

**CORPOREAL ROUTES: CLIMBING TOWARDS  
CULTURE**

**BY**

**ANDRE GOODRICH**

**GDRAND003**

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**DECLARATION**

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# **CORPOREAL ROUTES: CLIMBING TOWARDS CULTURE**

## **ABSTRACT:**

Traditionally, spatial knowledge has been conceptualized and explained through the use of the cognitive map hypothesis, in which the metaphor of the topographic map is used to construct an explanation of the way in which knowledge about space is stored and used. I argue that the topographical metaphor confuses the map with the territory and is therefore inadequate for approaching the study of peoples' spatial knowledge, as the necessary logical reduction that accompanies the practice of transforming the territory into the map is fundamentally alienating of contextual dynamics and particularities. Furthermore, the topographical metaphor requires and thereby reinforces the Cartesian split, and its implicit privileging of the mind over the body, which disqualifies spatial knowledge from the realm of practical consciousness. Drawing on conversations with, and participant observation of rock climbers throughout 2003, I propose a model of spatial knowledge anchored in corporeal simulation rather than mental representation, and demonstrate the necessity of this conceptual shift by arguing that one's perception of the environment proceeds from the culturally inscribed and extended body, just as the body is imaginatively extended and inscribed in order to meet the requirements of effective and acceptable functioning in the context of a particular located activity.

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# CONTENTS:

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b>	
Culture and Space: Why Should Anthropologists be Mindful of the Relationship Between Them?	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO:</b>	
On the Nature of Spatial and Cultural Knowing	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE:</b>	
The Climbing Body and the Corporeality of the Social	<b>52</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>APPENDIX:</b>	
Glossary of Rock Climbing Terms	<b>80</b>

# INTRODUCTION

The argument that runs through the chapters that follow is grounded in the use of a peculiarly anthropological method, namely participant observation, to contribute to the solution of a peculiarly anthropological problem, namely how to conceptualise the relationship between space and culture, in the way that this has been embodied in ‘the field’ to which anthropologists have traditionally travelled in order to conduct their fieldwork. This ethnographic account thus aims more to shed light on this theoretical question than to expound upon the dynamics of Cape Town’s climbing scene.

One could be forgiven for asking at the outset what the social relevance of a thesis with such a theoretical focus could possibly be, or even what kind of contribution such a topic could possibly make to the discipline of social anthropology or the lives of ordinary people. My answer, although somewhat abstract is very simple: there is a relationship between the notions of culture and space, and this relationship impacts on much of the work that anthropologists do in both the academic and development contexts. My aim in this work is thus to use rock climbing as an analytic tool to inform a detailed theoretical discussion that aims to unify spatial and cultural knowledge in the bodies of acting subjects.

Conceptually, I situate this work alongside two themes that emerged in the discipline in the 1990s. The first, led by Appadurai (1997 and 2000) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992) is a concern with the relationship between culture and space, and is motivated by the methodological implications of doing anthropological research in the face of a globalizing world in which people and objects are no longer restricted to the ‘sites’ within which anthropologists have traditionally practiced participant observation. The second, led by Tim Ingold is a concern with the character of ‘traditional’ or ‘local’ knowledge associated with both wayfinding (Ingold 2000), and the environment more generally (Ingold and Kurttila 2000). My contribution here is to construct a conceptual frame

capable of articulating the concerns of these two sets of authors, but that also remedies the shortcoming in cultural theory highlighted by Csordas.

In his often-cited essay on “Techniques of the Body” Marcel Mauss argued that the body is at the same time the original tool with which humans shape their world, and the original substance out of which the human world is shaped. Yet of all the formal definitions of culture that have been proposed by anthropologists, none have taken seriously the idea that culture is grounded in the human body. (Csordas 1994: 6)

In this thesis I take up Csordas’ challenge using rock climbing to grapple with the conceptual grids that frame space, culture and body. While it is now widely accepted that the body is a concept what is at issue here is the framing of that concept. The interesting thing about the conceptual grids that enframe such abstract entities and fix them long enough for us to look at and discuss them, is that the lines of these conceptual grids often obscure aspects of that which we are examining. Contestation is a function of shifting these conceptual grids and this study tries to shift the grid-lines that frame the body in such a way as to render visible a position from which to articulate the relationship between the three concepts of space, culture and body. To this end I use the three chapters that follow to guide the reader through three grid movements.

**Chapter One** begins to shift the grid-lines through a critical examination of attempts by such eminent anthropologists as Appadurai (1997 & 2000), Stoller (1997) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992) to come to terms with the problem of studying culture, in a world in which objects and people move around with increasing speed and ease, from within a discipline that has come to rely on the intimacy of ‘the field’. I focus on those moments in these texts that unravel the authors’ attempts to bring space and culture together in a meaningful way. I argue that these attempts fail as a result of two habits of Western thought: firstly, Cartesian dualism, or the insistence that the mind is separate from, and superordinate to, the body; and secondly, a mental technique and political technology for the organization of the world by way of the subsumption of empirical entities under increasingly abstract frameworks, or what Casey (1996) has termed ‘vertical integration’. I argue that the efforts of the above authors to re-theorize the anthropological

understanding of space and place are necessarily doomed to fail because these two problematic foundational concepts produce a ‘blind spot’ which prevents them from considering the extent to which the concept of culture they continue to employ is bound up in the notion of space against which they are writing. Chapter One thus lays the conceptual groundwork needed to take up Csordas’ challenge without falling prey to the language that trips up Appadurai (1997) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992).

**Chapter Two** introduces the body according to Ichikawa Hiroshi. Ozawa-De Silva (2002) introduces this Japanese philosopher’s formulation of the body as a possible avenue for getting beyond “certain common characteristics” shared by Western sociologies of the body, namely: Cartesian dualism; the notion of a unitary and durable self as the basis of personality; and “the assumption that a weak social constructivist model of the body is the only appropriate one” (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 22). In a project of repositioning the conceptual grid, Ichikawa’s notion of the orientational structure of the body – that aspect of the body not consciously directed to the environment – proves effective as a point from which to begin considering the nature of the relationship between the body and the two concepts refigured in Chapter One – culture and space.

Informed by the work of Alain Berthoz (1997) in the field of neuroscience, the chapter ‘fleshes out’ Ichikawa’s orientational structure by pursuing the implications of Berthoz’s distinction between *representation* and *simulation* as models for thinking about human perception. I draw from these two authors in considering two climbers’ accounts of their experiences on particular climbing routes, as well as in considering my observations and participation in a bouldering<sup>1</sup> competition between the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town in which I competed in September 2003. I introduce the notion of corporeal capital (an unconscious repository of skills, techniques and habits), and argue that this bodily knowledge (housed in the whole body, and not merely the mind) forms the historically contingent basis for knowledge – firstly of space, and secondly of how to act properly in space. It is in this chapter that it becomes fully clear that culture, understood

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<sup>1</sup>‘Unroped climbing on any small rock surface, including climbing walls and buildings’ (Hattingh, 2000:154).

as knowledge of propriety and effective action (Goodenough 1994 and Bloch 1991), is rooted in the body, and is inseparable from knowledge of the arrangement and extension of the site of that action in absolute space.

**Chapter Three** develops the notion of corporeal capital further by considering the conditions of possibility for its deployment by the actor. While Chapter Two constructs the body as the centre and foundation of spatial perception (indeed of all perception), in this chapter the body is presented as the centre and foundation of cultural and social participation. In this final chapter I employ the notion of ‘actor networks’, defined as “sets of humans, objects, technologies and scripts that contingently produce durability and stability” (Urry and McNaghten 2000: 8). Drawing from my participants’ discussions around helpful and effective scripts, as well as my observation and experience of how the body is culturally extended into a climbing body, I argue that the deployment of the corporeal capital associated with climbing is so contingent on the actor network that the climbing body must be understood not as an individual body, but as a culturally extended body, and that it is thus through the cultural extension of the body that climbers come to participate in and contribute to that shared aspect of culture that Goodenough (1994: 268) terms the “public record”. To reinforce this argument the chapter closes with a consideration of the dynamics of the relationship between the extended body and the environment. By contrasting the actor networks associated with two types of climbing, ‘traditional’<sup>2</sup> and ‘sport’<sup>3</sup> climbing, I argue that the cultural extension of the body mirrors the social production of the environment in a dialectic driven by intentional and creative embodiment – understood as the dynamic response to the activity the actor is engaged in such that the conditions of possibility for the deployment of the appropriate corporeal capital are met.

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<sup>2</sup> A type of roped climbing defined by the use of ‘natural’ or ‘traditional’ protection, which is placed by the lead climber to protect the team, as opposed to reliance on fixed or permanent bolts as are relied on in sport climbing.

<sup>3</sup> A type of roped climbing that utilises fixed anchors for the rope in the form of in situ bolts.

Having thus demonstrated that perception proceeds from the culturally extended body, I conclude that it is thus through the body that the setting of action from which the cultural extension of the body stems is socially produced.

### **THE ROUTE TO THE ‘ROUTES’: SAMPLING AND ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY OR ‘CLIMBING BUDDIES’**

The period of my field research extended throughout 2003. Methodologically I relied on participant observation, general conversation and reflexive participation. I was able to do so because I could properly participate in the activity I was studying. I was able to establish rapport very easily because I was a climber with two years experience and of quite reasonable ability. This served me very well, as the nature of my research agenda required a focus on the body – much of which is disqualified from conscious thought, and hence is inaccessible through interviews. It is easy to hypothesise how questioning people about something that works precisely because it requires no thinking would lead to the production of actor models that would be of no relevance to my research aim. As such I avoided formal interviews, open ended or otherwise, and relied on my position as an insider and experience of climbing to participate in and occasionally steer conversations in the direction of my interest in their experience of routes they had attempted whether successfully or not.

