning and continuous aspect perception are a matter of seeing *rather than* interpretation. For Wittgenstein, the notion of interpretation carries connotations of making inferences, forming hypotheses, or drawing conclusions—as if when someone sees a friendly glance in another's eye, what really happens is the direct perception of shapes, colours, and movement that are then interpreted to mean that the glance is a friendly one."⁴³ We see the friendliness of the gaze as immediately as we see the color of the eye. Interpretation happens when our dealings with the world turn intellectualist, not conceptualist.⁴⁴ Interpretation is the making explicit of the as-structure that already accompanies our otherwise ordinary skillful and conceptual embodied coping. Interpretation is, as it were, the intellectualist case of being-in-the-world that gets mistaken for the ordinary case.

That our ordinary embodied coping is conceptual does not mean that we have words ready at hand to describe the practice in which we are engaged. The capacity to predicate our experience of continuous aspect seeing is just that, a capacity, not a condition of the seeing itself. To say that our experience already possesses the "as-structure" is just to say that it is conceptual, not that it must be immediately available in propositional form, as cognitivism would have it. The idea that our everyday affective experiences must be strictly propositional to be conceptual is tied to a way of thinking about rules and rule-following that Wittgenstein questions: "There is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases."⁴⁵

Intellectualism and Rule-Following

The pervasive sense that affective embodied coping is nonconceptual is linked to the idea that to be conceptual, the rules for the correct application of concepts would have to be fixed independently of the affec-

tive responses and reactions of judging subjects. This is at the very core of the intellectualist picture of rules that Ryle mocked as the untenable idea that prior deliberation or interpretation is necessary for embodied rational action, which leads on his view to an infinite regress of rules.

Competence with a concept in any intelligible judgment entails the practice of going on to do the same thing. The classic temptation here is to think about this practice as fixed by rules that are like ideal tracks or rails along which any correct rule-governed activity must run. Taking the hard case of mathematical necessity (the “logical *must*”), Wittgenstein first exposes and then undermines the mistaken source of our confidence in thinking that anyone who understood the rule (e.g., “Add two”) would be compelled to go on in the right way. On the view in question, once the rule is properly grasped (i.e., the judging subject’s psychological mechanism engages the rails of the rule), it is a mere mechanical matter of churning out the correct answers for the extension of a series. Whether conceptualized with the rationalist (as transcendent forms) or with the empiricist (as contingent learned behavior), the view here is that if a pupil has understood the instruction “Add two”—that is, if he starts the series with 100 and continues with 102, 104, 106, and that is what “to understand means”—he is not free to continue as he likes, say with 110. To claim that 110 is the correct next step is illogical, for he has already shown that he understands the rule (i.e., that his mental wheels have been engaged). Thus on pain of logical contradiction, he *must* write 108. In response to the construal of the errant pupil as mistaken, perverse, or insane, Wittgenstein writes, “If my reply is: ‘O yes of course, *that* is how I was applying it!’ or: ‘Oh! *That’s* how I ought to have applied it—!’; then I am playing your game. But if I simply reply: ‘Different?—But this surely *isn’t* different!’—what will you do? That is: somebody may reply like a rational person and yet not be playing our game.”⁴⁶

In this passage, comments Barry Stroud, Wittgenstein “tries to show that not all cases of deviating from what we expect or from what we all do in continuing a series can be put down to simple misunderstanding, stupidity, or deliberate perversity on the part of the pupil.”⁴⁷ The point is not to question the awry calculator’s mental state, let alone to set in motion a familiar philosophical skepticism about “other minds” (i.e., the possibility that the rule-following behavior of others might come adrift). It is to show that the confidence we have in the outcome of the rule “Add two” is not based on the existence of a psychological mechanism that grasps an independently existing rule—but that does not mean we are wrong to be confident, only that the source of our confidence is misplaced.