As stated earlier, this is not an attempt at an ethnographic account of rock climbing, thus the reasoning behind my selection of research participants was not the production of a ‘representative’ sample. Wanting to base my research on participant observation I began my fieldwork by participating at a spot frequented by many young sport climbers and boulderers at the beginning of 2003. I ‘hung out’ at the University of Cape Town’s bouldering wall, which is open to any climbers, not just students. Training here is a very social affair, as it is common practice to share climbing ‘problems’<sup>4</sup> with other climbers. I became a fixture here spending three to four hours a day at the wall (not always climbing, and varying the time between morning, afternoon and early evening). In this way I met and shared ‘problems’ with a sizable number of climbers and in this setting I

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<sup>4</sup> A ‘problem’ refers to a short climbing route, typically within the context of bouldering.

developed good climbing friendships with several young climbers with vastly different degrees of competency from both myself and each other. I deliberately involved myself with climbers of differing ability, experience and focus in order to access a social space in which discussions of technique and the building of a good climbing body would be central to the interactions we shared. In grappling with their own spatial ability in the field of rock climbing, experimenting with training regimes and polishing techniques, the young climbers that became my most stable participants provided me with an ideal setting from which to consider the role of embodiment in spatial perception and competence.

The University of Cape Town bouldering wall proved particularly useful during the winter months as the Cape Town rain made regular visits to local crags<sup>5</sup> impossible. As winter arrived shortly after my fieldwork began, the wall was central to my ability to build and maintain the relationships that my participant observation required, so that when the sun once again washed over the crags of Silvermine Nature Reserve, Peer's Cave, The Mine and The Hole, I had willing and eager companions with whom to 'hit the rock'.

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<sup>5</sup> A crag is 'a smallish outcrop of rock, usually with routes of only one or two pitches' (Hattingh, 2000:154).

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **CULTURE AND SPACE: WHY SHOULD ANTHROPOLOGISTS BE MINDFUL OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM?**

#### **THE PROBLEM: WHERE IS CULTURE?**

The intricacies of the relationship between culture and space have gone unexamined until fairly recently. It lies on our intellectual landscape where it operates on an almost subliminal level, its problematic propositions filtering down into the most well intended attempts to raise it to the level of conscious critique. Having rejected the convenient notion of static and bounded cultures (Thornton 1988; Keesing 1994), anthropologists, I argue, are now faced with another convenient but fictional notion that must be cast aside. Edward Casey (1996: 30) has termed this notion vertical integration, and while he uses it to speak only of space, my aim in this chapter is to show that this habit of thought (as it is really more of a way of thinking rather than a thought itself) is the very root of the problem anthropologists have had in reconciling the two ubiquitous, but poorly understood concepts under examination here. This chapter sets the conceptual stage for my broader aim of unifying space with culture by passing them through the lens of the acting, purposeful and intelligent body. My thesis is: by reworking both space and culture; by producing a language for the two that problematises their distinction, the problems that anthropologists are allegedly facing in a globalising world will literally run out of the language that produced them and upon which they rely on for their existence.

#### **CULTURE, SPACE AND THE ‘CRISIS’ OF GLOBALISATION**

Since the late 1980s anthropologists have increasingly come to realize the need to rethink the received wisdom structuring their understanding of space. This realisation has been brought forcefully to the fore by the (alleged) realities of globalisation that have resulted in anxiety around research that is uncritical in its treatment of space, and consequently, in

calls to change the way we theorise space (structure 'the field') and thus the way we gather our data (methodology) (Appadurai 1997, Stoller 1997).

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) issued the first substantial call for a more reflexive consideration of the implications of this taken-for-granted 'stuff' called space. In what they term "a modest attempt to deal with space and place, along with some necessarily related concerns such as those of location, displacement, community, and identity" (1992: 6) Gupta and Ferguson's central assertion is that within Marcus and Fischer's (1986) "cultural critique" project, geographical separation (and separation more generally) is taken to be the primary condition of societies and cultures. For example within this framework "the San" would be understood as "a people", "native" to the Kalahari desert, with no thought being given to the broader historical, political and social issues that constituted "the San" as a "de-propertied category systematically relegated to the desert" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 16). Thus, whereas the "cultural critique" project uncritically takes spatial separation as a given starting point, what Gupta and Ferguson propose, following Wilmsen's (1989) critique of "the anthropological cult of 'the Bushmen'" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 15), is that the broader relationships of power through which the San came to inhabit the Kalahari be taken as primary. These authors are pointing to the necessary relationships (between the apparently separate societies) that lie behind the taken-for-granted primary spatial separation, which they assert is no more than a rhetorical trick perpetrated by the powerful. They assert that "the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 8).

In support of their criticism of the cultural critique project's "assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture" Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 7-8) present four resulting "significant problems". In discussing the first of these "significant problems", the authors employ a notion of culture that requires them to think of it as something coterminous with a people or a society. Calling for a focus on, or awareness of, the historical constitution of 'cultures' and their attachment to places still requires us to think of them as more or less separate and as pertaining to categories of people grouped along

lines determined externally. The problem is amplified by their use of the idea of space as the abstract Cartesian plane of degrees, minutes and seconds, without taking into account the degree to which this concept of space is implicated in the notion of culture they use in their argument (especially with regard to such spatialised conceptions of culture as those which speak of relationships ‘between’ them, even if they are seen as historically constituted).

The first criticism levelled at the ‘assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture’ is the problem that such a model has in situating (culturally) those people that: inhabit borderlands; constantly cross borders; and permanently cross borders. Amongst those that permanently cross borders such as immigrants, the authors assert, “the disjunction of place and culture is especially clear”.

Khmer refugees in the United States take “Khmer culture” with them in the same complicated way that Indian immigrants in England take “Indian culture” to their new homeland (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 7).

I have two problems with this assertion. First, that it continues to presume distinctive Khmer and Indian culture as coterminous with a category of individuals who are always located somewhere<sup>6</sup>. The statement therefore implies that the ‘culture’ being carried came from one geographical area (onto which it could be mapped) and went to another (onto which it can again be mapped); that, although they are historically and spatially mobile, they are still coterminous with a people or a society and therefore isomorphic with place – can still be illustrated with classic ethnographic maps, so long as they are regularly updated, and the reasons for the changes outlined to emphasise the historical and political factors in play. I feel that while this is a step in the right direction, it doesn’t go far enough in its interrogation of both space and culture – particularly of the degree to

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<sup>6</sup> While Gupta and Ferguson’s use of speech marks around “Indian culture” illustrates their recognition of the problematic reification and essentialism the phrase invokes, and alerts the reader to their understanding of the complexity of the culture concept, this mechanism does little to disaggregate culture from nation and the problem they are trying to overcome comes to inhere in this unarticulated complexity with the result that their argument remains overdetermined by the concept of culture that remains, albeit problematically, attached to, and a product of, the external constituting of groups by those with the power to reproduce categories.

which mapmaking forms part of the context in which the culture concept developed (Thornton 1988: 21) – and consequently that it contributes to the production of globalisation as a problem facing the study of culture<sup>7</sup>.

It is here that their argument unravels. Despite calling for critical reflection with regard to the historical processes that fix culture to ‘areas’, they leave unexamined the relationship between culture and people (necessarily always located) which lead to the idea that a located people’s culture could be represented on a map as coinciding with the location of the people with which it was conceived of as coterminous by early travellers, explorers and colonial administrators. Wilhelm Bleek’s library work for Sir George Grey in the Cape Colony at the turn of the century, and the degree to which his classification of ‘tribes’ became reflected in the South African map is illustrative of this point (Thornton 1988: 21). This failure to move beyond the notion of culture in which mapmaking featured so strongly leaves the authors with no alternative but to use the language against which they are writing.

To illustrate this point, contrast the quote under discussion above with the authors’ assertion made two paragraphs previously:

It is so taken for granted that each country embodies its own distinctive culture and society that the terms “society” and “culture” are routinely simply appended to the names of nation-states, as when a tourist visits India to understand “Indian culture” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-7).

One might tag on the phrase ‘or when Indians go to England and anthropologists (in this case Gupta and Ferguson) speak of them as taking with them their “Indian culture”’. At this point it is clear that the problem lies as much with the concept of culture Gupta and Ferguson employ (because it enfolds the concept of space against which they are protesting) as it does with the assumed autonomy and disconnection of places, and

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<sup>7</sup> The movement of people from one place to another can only be a problem if we believe culture to pertain to groups as a whole, so that when some members move they take their culture with them. Therefore, it is the conception of culture as coterminous with groups that enables one to say that because groups are no longer fixed to localities, the task of the anthropologist is becoming more difficult as people move around more.

consequently, that their project cannot be realized without a radical and simultaneous rethinking of the concepts of culture and space.

The second problem with their first attack on the assumed isomorphism of culture and place is twofold. On the one hand it is problematic to assert that people can simply ‘carry their culture’ as if it were in their luggage because it firstly invites (but leaves unanswered) the question of what the substrate that carries culture is, and secondly, because it persists in the notion that culture is a monolithic something coterminous with nation or society or worse. On the other hand there is a problem too with the radical disjunction between place and culture that carrying ones culture from place to place presupposes. While I agree that cultures (as they are conceived by Gupta and Ferguson) should not be thought of as isomorphic with, or belonging in particular places (conceived of as geographical regions inscribed upon abstract space), I cannot accept that culture and place are so unrelated that one can simply carry culture around with one between places as if these were simply neutral and irrelevant. Such a proposition disqualifies from use the notion of ‘situational selection’, well established in the Southern African ethnographic record since its introduction by Rhodes Livingstone scholars working in the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt in the early part of the twentieth century (Mayer and Mayer 1974: viii-ix).

If Gupta and Ferguson (1992) err in their lack of recognition that space and culture cannot be treated separately, Appadurai (1997 and 2000) errs in his lack of reflexivity with regard to the degree to which ‘areas’ are the products of power relations. This is perhaps an oversimplification. He argues that in the context of globalisation the power and means to delineate areas is itself mobile so that anthropologists “need to find out how others, *in what we still take to be certain areas as we define them*, see the world in regional terms” (Appadurai 2000: 8 italics added). The italics highlight what I consider to be a gloss that dodges the question of why it is at all useful to persist in the current definition of areas<sup>8</sup>; a gloss of Gupta and Ferguson’s thesis (leaving un-addressed the

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<sup>8</sup> The question becomes more difficult to answer when considering the following quote:

historically contingent nature of these areas) but which shares with them the conception of culture as coterminous with groups. So while he realises that different people imagine 'areas' differently (a rather obvious point), Appadurai's (2000) argument does not extend beyond the realm of the politics of representation, a problem, because as Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 17) point out "power does not only enter the anthropological picture at the moment of representation".

Thus, on the one hand are Gupta and Ferguson (1992) calling for consideration of the political relationships between apparently distinct groups; wanting to move away from conceiving of cultures as isomorphic with places (where the spatial separation is taken as primary), but who fail because they omit from their argument the very important shared history between cartography and the notion of culture they employ. On the other, is Appadurai (2000), who does take account of the degree to which the history and practice of Western cartography is bound up within the conception of culture he invokes, but who leaves unexamined the historical contingency of the areas he proposes we focus on. It thus seems as if each of these articles is capable of completing the argument of the other; of together producing the effect neither was able to achieve on its own. This is not the case however.

A clue as to why this is not the case, despite each argument possessing what the other seems to lack, is to be found in Appadurai's repeated use of spatial metaphors to talk about culture. For example he speaks about the porous "boundaries between cultures" (Appadurai 1997: 116) or of cultural "locations" (Appadurai 2000: 8). These metaphors, together with his willingness to simply accept current definitions of 'areas' illustrate the extent to which his movement beyond the theoretical constraints that make anthropology

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The trouble with much of the paradigm of area studies as it now exists is that it has tended to mistake a particular configuration of apparent stabilities for permanent associations between space, territory and cultural organisation. These apparent stabilities are themselves largely artefacts of the trait-based idea of "culture" areas, a recent Western cartography of large civilisational landmasses associated with different relationships to Europe (Appadurai 2000: 7).

Here it is clear that Appadurai is aware of the degree to which the concepts culture and area enfold each other's development, but he is unreflexive of the historical relationships that situated 'peoples' in those areas.

under globalisation so problematic is blocked in the same way as that of Gupta and Ferguson by the received ideas within which he is forced to work.

The question that I believe will lead beyond these received ideas is: what is it that enables us to speak of culture through spatial metaphor? Or what is it that enabled the concept of space to become so ingrained in the understanding of culture as these authors use it?

Both cartographers and anthropologists have uncritically accepted the notion that empirical phenomena (people and places) can be vertically integrated<sup>9</sup> into overarching abstract frameworks (cultures and space) – as if the latter were something more than a comfortable rhetoric for the ordering of the many by the few that own the means to produce, distribute and enforce categories – where these frameworks are perceived as neutral and inert, when they are in fact crucial elements in discourses that ‘frame’ (in both senses of the word) the phenomena they subsume.

In this light, Appadurai’s error is to assume that the problem of doing anthropology in a world where nothing ‘stays put’ can be solved by considering how other polities integrate space and culture vertically. Gupta and Ferguson’s error by contrast is that they accept uncritically the abstract framework of space: the root of topography’s power to conceal the ‘topography of power’.

But what does it mean to put an object or individual into a category? The short answer is that they are objectified – reduced from *thing* to *object*. There is a marked and important difference between an object and a thing; namely, a thing is an empirical entity, while an object is a logical entity. This transformation, from thing to object is necessary when attempting to place things into categories, for it is this shift that enables diverse entities to be vertically integrated and thus accounted for in categories. A set can only be made up of a group of entities any one of which is completely interchangeable with any other one. This is only possible with logical entities. In order to add empirically unique things to a

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<sup>9</sup> Edward Casey (1996:30) describes vertical integration as the “subsuming [of] concrete phenomena under more abstract terms”

category, one must first deny their empirical nature and reduce them to logical entities – one must objectify them.

The reason we are forced to reduce things to objects in order to categorise them is spelled out by Jaques-Alain Miller in his article ‘Suture (elements of the logic of the signifier)’ in which he deals with the implications of Frege’s theory of numeration for Lacanian psychoanalysis (Copjec 1995: 171). Miller begins by noting an oversight on Frege’s part, namely his radical exclusion of the subject that counts. Frege thus dispensed with the empirical attributes of this subject, some of which are undoubtedly political and also disposed of the faculty of memory necessary to “close the set without the loss of any of the interchangeable elements” (Miller in Copjec 1995: 171). The exclusion of this subject thus raised two problems.

1. Numbers can no longer be considered the neutral tool of a subject who wants to designate empirical things
2. The question of how the no-longer-closed set of numbers, a pure and infinite series of numbers, can come to subsume objects is raised. How does the series close *itself*, in other words? (Copjec 1995: 171)

The exclusion of this political subject who would previously have closed the set raises an important political question, one of the most important questions of political modernism. Namely, how, after the destruction of the monarch who formerly defined national boundaries and thus closed the set of subjects within his kingdom, does one constitute a modern nation? Rhetorically many anthropologists radically exclude themselves from their monographs (as political subjects), and many more claim that the violence of the categorization process can be reduced by reasserting the presence of the categorizing researcher in the shape of reflexivity<sup>10</sup>. My contention is that while this is important, it is only important in so far as we continue in the reduction of thing that necessarily accompanies vertical integration.

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<sup>10</sup> For an excellent discussion on the role of reflexivity in anthropology, see Bourdieu (2003) on ‘Participant Objectivation’.

According to Miller, this reduction “requires us to think of the concept that subsumes objects as a redoubled concept” (Copjec 1995: 172), as a concept of identity-to-a-concept. Using the way in which the modern state subsumes its members as an example, empirical subjects are subsumed, not by the concept “citizens of X”, but rather by the concept “identical to the concept ‘citizens of X’” (Copjec 1995: 172). Entities are thus not gathered by picking out their common empirical attributes but rather by reducing them to their identity to themselves; reducing them from things to objects. They therefore have no substantial empirical identity but only a relational one they achieve by comparing themselves to other members of the nation, or the members of other nations.

This definition's circularity indicates that the act of subsumption under a concept is a performative one. That is, “the attribute that distinguishes the objects of a [category] does not pre-exist, but subsists in the very act of numeration” (Copjec 1995: 172). Citizens and other entities thus retroactively belong, resulting in the fact that belonging to a set can confer on its elements no substantial identity. Are anthropologists thereby damned to the realm of comparison? I believe that the answer is yes so long as they persist in the habit of thought Casey (1996) calls ‘vertical integration’.

What I begin below (and continue with in the subsequent chapters) is the construction of a model of space and of culture that sees both as laterally integrated, and as such renders impossible any notion of culture as being coterminous with a group, or monolithic, and under which the problems raised within the globalisation debate – relating to the movement of “objects, persons, images and discourses” (Appadurai 2000: 5) beyond the localities upon which anthropologists have relied for the study of the practices of intimacy – simply disappear, run out of language, as the language of culture and space changes.

## **DISLOCATING CULTURE OR THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SHARING**

I take as my concept of culture that put forward by Goodenough (1994) and Bloch (1991). Bloch (1991: 183) describes culture as “that which needs to be known in order to operate reasonably effectively in a specific human environment”, while Goodenough (1994: 264) describes the emic description anthropologists strive for as “a model of that part of [the subject’s] cognition that enables them to function acceptably in their society”. I argue that these two assertions taken together imply that the task of the anthropologist concerned with culture is to focus on what people do and say in order to construct an account of the knowledge needed to operate effectively and acceptably in a particular context (where the concepts ‘effectively’ and ‘acceptably’ fold in upon one another).

Taken together these authors produce a picture of culture as fundamentally non-linguistic (Bloch 1991), as rooted in the activities in which people participate, and as pertaining to groups only in so far as individuals engage with one another in those activities (Goodenough 1994: 266), but where “even what people do seem to share is not understood in exactly the same way in all respects by any two individuals” (Goodenough 1994: 265). Each member of the group has their own cultural idiolect; their own “understanding of what they consider to be the customary practices, values and beliefs—the culture—of the groups in which they function as members” (Goodenough 1994: 266).

A second aspect outside of activity is thus crucial to this model of culture, namely language. If all individuals in a group formed around an activity have differing cultural idiolects how can we speak of that activity as having a culture associated with it? Language provides the answer. Through language each individual is able to convert her subjective record of her experience into an object for herself and others by rendering it in language (or perhaps in symbol more generally understood). These records – what people have said about their experiences – can then be compared to form a sharable group record – the ‘public record’ (Goodenough 1994: 268).

## DISLOCATING PLACE, OR PLACING THE INDIVIDUAL AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

Using rock climbing as a case study, I illustrate the close relationship between acting individuals and an environment that is more than just passive. In so doing I aim to articulate a model for the understanding of space that can be productively used in approaching the problem of studying the individual cultural idiolects, and the power relationships between them, that structure the public record. What is needed then is a model of the individual's relationship to, and understanding of space, that also moves away from the vertical integration of the cognitive map hypothesis which: firstly, does not adequately account for the difference between local and outsider knowledge; secondly, cannot provide access to individual understandings of place because of its heavily positivistic slant; and thirdly, contains several problematic implications at odds with the model of culture I outlined above.

One episode from my fieldwork sets the stage for a critique of the cognitive map hypothesis by raising some questions that it is incapable of answering adequately.

*It was a warm day; Matthew had not climbed at all for several years now, but was very keen to get back into it. As a start to the process he, Donovan (my regular climbing partner) and I went to the bridge near Rhodes Memorial to get some training in. I had been climbing for two years, a year longer than Donovan, and Matthew had been not climbing for longer than Donovan's and my climbing career put together and doubled.*

*As a student Matthew had trained regularly here with his friends, repeating the crimped traverses back and forth along the length of the bridge over and over again. In those days the indoor bouldering wall in the sports centre was not around yet, so this was where they trained. Our first trip to the bridge, Donovan and I arrived before Matthew and attempted a traverse by trying to follow the white chalk<sup>11</sup> marks that lined the bridge and marked the movements of other climbers onto the surface. It was a complete shock to me that after spending hundreds of hours on the steep bouldering wall doing hard powerful routes requiring strength and flexibility, this tiny traverse, with no power requirements to speak of had both of us thoroughly beat. Matthew arrived after we had each*

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<sup>11</sup> Powdered Magnesium Carbonate used to keep the climbers hands dry and ensure maximum mechanical grip between the fingers and the rock.