The problem, then, is how to get the proper ground of our justified confidence in view, and this requires interrogating the traditional intellectualist conception of what could possibly count as the ground of going on to do the same thing. Cavell urges us to understand the basis and nature of our confidence thus:

We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls “forms of life.” Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying.⁴⁸

“The terror of which Cavell writes at the end of this marvelous passage is a sort of vertigo,” comments McDowell, “induced by the thought that there is nothing that keeps our practices in line except the reactions and responses we learn in learning them.”⁴⁹ Cavell seems to offer little more than a lucky convergence of subjectivities, held together by a grab bag of affective sensibilities that can hardly make a claim to the kind of objectivity required to speak of following a rule as a normative practice. How would we know that we are *really* going on in the same way? How can we know that what we are doing has any correct relationship to reality at all?

It is just these sorts of questions that the intellectualist conception of rules and rule-following would avoid by holding prior deliberation—or something like it—to be necessary for rational action and judgment. But it is also just these sorts of questions that the nonconceptualist understanding of embodied coping would avoid by denying that affective sensibilities could play any normative (conceptual) role in judgments at all. Where there is judgment, there is no affect—or, to put the same point differently, where there is affect, there is no judgment. Intellectualism holds that “judgment is everywhere pure sensation is not, which is to say everywhere,” writes Merleau-Ponty.⁵⁰ But this, too, is illusory. Both the intellectualist and the nonconceptualist positions are hostage to the same idealized view of rules and rule-following: what *must* be the case for judgment to get off the ground.

It is tempting to recoil from vertigo into the picture of rules as rails and to imagine that the rules are like tracks that are objectively there to be followed, regardless of whether Cavell's happy convergence of affective responses and subjectivities ever takes place.⁵¹ Left to the "whirl of organism," we could just make up mathematics as we go along—what could stop us? But that thought assumes that there must be *something* forcing us to go on in the right way, lest our practices, mere human conventions, come adrift. It expresses our being captive to the picture that rules really must be independent rails, or they are nothing at all.

What Wittgenstein teaches is not to deny the "logical *must*," mathematical necessity, as a mere phantasm of a sensation of compulsion. It is not to deny that 1002 really does follow 1000 according to the rule "Add two." Rather, it is not to misunderstand the source of necessity or the perspective from which it is discernible. We are engaged in a practice, and it is from within the midst of this embodied affective practice, this "whirl of organism," that we rightly expect 1002 to come after 1000 and that we can so much as recognize the correct move as such. Our reliance on forms of instruction that appeal to our contingent, affective responses seems like a departure from conceptual rationality only if we assume that we could occupy an abstract vantage point from which all such responses could be seen as intrinsically distorting.⁵² The intellectualist denies that feeling can be normative at all. Wittgenstein and Cavell give us a very different view.

"Knowing by Feeling"

The idea that affects and emotions should be theorized in non-intentional terms, we have seen, is shared by certain iterations of affect theory and phenomenology. Although I have agreed with Leys that one does not need to treat all thought as conscious to retain the idea of intentionality, I am also concerned with complicating the intellectualist understanding of conceptual rationality that mistakes one very narrow case for the general case. As Wittgenstein showed us above, this mistake is expressed by viewing rules as rails and rule-following as a practice of interpretation.

Returning to the problem of judgment, we recall that anti-intentionalism threatened to reduce all judgments to subjective preferences. And yet affect theorists such as Connolly who defend the nonconceptual character of experience clearly see themselves as advancing critical accounts of the ways in which the nonconceptual character of affect is manipulated to uphold the status quo. Rather than accuse them of

being “cryptonomatists,” we might try to understand how the attempt to foreground the affective dimension of judgment need not require denying the place of concepts in embodied experience. The question left unanswered by affect theorists is how a judgment based on feeling could possibly be normative.

The relationship between affect and normativity animates Kant’s account of aesthetic judgments in the third *Critique*. Aesthetic objects, as Cavell puts it, “are *known by feeling*, or *in feeling*.”⁵³ Working through the ordinary language idea of “what we say,” Cavell is struck by the similar sense of necessity that accompanies claims to taste, that is, judgments whose peculiar validity is based not in a property of the object but only on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the judging subject. The claim “I like canary wine,” Kant explains, expresses what is “agreeable,” a merely subjective preference. By contrast, the claim “This painting is beautiful” posits the assent of all: everyone who sees *this* painting *ought* to agree. It would be “absurd,” writes Kant, to say that it is beautiful *for me*—for then one should not use the word “beautiful.” The expectation of universal assent belongs to the grammar of an aesthetic judgment just as it does to the ordinary language philosopher’s claim to what we say.