*had another attempt and were remarking to each other how ‘pumped’<sup>12</sup> our forearms were from hanging around for such long periods at a time, not knowing where to go (or rather, knowing where to go but not knowing how to get there). Matthew pointed out a few other routes to us before hopping on the one we had been attempting and finishing it with ease.*

*Matthew was as amazed as what Donovan and I were. We were definitely in better shape than what he was. He described with surprise how he just sort of knew where to go and what to do without having to really think about it, accompanying this explanation with a performance of hand gestures mimicking his movement across the rock, each gesture emphasized with the sound effects “shk shk shk”, as if the sequence were a series of moves that just slotted into place.*

*A few weeks later the three of us met at the UCT bouldering wall, and the positions were reversed, Matthew really battled with the long more powerful moves that Donovan and I sailed through. Here he was a stranger and we were the locals, whereas at the bridge we had been the strangers, and he the local. There he knew where he was, where he wanted to go to, and most importantly, the moves necessary to link the white chalk marks, there for all to see, that marked out other climbers’ passage. At the bouldering wall he was not in possession of ‘the moves’, of the embodied knowledge necessary to move between the handholds of the marked out routes we showed him.*

In both instances, the routes we were trying to climb were marked out – at the bridge by the white chalk-marks left on the handholds by the hands of other climbers; and at the bouldering wall by my and Donovan’s verbal instruction to Matthew.

The cognitive map approach postulates that every individual carries around in his or her head a mental model analogous with a topographical map. This would suggest that when climbing at the bridge Matthew (a local) held the map of the route in his head, while Donovan and I (strangers to the terrain) relied on a map outside our head – the chalk marks we followed. To move from point A to point B then, the local (and the stranger in possession of an artefactual map) plots a course through space before setting out, so that

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<sup>12</sup> A vernacular term applied to muscles that have been so heavily used that they are engorged with blood and aching from lack of oxygen at a cellular level. It is most commonly applied to the muscles of the forearm.

the journey becomes no more than the mechanical execution of a mentally prescribed course.

Given then, that Donovan and I were in better climbing shape than Matthew, and that the route we were trying to complete was well marked out so that we essentially possessed an artefactual map capable of providing the same information as Matthew's cognitive map (assuming for the time being that he possesses one), this model – which explains wayfinding in terms of isomorphism between a mental construct and the physical environment – does not adequately describe the superior knowledge of the route, that can be the only possible explanation for Matthew's advantage.

In addition to its inability to adequately account for my fieldwork experience, the cognitive map hypothesis has at least two troublesome implications that contradict the notion of culture I have outlined above. The first of these is that it reinforces the rigid split between mind and body for which we have Descartes to thank. It implies that navigation and movement are two separate acts, the first performed by an intelligent mind (plotting a course on a mental map of the terrain), and the second carried out by a dumb body (mechanically following the plotted course).

Within current anthropological theorizing (most of it generated in the field of medical anthropology (Lock 1993: 136; Csordas 1994: 9)) as well as more generally in the works of non-anthropologists such as Foucault and Merleau-Ponty (Crossley 1996: 100), the primacy of the mental act has come under harsh and valid criticism as Descartes's resilient model slowly crumbles. Such theoretical advancements in our concept of the subject render unacceptable any explanation of the movement of subjects from place to place that requires us to conceive of them in terms that preserve Descartes's dualism. In fact, it seems that what separates Matthew's performance from Donovan's or mine, can only be articulated in an area disqualified from thought by the cognitive map theory, namely embodied knowledge of acceptability and effectiveness—culture, as outlined in the preceding section.

The second problematic implication of the cognitive map hypothesis relates perhaps more directly to the concept of culture. The fact that the cognitive map model is not supported by the comparative method, leads us to the paradoxical position of having to assert that while maps are non-indexical of position<sup>13</sup>, they are indexical of cultural tradition (Ingold 2000: 226), as if cultural tradition is somehow independent of its location. Put differently, the cognitive map hypothesis necessitates the separation of ‘culture’ from lifeworld, a proposition that divorces traditional knowledge from the context of its production in the environmentally situated experiences of practitioners, and which thereby reduces culture simply to a set of rules carried around in people’s heads, transmitted along traditional genealogical lines from ancestors, and imported into the sites of its practical application (Ingold 2000: 226). This leads us back to a point at which we have to conceive of mind and body as separate, and at which we have to take vertical integration as a starting point by being forced to see cultural practices as genealogically transmitted traits and rules organised into reified ‘cultures’. My assertion at this point then, borrowing from McLuhan (1994), is that the cognitive map hypothesis seems to confuse the medium (the topographical map and its associated technologies and rhetoric, which it draws on as its organising metaphor; its master signifier) with the message (the way in which people understand and experience the world they live in). We are so inundated with maps in our daily lives, and these maps fulfil a range of functions so effectively, that they almost necessarily blind the careless user to the distinction between the map and the territory it describes.

This is of course at odds with the concept of culture outlined above, and is the product of the fallacy of objectivist social analysis, which conflates society with already completed processes, thereby reducing it to fixed and flat forms and rules (Williams 1977 cited in Rosaldo 1989: 106). In short, because they force the split between mind and body, and abstract culture to a set of mental rules carried around in people’s heads (conceived of

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<sup>13</sup> Being token non-indexical with regards to position is for Ingold (2000) the defining characteristic of maps. What this means is that the truth-value of the propositions contained in maps are independent of the position from which they are made. For example to say that Pretoria is North of Johannesburg remains true regardless of where the assertion is made – the statement is non-indexical of the speaker’s position. If I were to stand on UCT’s Plaza and say that Athlone stadium is to the right of the cooling towers between Epping and Athlone, that statement would be indexical of my position. As I moved relative to these two landmarks their position relative to one another would also change.

within the framework of vertical integration), the propositions enclosed within the cognitive map model are unacceptable in view of the move in anthropology towards a focus on practice (Ortner 1985). The reason is that such a move requires a focus on embodied subjects acting in particular localities that become the sites of the (re)production of *bodies* of cultural knowledge, which includes the production of the gradual changes to which they are constantly and necessarily subject.

Put differently, by forcing us to conceive of culture as knowledge carried around in heads, cognitive map theory leaves us with no alternative to diffusion as an explanation for change precisely by denying us a way of thinking about the dialectic relationship between the practices of situated actors and the system that shapes and is shaped by those practices. It is not enough that we simply admit that maps are cultural constructions if the price is the separation of culture from place, mind from body, and ultimately the sacrifice of our ability to access the site at which the system and individual agency meet and interact – the site at which culture and society exist as the ongoing dialogue between (on the one hand) situated practices in which individual cultural idiolects (re)learn, through imaginative action, what is effective and acceptable in those contexts, and the ‘public record’, which seeks to provide a model of how to act in all such contexts, and which is vital in enabling individuals “to expand their phenomenal world vicariously” (Goodenough 1994: 268). Such shallow constructivist analyses leads straight back to nothing more than simple diffusionism. Failing to revise our notion of space, analyses in a globalising world could easily collapse into the diffusionist style myths of cultural imperialism that ignore the agency of environmentally situated actors, and which open the door for the production of reified notions of cultures by relativists, nationalists and similar undesirables.

As an alternative to the cognitive map model, Tim Ingold (2000) proposes a model in which space is integrated laterally within a ‘region’. Here the ‘region’ consists of the entire history of the individual’s movements along the pathways down which the course of her life has taken her; of a matrix of movement out of which places are created, as opposed to simply the movement between self-identical localities situated in

abstract/absolute space. According to this understanding the individual is able to see everything in the region at once, not because her mind's eye holds incidents and locations within a set of spatial coordinates represented as viewed from above (as is the explanation offered by the cognitive map hypothesis), but because every place is the product of the multitude of paths along which she has travelled and the multitude of activities she has performed at and between those places. Each place and each path enfolds within it its relationship to all other paths and places, and is constantly altered as the region is expanded and altered by the addition of both new pathways and new activities along those pathways and at those places. Thus, the individual can literally be everywhere at once because every pathway and place enfolds within it every other (Ingold 2000: 227). Within this frame I knew how to move on *Talking to the Trees* to successfully complete the route, not as a result of a mental map, but because of the degree to which this 'route' enfolds within it the 'problems' on which I train at the UCT bouldering wall. Similarly, Donovan's and my struggle at the bridge resulted from the extent to which these traverses were novel, not enfolding our training at the bouldering wall. Knowing where to go on a 'route' or 'problem' thus cannot be separated from knowing how to go. Importantly, a 'region' is defined by the individual's history of movement rather than by the locations of that movement. In Ingold's (2000) model *movement* along the pathways of life becomes the focus rather than the pathways themselves, as is the case with the cognitive map hypothesis.

Unlike a focus on the pathways themselves, as is the case with topographical spatial approaches, a focus on the movement that generates these pathways as lived admits for consideration notions of acceptability and effectiveness in the performance of those activities that take individuals down those paths. By focussing on movement, rather than the lines along which movements occur, culture, as defined by Goodenough (1994) and outlined above, becomes central to spatial understanding because of the role it plays as a 'guide' to what constitutes effective and acceptable 'movement' within the context of a particular complex of interrelated activities. My understanding of effectiveness and acceptability when climbing was acquired in a context that differed from the traverses at the bridge, but not from *Talking to the Trees*. To understand the difference between my

performance at these two locations then, one needs to ask not about my topographical knowledge of the spatial arrangement of hand and footholds, but about my embodied knowledge of how to move effectively and acceptably within that spatial arrangement. In short, 'region' is as much a product of the cultural as what it is of the arrangement of objects in absolute space.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ON THE NATURE OF SPATIAL AND CULTURAL KNOWING

#### A NEW BODY FOR AN OLD PROBLEM

In the previous chapter I identified two habits of Western thought that, in my opinion, undermine attempts by authors such as Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Appadurai (1997 & 2000) and Stoller (1997) to rethink the problematic historical relationship between culture and space that is 'the field' to which anthropologists have traditionally travelled. These are, vertical integration on the one hand, and Cartesian dualism on the other. Having presented alternative conceptions of these two fundamental concepts, this chapter aims to bring these together in the acting body; to merge space and culture in the inescapable stuff of our corporeality. It follows logically of course that if the body is to be the site of this unification then any understanding of the body put forward must itself not be coloured by either of these two received ideas.

The first substantive call for an anthropological focus on the body must be credited to a 1934 lecture delivered at a meeting of the Société Psychologie by Marcel Mauss. He there called for a focus on 'techniques of the body' as a means to penetrate the ethnographic rubric 'miscellaneous' (Mauss 1973:71), a coverall category burdened with making sense of the chaos of the quotidian. Mauss's basic assertion is that techniques of the body are not simply a matter of individual variation; that behaviour, regardless of how 'natural' it may appear, stems from a 'habitus' that is social.

These 'habits' do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties (Mauss 1973: 73).

The phrase 'collective and individual practical reason' prefigures Goodenough's (1994) more clearly articulated distinction between the individual cultural idiolect, and the

public record. Mary Douglas (1970: 65) takes this to mean “that there can be no such thing as natural behaviour [as] every kind of action carries the imprint of learning”. This kind of deduction clearly rests on her nature/culture dichotomy, and it would perhaps be more in keeping with Mauss’s assertion to say that natural behaviour follows from a ‘habitus’ that is social in nature. But here lies a conundrum – is behaviour overdetermined by the habitus, or is it the other way around?

Both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty have variously addressed this conundrum.

For Merleau-Ponty, the body’s active relation to its environment creates a functional space around it. Using its acquired schemas and habits, he maintains, the active body positions its world around itself and constitutes that world as ‘ready-to-hand’, to use Heidegger’s ... expression. For Foucault, by contrast, bodies are organized and controlled through the organisation and control of space (Crossley 1996: 106).

These two philosophers are probably the greatest contributors to Western philosophy’s understanding of the body and, while they both accept the body as both active and acted upon, their disciplinary backgrounds (their professional habitus) see them each foregrounding a different pole in this duality (Crossley 1996: 106). Thus, while their work continues to inform and check my discussion that follows, their seemingly contrary positions introduce debate at almost every turn.

A conception of the body that is particularly useful for the directness with which it addresses the mind body separation, and its refusal to set a limit on the shape of the body (which is of course in keeping with the thought of both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty (Crossley 1996: 100)), is that of the Japanese philosopher Ichikawa Hiroshi. He proposes that “if we grasp the body in the situation we live in every day, we will realize that the body is much closer to what we understand by the word ‘spirit’” (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 24). Central to his argument is his systematic approach to analysing both the body as phenomenon and the body as structure (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 24).

Ichikawa maintains that studying the body as phenomenon, while enabling one to perceive the body as it appears on the conscious level, offers no means of accessing what he calls the subconscious body that underpins and supports this. To remedy this he proposes studying the body as structure, and introduces two concepts very useful for articulating the important role played by embodied knowledge. He distinguishes between the ‘orientational’ and ‘intentional’ structures of the body to explain the two ways in which the body directs itself towards the environment (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 26).

The orientational structure is that aspect of the body not consciously directed towards the environment, such as heartbeat, habits and learned skills. The intentional structure is that aspect of the body which consciously engages the environment, such as picking up an object or using a skill (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 26).

The orientational structure then exists on the unconscious level “as the reflection of pre-conscious functions influencing the conscious level”, directing the ‘way’ of the intentional structure without actually determining it (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 26). The intentional structure on the other hand occurs at the conscious level, controlling the orientational structure without deciding it in detail.

### **REPRESENTATION OR SIMULATION: FROM PERCEPTION TO ‘ACCEPTION’**

During the course of my fieldwork, and throughout the two years that I have been climbing, I have been both interested in, and amused by the way in which climbers physically act out the moves of routes when describing them to others. One conversation I overheard from a climber I regularly exchange ‘problems’ with at the UCT bouldering wall is particularly illustrative of this phenomenon.

*He was sitting on the green and red gymnastics mat in Sport Centre hall three, explaining a route he had attempted on the weekend to two of his friends while resting between attempts at a problem the three of them were trying on the training wall. I was sitting a short distance away resting on the edge of one of the bouldering mats below the steeply overhung section of the wall – I had been trying the same problem and had just ‘sent it’ on my fourth attempt.*

*“I got to the second crux, the one on the roof<sup>14</sup> ...”*  
*He had apparently not finished the route he had climbed on the weekend and was in the process of explaining where and why he had fallen.*  
*“You know the second small crux in the roof, where you move off the pinch<sup>15</sup>?”*  
*He leaned back, balancing his weight on his butt and his left foot, raised his right foot into the air, above the height of his head, twisted his midsection so that his body curved slightly to the left and raised his hands up to the height of his right foot, palms facing his right hand side, his fingers imitating the stress of a difficult pinch.*  
*He was on the roof, hands and right foot gripping the rock, his body aligned to get maximum purchase on the small pinch.*  
*“You get onto it like this, but I didn’t stabilize before I moved off it, so I went too far...”*  
*Suddenly he was off balance, he mimed moving backwards as he reached for the hold above the lip of the roof, imitating how his moving from an unstable position caused him to move too much, to go beyond the final point at which he could get any grace out of the pinch.*  
*“And...”*  
*Suddenly his hands and legs came in, pulled towards his centre and he was falling. A casual shake of the head and shrug ended the story, marking dissatisfaction, but also satisfaction, and he was asking them if they wanted to go for a climb the next day.*

The ‘crux’ of a climbing route is the most challenging move of the route and the one that defines its grade<sup>16</sup>. This description then is relating the climber’s experience of just one ‘move’, which he was unable to execute properly, and which cost him the route. His miming the ‘move’ for his friends is indicative of his not conceiving of the route as a series of points on a rock surface. He could alternatively have gestured with his hands to indicate the position of each hold on the route relative to other holds. Instead of in this way creating a token non-indexical map of the hand and footholds however, he foregrounded his own position, indicating that he conceives of the route as a series of bodily positions – as a series of ‘moves’.

This language is ubiquitous; climbers never speak about the arrangement of the hand- and footholds relative to one another. Indeed, I have come to wonder whether this is even a

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<sup>14</sup> A ‘roof’ is a part of the rock that is so over hung as to be horizontal, also referred to as a ‘ceiling’.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Pinch’ refers to a way of gripping a feature of the rock between the thumb and other fingers. It also, as in the usage above, refers to those features of the rock that can be gripped in this way.

<sup>16</sup> The ‘difficulty rating’ given to a climb; determined by general consensus.

possibility. They rather speak of the moves between holds, a point reinforced by Malcolm's description of a 7B<sup>17</sup> problem he had climbed in Rocklands, a premier bouldering area in the Cedarberg.

*He arrived at the UCT wall on the fifth of August. He didn't come to climb, he just came to see who was climbing, and to make sure Matt wasn't "climbing on a rest day". To which Matt replied that he doesn't rest. Malcolm was very happy with himself for climbing a 7B problem, and described it as surprisingly easy; he felt like he had a lot of power, and attributed this to the fact that he had had a two-day rest before his attempt.*

*He described the problem as starting on a rail. (Here he held both his hands in front of his chest, fingers pointed away from him, mimicking the action of matching<sup>18</sup> on a small rail).*

*'Then you go up to a pinch.' Here he mimicked the action as well, even twisting his body slightly to the left as he extended his right hand up to the imaginary pinch as if he were actually performing the technique, the position of his fingers indicating the proportions of the hold. He then stopped his climbing performance to describe the pinch as 'perfect', drawing its hourglass shape in the air simultaneously with both his hands, a real tone of satisfaction in his voice when he exclaimed how perfect it was to hold. Earlier in the day he had explained to me that despite Andrew's power he was not bouldering that well because at Rocklands he had battled to move off a pinch on what I assume was the same problem he was describing here. This perhaps goes some way to explaining his sense of satisfaction (of course the fact that this was the first 7B problem he had climbed may also have something to do with it).*

*'Then you go up to a little intermediate.' At this point, again holding his body in the position he had to get into to reach the pinch, he moved his left hand into a crimp<sup>19</sup> 'undercling'<sup>20</sup> on the imaginary overhanging boulder. Though he did not describe the intermediate as an undercling we were able to recognize it as such by the angle at which he held his hand. This is interesting in that though a non-climber may recognize the angle of his hand and see that he held the grip from the bottom, they would not see from his fingers that it was a crimp, and nor would they see from the angle of his body the way in which gravity was pulling him or the amount of body tension required to prevent this from happening. We climbers could, however, almost feel the move.*

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<sup>17</sup> 7B is a grade within the bouldering grade system originating in France. A 7B problem would be beyond the reach of most recreational climbers.

<sup>18</sup> To 'match' is to move so as to place both of one's hands on the same handhold at the same time.

<sup>19</sup> The term 'crimp' describes one of many ways of gripping the rock, and describes both the action of holding with the very tips of one's fingers, as well as the thin edge of rock being held onto.

<sup>20</sup> An 'undercling' is a handhold that is gripped from below (with the palm of the hand facing upward) rather than from above.

*'From the intermediate it's a long throw out to a shallow two-finger pocket.'*  
*Here Malcolm moved as if to simulate a small swing of his weight to the right (a technique aimed at generating momentum to assist in the long move to the left). He then pretended to rapidly pull himself to the left and stood up slightly on his toes as his left hand released the intermediate and shot out to its full extension about 30 degrees above the horizontal to the left, burying two fingers in a shallow pocket, his right hand still squeezing the pinch.*

*He then explained that from the position on the pinch and the intermediate the shallow pocket was not visible, and he then repeated the move craning his neck backwards and arching his back slightly as he tried to look for the pocket around the edge of the overhang while lunging for it.*

Central to both the delivery and reception of the narratives of both the above cited climbers are 'moves', not maps. Foregrounding the movement between holds highlights the relationship between the body and the rock, the fact that the 'move' is dictated to a large degree by the features of the rock, but is itself a creative act. This is thus not simple determinism as the 'dictation' is not fixed and final by any means. The rock offers a limited suggestion of possibilities so that different climbers might move between the same two points differently, one may 'drop knee'<sup>21</sup>, another might 'rock on'<sup>22</sup>, and yet a third might 'dyno'<sup>23</sup>.