The “subjective validity” described in the third *Critique*, argues Cavell, is not unique to taste but belongs to all evaluative judgments. “Aesthetic (and moral and political) judgments lack something: the arguments that support them are not conclusive in the way arguments in logic are, nor rational the way arguments in science are. Indeed they are not, and if they were, there would be no such subject as art (or morality [or politics]) and no such art as criticism,” he writes. Rather than give the intellectualist what he most desires, Cavell adds, “It does not follow, however, that such judgments are not conclusive and rational.”⁵⁴ Rationality is not restricted to logical reasoning and the giving of proofs, i.e., “arriving at conviction in such a way that anyone who can follow an argument must, unless he finds something definitely wrong with it, *accept the conclusion*, agree with it.”⁵⁵ Rather, rationality “is, partly, a matter of the *ways* a judgment is supported, the ways in which conviction in it is produced: it is only by virtue of these recurrent patterns of support that a remark will count as—will be—aesthetic, or a mere matter of taste, or moral, propagandistic, religious, magical, scientific, philosophical, [or political].” As Mulhall explains:

Cavell is not suggesting that logic or rationality is a matter of the existence of patterns (of support, objection, response) *rather than* of agreement (in conclusions); he is suggesting that logic or rationality might be more fruitfully thought of as a matter of agreement in *patterns* rather than agreement in *conclusions*. Whether

the particular patterns or procedures are such that those competent in following them are guaranteed to reach an agreed conclusion is part of what distinguishes one type or aspect of rationality from another; but what distinguishes rationality from irrationality in any domain is agreement in—a commitment to—patterns or procedures of speaking and acting.⁵⁶

Calling attention to agreement in “patterns of support,” rather than conclusions, as the crucial element in rational argument, Cavell shows how we misunderstand the difference between evaluative judgments, on the one hand, and empirical or logical judgments, on the other. “The ability to judge something . . . without mediation by a concept,” as Kant initially defines the reflective judging that characterizes taste, and what Cavell extends to describe evaluative judging tout court, should not be understood as nonconceptual.⁵⁷ For reflective judging is rational: “A judgment of taste is indeed based on a concept, but on an *indeterminate* one,” as Kant clarifies his earlier point.⁵⁸ Rather than being subsumed under a determinate concept, a particular intuition has the form of what Kant calls a “concept in general” or a “concept as such.” In other words, it exhibits something akin to the prepredicative as-structure that we discussed earlier in relation to Wittgenstein’s notion of seeing an aspect.

I have discussed these points of connection between Wittgenstein and Kant elsewhere; a substantive account is beyond the scope of this essay.⁵⁹ Here I would suggest only that there is ample room for creative work on the rational role played by affective propensities in conceptualist accounts of being open to the world.⁶⁰ The problem of singular reference mentioned earlier, for example, need not follow from the conceptualist view that I have been trying to defend. Among other concerns, affect theorists and phenomenologists worry about the loss of the particular in its subsumption under a concept; with this worry in mind, they defend a nonconceptualist approach to human practice and judgment. As we have seen, the sense is that there are experiences that fall outside the sphere of the conceptual, experiences that concepts either cannot accommodate or—worse—distort.

In answer to my earlier question about why phenomenologists and affect theorists think they need to locate experiences outside the sphere of the conceptual, I have argued that their worries (about novelty, singular reference, embodied responsiveness) are important but based on a misunderstanding of what conceptual rationality entails. To return to the example of color sensibility, the worry about singular reference need not lead us to object to the idea that unique perceptual episodes are conceptually articulated. That is because the general nature of concepts does not by definition exclude the possibility that concepts can be as “fine-grained” as any particular shade of color. What makes

the experience of a particular color shade “conceptual,” as McDowell explains, is not that it can be captured by a general concept like “red” or even “burnt sienna,” but that when we speak of “*that shade*” we have in mind something that is just as “fine-grained” as our perception of the color sample; we attend to that shade as having the general form of a concept.⁶¹ This ability to recognize “*that shade*” is no private language but a capacity that “can in principle persist beyond the duration of the experience itself . . . can persist into the future . . . and that, having persisted, it can also be used in thoughts about what is by then the past.”⁶² In this way we use “*that shade*” normatively to go on to do the same thing, to follow a rule in Wittgenstein’s sense.