We are able theoretically to articulate the way in which the environment circumscribes action through the use of the notion of 'affordances' (Michael 2000: 110-111), an idea that bridges the gap between the passive and inscribed body according to Foucault, and the active and creative body according to Merleau-Ponty. This model argues that although the environment does not determine our behaviour, it facilitates (and limits) it by offering a range of possible actions that mirror the individual body's corporeal

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<sup>21</sup> A footwork technique in which twisting the leg from the hip so that the knee of that leg ends up facing down, where the leverage generated from dropping the knee moves the centre of gravity higher, allowing for a longer reach.

<sup>22</sup> A footwork technique in which one of the climber's feet is placed high relative to the other and the climber's weight is rocked onto this higher foot, which ends up taking most of the load.

<sup>23</sup> The word 'dyno' is drawn from the dynamic nature of the move it describes. In short, to dyno simply means to jump from one hold to another, a very spectacular move, as for a brief period the climber has no contact with the rock at all.

capabilities. In this way, the environment provides the possibility of a range of actions that can be combined into the activities in which a culture would, according to Goodenough (1994), be rooted. Thus, as Foucault argues, “a space can be designed, equipped and organised to enable effective control over bodies” (Crossley 1996: 107). It however remains true that that space must be animated by an individual engaged in the prescribed activity for it to serve its political function, as the individual’s selection of ‘affordances’ would be influenced by the activity he or she is engaged in (Michael 2000: 111), and as such by her sense of acceptability and effectiveness in that context – what Goodenough (1994) terms her ‘cultural idiolect’.

As an example, in my own training at the UCT bouldering wall I developed a taste for making problems around a crux ‘rock on’. As is common practice, I would share these problems with others that I regularly climbed with, two climbers in particular, both of whom are taller than I, and both of whom would regularly subvert my prized move by simply ‘dynoing’ from a lower foothold, rather than getting their foot up and rocking their weight onto it (which frustrated them greatly as their long frames made this a difficult proposition). This disappointed me greatly, partially because I was too short to do the same, but predominantly because their selection of move literally (re)moved most of the difficulty and hence most of the status of my route and myself. As a corrective measure I began deliberately constructing routes aimed at making it impossible to avoid the crux move in this way, a task that proved impossible. The impossibility stemmed from the fact that, although I was selecting affordances that enabled a particular move of which I was and still am particularly fond, others are used to different moves and have differently shaped bodies. While the affordances I selected mirrored my ability to use a ‘rock-on’, they inevitably mirrored other abilities in Malcolm and Dom who, by animating the problem differently, subverted my own ‘political’ intention.

It must be emphasised that, while the features of the environment that afford actions can be said to objectively exist independently of any individual, it is only through creative engagement with these features that an individual can transform them into affordances. At the main ‘crag’ on the Silvermine nature reserve there is a beautiful route called *Silver*

*Streak* that is graded 26<sup>24</sup> and my experience of climbing this route with Felix is a good example of how although the features are unproblematically there, it takes work to render them affordances.

Near the top of *Silver Streak* one has to follow a ‘line’ that takes one up the corner edge of a large jutting piece of rock. Felix was first to attempt the route on the day in question (he had already climbed it a week previously) and from my position on the ground I watched with admiration as he used a series of low ‘heel hooks’ to stabilise himself during the two moves that it took to get beyond this, the second of *Silver Streak*’s cruxes. From twenty meters below I was unable to realise fully the genius of his chosen sequence, but it soon hit me when I found myself looking up from just below that section, my forearms pumped out, unable to see any way to move on – unable to generate/find any affordances. Before I commenced my attempt of the route Felix had told me to remember to use the two underclings to move up through this technical<sup>25</sup> section, but I could only see one, and I could see no way to get into a position to use it. Had I not had Felix with me I would most certainly not have finished the route. He talked me through the technical sequence, and with his advice it was as if affordances were materialising out of thin air. I am not exaggerating, it amazed me to see how using one technique namely ‘heel-hooking’ allowed me to get into a position in which the small crimpy undercling for my left hand and the very flat sloping ‘side-pull’<sup>26</sup> for my right hand became useful. These features of the rock were always there, but it was only through using my body in a specific technique, on the basis of ‘beta’<sup>27</sup> from Felix, that these became affordances. Felix was able to draw on his history and experience of rock climbing to construct a solution where through my novice eyes I saw only unfriendly and unhelpful rock. Developing this way of perceiving the rock is what I believe Felix means when he tells

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<sup>24</sup> Within the South African grading system for ‘sport’ climbing, 26 is a moderately difficult climb marking the transition into the more difficult routes.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Technical’ in this instance refers to a series of moves that require technique rather than strength or power to execute. Obviously such moves require an amount of strength and power; a sequence of moves is described as technical when the difficulty of the sequence derives from the demands they place on the climber’s technique.

<sup>26</sup> Describes a handhold that is gripped from the side rather than from the top.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Beta’, is the second hand information about the particularities of a climbing ‘problem’ or ‘route’ a climber is attempting, obtained from a person that has already climbed the ‘route’ or ‘problem’.

me that I need to transfer my strength from the bouldering wall into strength on the rock – it has little to do with the strength of my muscles and more to do with my ability to render affordances out of the rock.

Alain Berthoz (1997) offers an explanation in keeping with, but extending, the idea of affordances, for the embodied nature of the two climbing narratives presented above. It rests on his concept of ‘topokinetic’ or ‘topokinesthetic’ memory, which he presents in opposition to topographic memory. Here, the latter is understood to be one of two things: either “a form of procedural memory, because it involves a succession of places or local scenes and movements”; or “a survey of the places that represent the trip as on a geographic map” (Berthoz 1997: 117). Topokinetic memory, by contrast, is dynamic memory that evokes an internal simulation of the path, rather than simply a mental representation of it (Berthoz 1997: 125).

This distinction between simulation and representation is crucial to understanding Berthoz’s model. Bouveresse (1995), quoted in Berthoz (1997: 21), points out the danger and inherent dualism in theories that employ the concept of representation.

Theories that describe perception as the construction of internal representations of the external world commit themselves at the outset to a path that may perhaps lead somewhere, but not where they claim to go. If we assume that our concept of mental representation is inspired by the idea of a material image for which the object itself is lacking, and that this image we have is distinct from the object itself, it is unlikely that we can thereby achieve a satisfactory theory of how objects are perceived.

In short, the concept of representation offers no possibility of a dynamic relationship between its bearer and the-world-out-there, as it is a purely mental phenomenon, isolated and distinct from the object itself.

Simulation [by distinction] means the whole of an action being orchestrated in the brain by internal models of physical reality that are not mathematical operations but real neurons whose properties of form, resistance, oscillation, and amplification are part of the physical world, in tune with the external world. (Berthoz 1997: 22).

By way of example, “if the neurons of the colliculus allow a cat to catch a mouse by anticipating its future position, it is because the neurons are sensitive to the velocity of movement: they do not calculate a velocity” (Berthoz 1997: 22). Thus, although both are biological models, the difference between a representation and a simulation is that the latter is embodied in physical reality, an important distinction that allows Berthoz to propose that memory of movement is both retained and detected by the sensory receptors themselves, and not held as a representation in the mind. Hence, when presented with a navigational task, the animal produces an internal simulation of the path that allows it to anticipate the configuration of specific receptors en route. In the performance of the task, the brain is then engaged in at least two functions. Firstly it is constantly calling on anticipatory mechanisms, as well as on past experience to construct a simulation of the path, quite literally, a feel for it. Secondly, it from time to time checks to make sure that the state of the groupings of sensory receptors is in keeping with the predictions of the simulation (Berthoz 1997: 5).

The way in which this shift from representation to simulation impacts on the narratives of routes outlined earlier is via the effects this shift has on our notion of perception.

“Perception is constrained by action; it is an internal simulation of action. It is judgement and decision making, and it is anticipation of the consequences of action” (Berthoz 1997: 9). In other words, we are at this point required to discard the distinction between perception and action, at least at the level of what is happening in our nervous system. Hence I introduce the term ‘acception’.

When we perceive an object, an armchair, for example, we do not see ourselves as acting at that instant, because we are still standing, unmoving, perceiving the armchair. This is an illusion. In reality, we already have within us the action we associate with the armchair, which we call a perceptual schema—here, the action of sitting in a particular way in the armchair. (Janet 1935 quoted in Berthoz 1997: 11).

Thus, when enacting descriptions of their recent climbs, the climbers mentioned earlier are in effect re-living the configurations of the various sensory receptors that contributed

to their kinaesthesia, their 'sense of movement', which is retained in the receptors themselves. Rather than being representations of the action enabling movement between the affordances of a route or problem relative to one another, these narrative performances are simulations of the movements along the path, drawn from the past kinesthetic, and other sensory experience of the organism as it interacted with the affordances of the environment. What I am asserting is thus that, whether the armchair is directly perceived by the eyes or held in the mind's eye, the perception cannot be dissociated from the feeling of the action of sitting in the chair. The two are inextricably intertwined.

The reason for this inability to dissociate the object from the action associated with it is at the very heart of our ability to sense space, and here the kinesthetic sense is of paramount importance.

To localize an object simply means to represent to oneself the movements that would be necessary to reach it. I will explain myself. It is not a question of representing the movements themselves in space, but solely of representing to oneself the muscular sensations which accompany these movements and which do not presuppose the preexistence of the notion of space. (Berthoz 1997: 37)

This once again reiterates that understanding space is a matter of simulation, without there being a need to introduce either the idea of geometric space or of topographical representations of this space. On *Silver Streak* Felix was able to perceive the solution while I was not because he could simulate using the relevant features in a specific technique that was far from my mind, which at the time was more concerned with my painfully pumped out forearms. Put differently, he was able to perceive the afforded solution because the perception of these affordances proceeded from his body, his history of movement on rock, rather than proceeding from an objective environment. Rather than being understood as a change in grid position in absolute or geometric space, a change in position is signalled by a modification in the states of sensory receptors, those associated with kinesthetic sense being chief among these. Quoting from Poincaré (1907), Berthoz clarifies thus:

“[A] motionless being,” he adds, “could never have acquired [the idea of space], because, not being able to correct by his movements the effects of the change of position of external objects, he would have had no reason to distinguish them from changes of state.” Sight and touch would not be able to give us a sense of space without the “muscular sense.” (Berthoz 1997: 38)

From this philosophical point it follows that our ongoing perception of being located spatially, and hence our ability to navigate, must stem from the fact that we constantly unconsciously simulate the actions associated with the affordances relevant to the activity or action we are engaged in; that our sense of location is fundamentally the simulation of possible actions, or the perpetual embodiment of our purpose directed perceptual field. In other words our very sense of space is a product of our unconscious simulation, on the basis of our prior experience, of the moves available to us.

Within this frame, the matrix Ingold (2000) proposes as an alternative to the cognitive map becomes much more than a representation of our environment; it is the historically informed simulation, carried out unconsciously, of all the possibilities of movement and action afforded us in a particular situation. My knowledge of the world not given me by my senses, what lies beyond the setting in which I am currently, develops from this setting by way of “a kind of practical synthesis” that proceeds “as the necessary consequence of a certain law of the development of my perception” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 14). It is not so much the ordering of space within an overarching framework (representation), but the ongoing projection of the body into the world beyond the situation, from the situation on the basis of an embodied history of movement (simulation).

The concept of acception, and its role in structuring the environment is best demonstrated when considering an offshoot of climbing called “buildering”. Since I took up climbing in 2001 I have looked at buildings very differently, seeing affordances that would allow me to climb them. I thought that I was fairly unique in this regard until, after he began climbing about a year later, Donovan mentioned to me that he too was looking at buildings with an eye to climbing them.

Having harboured this desire to climb buildings for two years, I jumped at the opportunity when I was invited in October 2003 to participate in a 'buildering' day at UCT. On the whole it was not a day that I enjoyed very much as most of it was taken up with the macho posturing of the other climbers. It seemed to me as if they were more interested in being perceived by other people on campus as daring and unrestrained individuals, with the result that there was less climbing than wrestling and shouting and general shirtless tom-foolery. While this served to illustrate a young buck masculinity based on one-upmanship, this is beyond the scope of my discussion here. Most of the buildering that did however occur on that day took place around the entrance of the UCT Zoology building, and there was no difference between my experience of setting problems here, setting problems at the UCT bouldering wall, or finding a line to climb at a crag or on a boulder. Window frames, features of the plaster, pillars, ledges and ornamental decorations were instantly identified as affordances, and tried.

This day of 'buildering' clearly illustrated for me that the way an individual sees the world around them is a product of their cultural idiolect in the sense that perception proceeds from the body. This is the best evidence I have thus far encountered for the centrality of the body in our construction of the environment through which we move. , As a result of the lateral integration of climbers' movement along 'routes' and 'problems' into what Ingold (2000) terms the 'region' in which they dwell (the region being their entire history of movement), buildings come to enfold within their vertical surfaces the movement associated with and acquired through rock climbing.

Possessing the corporeal capital associated with climbing opens the door for perceiving the world somewhat differently; for producing a different urban landscape to that produced by skateboarding or driving for example. If Poincare's point (1907, quoted in Berthoz 1997: 38) is that the sense of movement is necessary to the perception of space, then it must follow that as one introduces a new kind of movement to one's repertoire, one's perception of space must change too. In short, one's sense of the environment proceeds from the corporeal capital that is the basis of the ongoing simulation (what I

But how does shifting our understanding of space away from understanding it as a series of localities towards conceiving it as a matrix of simulated movements between places and objects (that simultaneously constitutes those objects and places) help to explain my and Donovan's performance at the bridge relative to Matthew's? Perhaps a clue lies in what Mauss (1973) termed the specificity of all techniques.

An example: during the war I was able to make many observations on this specificity of techniques. E.g. the technique of digging. The English troops I was with did not know how to use French spades, which forced us to change 8,000 spades a division when we relieved a French division, and vice versa. This plainly shows that a manual knack can only be learnt slowly (Mauss, 1973: 71).

Clearly, the manual knack of digging a hole with an English spade cannot be considered wayfinding. The more interesting question however is: Can wayfinding be considered a 'manual knack' in the same way as digging with an English spade? For space to be anything other than abstract and passive it seems this question must necessarily be answered in the affirmative.

This is the obvious advantage we gain by adopting Casey's notion of a laterally integrated matrix (1996: 30). It allows us to begin to consider wayfinding as an ongoing, dynamic activity that is inseparable from the actual movements (past or present) of the organism.

As will be made clear in the next example, each climber builds up a repertoire of techniques through his or her training and experience on different routes (through building up a matrix of movement), which s/he then draws on to exploit the available affordances whenever s/he attempts to climb a route, familiar or not. Here Ichikawa's 'orientational structure' is very helpful in articulating the central role of the body in the individual's ability to (make) sense (of) space. A rock climber will either fail or succeed in her attempt, depending firstly on how well she reads or interprets the requirements of the 'move' – which will determine the techniques she deploys to construct the 'move'

between A and B – and secondly, on whether or not she is physically capable of executing the selected technique under the stresses of the particular situation.

*After climbing an easy '15' on the south side of the rocky formation containing the many climbs around Tunnel Cave, which Roger 'lead' and Donovan and I 'top roped'<sup>28</sup>, we moved around to 'Talking to the Trees', a '19' on the northern side. Donovan and I had met Roger at the UCT bouldering wall, he and Donovan had been sharing 'problems' and he had invited us out with him for a climb. It would be the first time Donovan and I got outdoors and climbed on rock.*

*Roger told me that I should lead this one, and explained to me the proper procedure for clipping the 'quick-draws'<sup>29</sup> into the 'bolts'<sup>30</sup>, and the way in which to clip the rope through the 'quick-draws'. I was very nervous; with this kind of overhang if I fell I could swing back into the rocks, my body a weight at the end of a pendulum as long as my 'run out'<sup>31</sup>. I resolved not to fall. The moves were long, but the holds were huge 'jugs'<sup>32</sup> that I could easily bury my hands in and relax onto.*

*I moved through the tricky first moves, remembering to take my time and breathe. Not thinking of what was below me, I patiently and slowly executed the long moves, taking time to set each one up: looking for solid foot placements; locating the next hold; feeling myself into a stable balanced position, shifting my weight until I could feel it evenly distributed in such a way as to maximize the purchase I could get from my hands while taking most of the weight on my feet; and then moving, applying whatever technique I had at my disposal to cover the distance, while remaining balanced and maintaining positive force on my hands and feet; then sinking into the next handhold and repeating the process.*

*It was my first 'redpoint'<sup>33</sup>, the route was well within my ability, I could afford to hang on and survey my options, draw on my experience of similar moves and techniques I had executed hundreds of times before at the climbing wall, make the*

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<sup>28</sup> "To climb a pitch [or 'route'] without leading it; the rope is attached from above" (Hattingh, 2000:155). A rope attached from above is in addition referred to as a 'top rope'.

<sup>29</sup> A quick-draw consists of "two carabiners joined by a short sewn sling. Many variations exist, but most climbers prefer one end to have a straightgate carabiner, which clips the bolt or peg, and the other a bentgate clipgate, which allows the rope to be clipped quickly and easily" (Hattingh, 2000:66).

<sup>30</sup> 'A metal expansion bolt, glued or fastened into a predrilled hole in the rock face; used for belays or running protection' (Hattingh, 2000:154).

<sup>31</sup> Describes either the distance between two points of protection on a 'route', or a long section of a route that is not protected. The longer the run out, the further the potential fall, as the distance of the fall will be twice that of the run out.

<sup>32</sup> 'Jug' is a vernacular description of a particularly easy to use handhold that is so in-cut that the climber can hook his or her fingers into it with very little strain.

<sup>33</sup> 'Redpoint' describes the successful completion of a sport route in which the climber places no pressure on any of the anchor points. It means leading a route without falling or resting on the tension of the rope.

*necessary adjustments that I knew were right when my body told me, and then move from position A to position B.*

Explanation of this episode in terms of Ingold's alternative model of spatial understanding goes a long way to explaining why Matthew out-performed Donovan and me on the bridge despite his not having climbed for so long. *Talking to the Trees* takes the climber through a relatively steep overhang and requires power to execute the long moves, between the good handholds. The 'routes' at the bridge are by contrast 'traverses' along a vertical wall, with smaller hand and footholds and as a result require balance rather than power.

The above example illustrates well how 'moves', and therefore affordances, are best explained with lateral integration, as each required 'move' is constructed out of the experience of every other move. In a very real sense then, because each affordance requires creative engagement, I navigated by evaluating the affordances to know where I was and where I needed to go, and by simulating how I needed to move in order to get there. So, returning to the episode on *Talking to the Trees*: because the UCT bouldering wall, which has been the site of my training throughout my climbing history, offers a range of affordances similar to those offered by *Talking to the Trees*, which demand upper-body strength, I was able to more accurately simulate the moves on the basis of past experience and anticipate the consequences of those moves than what I was at the bridge with Matthew, where balance and control were more important than upper body strength and power. I was able to climb *Talking to the Trees* with relative ease, although I was a stranger to it, by applying the embodied knowledge I had gained at the wall.

The route mirrored my corporeal abilities, which includes my strength, technical skill, and the range of configurations of sensory receptors that are associated with the execution of particular movements in the past, all of which form part of my idiolectal matrix of climbing movement, and all of which were developed in what Mauss would have termed a habitus – through training in a particular social and physical environment (the climbing wall at UCT) along particular routes, and all of which form part of what

Ichikawa has termed the orientational structure of the body. Douglas (1970) would of course assert that there is nothing natural about the moves that comprise my idiolectual matrix as they were developed in a habitus, which according to Mauss (1973), is social in nature. Though the dichotomy on which such an assertion would be based is now redundant, it provides a useful frame for introducing the distinction between the region (idiolectual matrix) and the habitus. The former is the product of individual experience and corresponds to Goodenough's (1994) cultural idiolect. The latter is the product of negotiated collective experience, and as such corresponds to what Goodenough (1994) terms the 'public record'. I associate the habitus with the public record on the grounds that the feature of the habitus most foregrounded by Mauss (1973: 73), Merleau-Ponty (Crossley 1996: 101) and Bourdieu (1990: 56) is that it only exists as a product of actors' interactions with each other. The habitus is constituted in social conditions (Bourdieu 1990: 56), which carries us into the realm of social power. The distinction between the two being made here is similar to Bourdieu's distinguishing between the habitus and the hexis, where "it is in bodily hexis that the idiosyncratic (the personal) combines with the systematic (the social)" (Jenkins 1992: 75). Idiolectual matrix however, more than hexis, foregrounds the relationship between individuals and the affordances of the places they animate, and is thus better suited to an attempt to marry culture and space in the body.