Conclusion

In concluding, I would like to speak directly to the question of what ordinary language philosophy might offer feminists, many of whom have embraced various versions of nonconceptualism as it is presented in phenomenology and in affect theory. I suggested earlier that the idea of embodied coping and a nonconceptual know how or practical knowledge has played an important role in feminist efforts to explain the tenacity of regimes of heteronormative gender difference. There is something fundamentally unconscious about the ways in which individuals conform to and thus reproduce gender norms. And yet the assumption that what is not conscious, present in the form of propositional knowledge, must be nonconceptual remains tethered to an intellectualist view of what conceptuality entails. By contrast with affect theory, ordinary language philosophy offers feminists no new ontology but instead brings to light the misunderstandings upon which our sense of the need for this new ontology is based. Just because our affective experiences do not take propositional form, as Wittgenstein’s account of rule-following shows, this does not mean that these experiences are nonconceptual. The thought that they must be nonconceptual is captive to an intellectualist conception of what conceptuality must entail, namely, the kind of detached rule-following that Dreyfus associated with the “Myth of the Mental.” Likewise critical of Cartesian dualism, ordinary language philosophy invites us to think of affectivity as the irreducible element in “the whirl of organism” that Cavell showed us to characterize not the nonconceptual but the normative dimension of embodied thought and action.

Drawing on the resources of ordinary language philosophy, feminists need to think about the stakes for feminist and democratic politics in the idea that much of perception and judgment takes place without our

conscious awareness. It is not as if no discourse prior to affect theory ever asserted such a thing—psychoanalysis comes to mind—but the manner in which this idea of what is subthreshold is formulated has radically changed.⁶³ That is partly because the idea of affect as something working behind our backs, as it were, structuring or even determining our judgments before we so much as know that we are making them, was not conceptualized in such radically anti-intentionalist terms, that is to say, as devoid of meaning or signification. For affect theorists, affect and cognition are two entirely different systems. But does this not rely on an entirely false picture of the mind/body relation, one that turns out to be parasitic on the very dualistic account that it would undercut?

Ryle memorably characterized the Cartesian image of the human as the “dogma of the Ghost in the Machine,” a bifurcated thinking yet embodied being living “two lives” and in “two worlds” (*CM* 15–16, 12). “In consciousness, self-consciousness and introspection,” such a being remains “fully authoritative.” Although he “may have great or small uncertainties about concurrent and adjacent episodes in the physical world [‘including his own body’],” writes Ryle, he “can have none about . . . what is momentarily occupying his mind” (*CM* 12). In their ongoing efforts to criticize this ghostly figure, feminists, affect theorists, and phenomenologists might draw on the resources of ordinary language philosophy to avoid entanglement in its negative image and wrestle instead with investigating the conceptual dimensions of embodied experience.

Although I have agreed with Leys and other critics that affect theory remains entangled in Cartesian dualism and its many intellectualist temptations, I hope to have shown that a critical response must do more than reaffirm intentionality—the relation of thought to its objects—in one or another of the ways now familiar in the philosophy of mind. On a generous interpretation, affect theory is an attempt to explain the tenacity of oppressive social norms and to hold out the possibility of a novel and politically progressive response. Because it severs the link between affect and judgment, save as a relation of unconscious priming, however, affect theory leaves feminists stranded when it comes to such a response. I would agree with Claire Hemmings that feminists should remain skeptical of the “theoretical celebration of affect as uniquely situated to achieve this [politically progressive] end.”⁶⁴ The very unpredictability of affect, its lack of connection with any object, raises questions about its role in a critical feminist political practice.

We can pursue the idea advanced by affect theorists that judging cannot be understood as a disembodied practice, as the intellectualist doctrine would have it. But if reflective judging is a kind of knowing by feeling or in feeling, as Cavell parsed the Kantian account, it does not proceed

nonconceptually. Affect and cognition are not two different systems but radically entangled. To see this we need to rethink knowing how as a form of knowing that, to speak with Ryle, but also knowing that as a practice of knowing how. Can we describe the radical entanglement of affect and conceptual rationality in a way that keeps their mutual imbrication from sliding into always already affectively primed responses, on the one hand, or always already conceptually determined responses on the other? This is the real problem—the problem of critical judgment—raised at once by and for affect theory.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

NOTES

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1 For accounts of the development of affect theory, see Sara Ahmed, “Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the ‘New Materialism,’” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 23–39; Patricia T. Clough, “The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2010), 206–28 (hereafter cited as *AT*); Lisa Blackman, “Affect, Relationality, and the ‘Problem of Personality,’” *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 23–47; Myra J. Hird, “Feminist Matters: New Materialist Considerations of Sexual Difference,” *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 2 (2004): 223–32; Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801–3; Anu Koivunen, “An Affective Turn?: Reimagining the Subject of Feminist Theory,” in *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences*, ed. Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen (New York: Routledge, 2010), 8–28.

2 Recent work on affect in political theory includes William Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Univ. Press, 2002); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2010); Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2009); Leslie Paul Thiele, *The Heart of Judgment: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006); Jennifer Nedelsky, “Receptivity and Judgment,” *Ethics and Global Politics* 4, no. 4 (2011): 231–54; Alexander Livingston, “Avoiding Deliberative Democracy? Micropolitics, Manipulation, and the Public Sphere,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 45, no. 3 (2012): 269–94; and John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2009). For an excellent critique of the turn to cognitive neuroscience and affect in political theory, see John G. Gunnell, “Unpacking Emotional Baggage in Political Inquiry,” in *Essays on Neuroscience and Political Theory: Thinking the Body Politic*, ed. Frank Vander Valk (New York: Routledge 2012), 91–116 and Gunnell, “Are We Losing Our Minds?: Cognitive Science and the Study of Politics,” *Political Theory* 35, no. 6 (2007): 704–32. For a good overview of the humanities literature, see *AT*. There is debate about the extent to which the work of affect theorists such as Brian Massumi can be linked up

with affective neuroscientists such as Antonio Damasio. Whereas Massumi is heavily influenced by Deleuze, who stresses the irreducible difference between a register of affective embodied intensity from a register of symbolic mediation, Damasio relies on the 1960s research of Silvan S. Tomkins and Paul Ekman, for whom the basic emotions such as fear, anger, disgust, joy, sadness, and surprise are rapid, phylogenetically old, automatic responses of the organism that have evolved for survival purposes. I would agree with Ruth Leys, however, that there is a striking compatibility between Spinozist-Deleuzian inspired affect theorists and affective neuroscientists at the level of their shared anti-intentionalism—hence Connolly can appeal to both Massumi and Damasio. See Massumi, *Parable for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2002); Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (1994; New York: Penguin, 2005); and Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): 434–72; quotation is from 437 (hereafter cited as TA).

3 I take ordinary language philosophy with Toril Moi (in this volume, pp. 191–216) "to mean the philosophical tradition after Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin as established and extended by Stanley Cavell." For reasons explained below, I include aspects of Gilbert Ryle's work in this tradition.

4 Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002), 27 (hereafter cited as *CM*).

5 Hubert L. Dreyfus, "The Myth of the Pervasiveness of the Mental," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, ed. Joseph K. Schear (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.

6 Connolly, "The Media and Think Tank Politics," *Theory & Event* 8, no. 4 (2005): 8.

7 Dreyfus, "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental," *Topoi* 25 (2006): 43.

8 Dreyfus, "Overcoming the Myth," 43.

9 Jason Stanley, *Know How* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 13, 14. Stanley offers a brilliant critique of nonconceptualist or what he calls non-propositionalist accounts of know how.

10 Clive Barnett, "Political Affects in Public Space: Normative Blind Spots in Non-Representational Ontologies," in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, no. 2 (2008): 188 (hereafter cited as *PA*).

11 For the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that," see Ryle, "Knowing How and Knowing That: The Presidential Address," *Aristotelian Society Proceedings* 46 (1945–46): 1–16. See also chapter 2 of *CM*.

12 Linda M. G. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005). Other works in the postfoundationalist or phenomenological tradition that examine gender as a kind of embodied know how include Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Iris Marion Young, *On Female Bodily Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005); Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001); Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1994); Moi, *What is a Woman?: and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999); Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

13 "The nonconceptuality of social norms," writes Dreyfus, means "we are always already absorbed in a nonconceptual background understanding of our shared social world." We learn, for example, what the appropriate distance is to stand in relation to other people in different contexts not by consciously following rules but by means of an infinite number of micropractices in which we engage fully "unawares." The same goes for other "styles of normative comportment such as gender roles and ethnic stereotypes." Dreyfus, "The Myth of the Pervasiveness of the Mental," 23, 24.

14 See Robert Stalnaker, "Intellectualism and the Objects of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85, no. 3 (2012): 755.

15 Stalnaker, "Intellectualism," 754–61. Stalnaker offers a discussion of Ryle in the context of a review of Stanley's *Know How* (cited in note 10), arguing persuasively for more continuity in Stanley's view and Ryle's than Stanley's own defense of intellectualism would suggest. For a sympathetic reading of Ryle along the lines suggested here, see Julia Tanney, "Rethinking Ryle: A Critical Discussion of The Concept of Mind," in Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 60th Anniversary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), ix–lvii.

16 On the alternative reading of Ryle proposed here, we would not be able to distill out a purely mental concept-guided form of knowing from an embodied nonconceptual form of doing. The very idea of the mind as fully detached from the body in expressions of propositional knowledge is a Cartesian phantasm: what Ryle unforgettably coined the "dogma of the Ghost in the Machine" (CM 15–16). As I argue below, certain iterations of affect theory retain this ghostly figure of the mind as a fully disembodied intellect at the very moment that they deny its autonomy.

17 The term Barnett cites here is elaborated in CM 10.

18 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tompkins," in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tompkins Reader*, ed. Sedgwick and Frank (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1995), 1–28. Leys folds Sedgwick into the layer-cake affect theorists that Barnett describes below. But that characterization seems less useful when trying to account for the original and important work done by Sedgwick in the area of queer studies.

19 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2011).

20 Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in AT, 50.

21 Within the political theory literature, see Sharon R. Krause, *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Political Deliberation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008); Susan Bickford, "Emotion Talk and Political Judgment," *The Journal of Politics* 73, no. 4 (2011): 1025–37; Cheryl Hall, "Recognizing the Passion in Deliberation: Toward a More Deliberative Democracy," *Hypatia* 22, no. 4 (2007): 81–95; and Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347–76.

22 For a similar argument, cited by Clough, see Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'Death of the Subject'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001).

23 See Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*; Connolly, *Neuropolitics*; Nigel Thrift, "Summoning Life," in *Envisioning Human Geographies*, ed. Paul Cloke, Philip Crang, and Mark Goodwin (London: Routledge, 2004), 90; Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007); Protevi, *Political Affect*; Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004); and Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004).

24 The Robert Brandom quote is from *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 332. More broadly, layer-cake theories in philosophy posit a particular relationship between our sentient and rational cognitive faculties, according to which one could operate without the other and give us cognition of objects. According to the two most well-known variants, empiricism and rationalism, we could have cognition based, respectively, on sense experience or on our intellectual powers alone. Although affect theory aims to undercut our powers of cognition, it remains entangled in the basic presupposition that our cognitive faculties operate fully separately. As we shall see below, affect and cognitions are two different systems, utterly distinct.

25 As Eric Shouse explains, "Affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *pre-personal*. . . . An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. . . . Affect

cannot be fully realised in language . . . because affect is always prior to and/or outside consciousness. . . . The body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language.” Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *M/C Journal* 8, no. 6 (2005). On a similar point see Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 27.

26 Donald Nathanson continues, “There is nothing about sobbing that tells us anything about the steady-state stimulus that has triggered it; sobbing itself has nothing to do with hunger or cold or loneliness. Only the fact that we grow up with an increasing experience of sobbing lets us form some ideas about its meaning.” Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: Norton, 1992), 66. Quoted in TA 438.

27 Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 90.

28 Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, 26.

29 Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, 192. Connolly also focuses on the delay, arguing that neuroscientific experiments offer evidence that a “lot of thinking and interpretation” goes on during the “half-second delay” between the reception of sensory material and conscious interpretation of it.” Quoted in TA 983.

30 Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2015), 134. Feminism has a stake in questioning norms of rational political deliberation that advance the image of a sovereign judging subject. As Bickford writes, these norms are “not neutral, but tend to reflect the communicative style of already powerful groups.” Bickford, “Emotion Talk and Political Judgment,” 1025. See also Young, “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy,” in *Democracy and Difference*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996), 120–35.

31 Leys writes, “The affects are only contingently related to objects in the world; our basic emotions operate blindly because they have no inherent knowledge of, or relation to, the objects or situations that trigger them” (TA 437). Leys is referring specifically to the writings of Tomkins and his follower Elkan, whose work has had tremendous influence in affect theory.

32 Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 81, 84.

33 Leys, “Affect and Intention: A Reply to William E. Connolly,” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (2011): 802; Connolly, “The Complexity of Intention,” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (2011): 791–98.

34 Charles Altieri, “Affect, Intentionality, and Cognition: A Response to Ruth Leys,” *Critical Inquiry* 39 (2002): 878–79.

35 Wondering in the last sentence of her essay “why anti-intentionalism exerts such a fascination” over contemporary cultural critics, Leys suggests that the relevant text here would be Walter Benn Michaels, *The Shape of the Signifier*, which explores the basic shift in cultural and literary theory to a discourse of identity over ideology and belief. See TA 472.

36 Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), 176.

37 Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 87. In *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2016), I take up Sellars’s Kantian argument that experience is always already conceptual. This argument is developed a decade later by John McDowell, who insists that all receptivity is always already rational and normative. There can be no “experiential intake” (what Kant calls intuition) without the use of concepts: “The relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity. . . . It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity,” writes McDowell. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), 9. I am sympathetic to McDowell, but more work is required to explain why his conceptualist account of intentionality as a critique of empirical naturalism does not exclude any significant role for affect in cognition.

- 38 "Once one brings the background to the foreground and distances it from the thinker it is radically transformed." The spatial metaphor has changed (background/foreground versus upstairs/downstairs), but the idea is the same. Dreyfus, "The Myth of the Pervasiveness of the Mental," 27.
- 39 Schear, "Introduction," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, ed. Schear (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.
- 40 Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), xi.
- 41 Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 21.
- 42 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan, 1968), 193e, 194e.
- 43 Mulhall, *On Being in the World*, 79. Wittgenstein's treatment of aspect perception, to which Mulhall refers here, can be found in *Philosophical Investigations*, 212d.
- 44 Wittgenstein's reflections on aspect perception resonate strongly with those of Heidegger, who is typically drawn upon by critics such as Dreyfus to make the case for a nonconceptual embodied coping. See Mulhall, *On Being in the World*; Peter Dennis, "Was Heidegger a Nonconceptualist?" *Ratio* 25, no. 1 (2012): 1–7.
- 45 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 201.
- 46 Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, and Anscombe (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 1:115.
- 47 Barry Stroud, "Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity," *The Philosophical Review* 74, no. 4 (1965): 507.
- 48 Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 52.
- 49 McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (1998; Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 207.
- 50 Quoted in McDowell, "What Myth?" *Inquiry* 50, no. 4 (2007): 339.
- 51 McDowell, "What Myth?" 339.
- 52 McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism," 41–42. For an excellent discussion of this point in moral theory, see Alice Crary, *Beyond Moral Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009).
- 53 Cavell, "Music Discomposed," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), 192.
- 54 Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems," 88.
- 55 Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems," 94.
- 56 Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 25–26.
- 57 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), § 40, p. 162.
- 58 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 57, p. 213.
- 59 See Zerilli, "Judging at the 'End of Reasons': Rethinking the Aesthetic Turn," chap. 2 in *A Democratic Theory of Judgment*; Zerilli, "'We Feel Our Freedom': Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (2005): 158–88.
- 60 For a creative attempt to deal with the world-giving character of affect, see Joseph Tinguely, *Orientation: Kant and the Aesthetic Content of Cognition* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The New School for Social Research, 2011), 99.
- 61 McDowell, *Mind and World*, 57.
- 62 McDowell, *Mind and World*, 57.
- 63 For Freud, "emotions are embodied, intentional states governed by our beliefs, cognitions, and desires," writes Leys in TA 437.
- 64 Claire Hemmings, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (September 2005): 564.