At the bridge, I lacked the corporeal capital necessary to master the traverse on my first attempt; I was unable to achieve unity at the level of the orientational structure. Here I, as an intelligent organism, was a stranger, whereas on *Talking to the Trees* I was more local. At the bridge Matthew as an intelligent organism knew how to move along the wall, his knowledge of the 'moves' arising out of the affordances was embodied in the sense that he possessed the corporeal capital necessary to accurately simulate and execute the moves needed to traverse along the affordances with which he was presented.

Here we have the problematisation of the binary stranger/local in terms of Mauss's (1973) specificity of techniques – having learned to climb on a steeply overhanging bouldering wall at UCT I was 'at home' on *Talking to the Trees*, but experienced the balance centred moves of the traverses at the bridge as foreign and difficult. Here the

distinction between stranger and local runs along the lines of the degree to which the individual knows how to 'be' in a place in order to acceptably and effectively find their way around; where the knowledge necessary for the activity of wayfinding is carried in the organism as a whole – in the sensory receptors themselves – and not as a representation held in the head. To return to Goodenough's language, the difference between the local and the stranger is marked by the degree to which they have embodied the knowledge of what is effective and acceptable that is necessary to act successfully in any given context, and wayfinding cannot be without a context. The cognitive map hypothesis is not capable of dealing with sliding scales of local- and strangeness. Either one possesses a cognitive map of the area (is local) or one does not and is a stranger. It is my contention that this revision of our understanding of space begins to answer the question of how we can "account sociologically" for the fact that the "distance" between the rich in Bombay and the rich in London may be much shorter between different classes in "the same" city (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 20).

What I am proposing here is that the ongoing process of simulation that gives rise to our perception of space (bearing in mind that the distinction between action and perception can no longer be sustained) forms a crucial part of the orientational structure of the body, as do strength, flexibility, power, endurance and learned bodily techniques. My contention is that on *Talking to the Trees* I had sufficient unity at the level of the orientational structure to carry out my intended actions; I possessed the corporeal capital needed to raise the simulated moves to the level of the intentional structure. On the bridge Donovan and I lacked this necessary pre-conscious unity; the possibilities presented to our conscious intentions were not sufficiently embodied at the pre-conscious level.

In the case of both route descriptions offered thus far, both were given by climbers that had already actually climbed the route. The process of internalizing the route however, begins before the climber even touches the rock, or in the case of the bouldering competition that informs the discussion that follows, the plastic. At that competition I was able to observe three strategies used by climbers to anticipate the sequence of

movement that would be required to do the problem. The pressure that the structure of the points system puts on climbers to ‘flash’<sup>34</sup> problems produced an ideal setting for observing this phenomena as climbers spent more time preparing for problems than they would in a training session, or even on rock. The three strategies are: firstly, solo simulation; secondly, partner-assisted simulation; and thirdly, observation-assisted simulation.

### **Solo Simulation.**

This strategy consists of an individual climber standing alone in front of a ‘problem’ and acting out the moves with which he intends to climb it. This equals the translation of the arrangement of affordances (holds) in space into a sequence of actions (‘moves’). In the first instance I observed climbers alone in front of ‘problems’ physically acting out the series of moves with which they intended to solve the ‘problem’. I observed a long haired climber from Stellenbosch standing, feet shoulder width apart, in front of ‘problem’ five, his arms out in front of him, elbows bent a little over ninety degrees, hands above shoulder height almost touching one another and relaxed halfway between a fist and an open hand. I could tell by the direction of his gaze, almost trans-like with concentration, that he was working out the problem’s final three moves. In his mind he was matching on a large flat ‘crimp’ just above the overhanging section of the wall. Slowly he shifted his weight onto his right leg, and crossed his left arm over his right, imagining executing a ‘crossover’<sup>35</sup> with his left hand onto a much smaller ‘crimp’ up and to the left of the one on which he was matching. This miming of the crossover indicates that in examining the problem the climber in question was able to draw from his experience of moving between similarly arranged affordances to anticipate the move he will use in his attempt of the problem.

This process need not of course involve acting out the moves. Two further examples illustrate this point. One of the first routes I climbed on rock was ‘*Perverted Picasso*’; a

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<sup>34</sup> To flash a ‘route’ or ‘problem’ means to complete it with no falls on ones first attempt. This term is most commonly applied in bouldering, and is not used in traditional climbing at all.

<sup>35</sup> The act of crossing one hand over the other to reach the next available handhold on the route while the other hand is holding onto a hold already.

sport route at Peer's Cave above Fishoek in Cape Town graded nineteen. I accompanied Roger and Donovan, and as both Roger and I had already led a route that day it fell to Donovan this time. On his first attempt he got through the first section of the route, but was unable to get through the 'cruz' because he was unable to find a good handhold for the long move needed to pass over a jutting piece of rock that we described as a nose (wondering if this feature had anything to do with the name given to the route). Moving around the nose kept us busy for some time. I say 'us' because, although Donovan was the one doing the climbing, Roger and I were constantly shouting up advice as all three of us scoured the surface of the rock with our eyes. If Donovan saw something that looked promising he tried it, if Roger or I pointed something out he would try it. On his third attempt at the route, and after about thirty minutes of trying, Donovan found a 'side-pull' for his right hand that he was able to do a 'layback' off. This enabled him to reach over the nose quite easily with his left hand and move on to finish the route comfortably.

Given that Donovan's hands were occupied in holding him onto the rock, and that Rogers were being used to belay<sup>36</sup> Donovan, it is obvious that they could not act out the moves for themselves, even though both were suggesting moves. This means that the same anticipatory faculty as that displayed by the climber at the competition was in operation, and that it needn't always be performed. But performing does seem to assist in constructing an accurate simulation.

Although this strategy is primarily visual, Donovan's many attempts to place his hands on 'Perverted Picasso' are evidence of the primacy of touch and kinesthesia over sight in climbing. In this example sight was used to anticipate possible moves, but touch was used to test the friction of the rock while kinaesthesia was used to determine whether or not Donovan's joints and muscles would be able to hold the strain of the movement to which his selection of hand and foot placements would commit him.

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<sup>36</sup> 'The 'system' used to stop a fall by means of a rope – includes the anchor, the belayer and the belay devices or method. To 'belay' is to hold the rope in such a way as to arrest a fall' (Hattingh, 2000:154).

This sense hierarchy was also well displayed when the climber who had rehearsed the crossover on ‘problem’ five at the competition finally got to executing his plan. He managed to arrive at the matching position from which the rehearsal I had witnessed had started. But, as he released his left hand to make the crossover to the smaller ‘crimp’ up and to his left, he realized that his right hand was not going to support him for the duration that it would take him to get into position to be able to hold the smaller ‘crimp’. The result was that he fell back down onto the ‘match’ almost immediately and reconsidered his options. He elected to rather ‘rock on’ to his right leg in a ‘dynamic’ move out to the ‘pinch’ about sixty centimetres right of the small ‘crimp’ that was his original mark. Having ‘stuck’ the pinch he was able to ‘bump’ his left hand onto the small crimp and ‘top out’<sup>37</sup> from there. Here his success was due not to his ability to anticipate the sequence of moves before leaving the ground, but to his ability to revise his plan based on the kinaesthetic feedback that measures the degree of ‘fit’ between the simulation and the execution.

### **Partner-assisted Simulation.**

This strategy consists predominantly in getting ‘beta’ from one or more climbers that have already successfully completed or even just attempted the ‘problem’. ‘Beta’ is information about the sequence of a ‘problem’ based on another climber’s experience of doing it. The benefit of this strategy is that, in addition to anticipating the moves on the basis of visual data alone, one vicariously gains access to another climber’s kinaesthetic and tactile experience of the route. In a typical encounter of this kind, a climber who has already completed the ‘route’ or ‘problem’ will act out and describe a sequence of moves for the climber who has yet to make an attempt, giving an account of the characteristics of a hand or foothold and suggesting which techniques are best suited to them.

At the competition I partnered myself with Felix and, because I climbed the first couple of routes first, I was able to give him information about them before he climbed them. On problem ten the second move required a long dynamic move off a sloping ‘pinch’, to

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<sup>37</sup> To ‘top out’ is to successfully reach the top of a ‘route’ or ‘problem’. Completion of the ‘route’ or ‘problem’ is achieved when the climber reaches the hold deemed to be the ‘top’. Taking this hold is called the ‘top out’.

a big ‘sloper’<sup>38</sup> far up and to the left on the most overhung section of the wall. My hand-strength on slopers is an area I am trying to improve in my own climbing so I am always nervous when presented with problems or routes that require me to move off or onto them. When I attempted the problem however I was pleasantly surprised to find that the amount of friction afforded by both these holds, particularly the sloping ‘pinch’, was far higher than that offered by similar holds at the UCT bouldering wall, my experience of which had informed my initial evaluation of the problem.

I had originally intended to attempt the move statically as this would have allowed me to maintain a more even and constant downward force on the sloping pinch. However, when I grabbed the sloping pinch between my thumb and fingers, getting as much of my palm on the hold as possible, and felt the good friction it afforded I decided it would be more efficient to do the move dynamically, as the friction would make it possible to resist the sideways force this would involve. This technique required me to jump off my left leg from a low foothold, with the result that my feet would ‘cut loose’. In executing this move, the only point of contact with the wall after jumping would be the right hand on the sloping pinch. This means that the right arm, which remains straight throughout, functions like a spoke, the rest of the body pivoting around the right hand. It thus falls to the right hand to counter the centrifugal force this pivoting movement generates. As a result of the good friction I was able to prevent myself from simply flying off to the left as I jumped, which would certainly have been the case on a sloping pinch with less friction.

After completing the route I was able to tell Felix that he should do the move dynamically, just ‘jump for it’ and not worry, because the sloping pinch had really excellent friction. Later, when Ryan asked me about the route, I was able to give him the same information about the possible ‘move’ afforded by the friction of the holds. This tactile information was then incorporated into their visually based models of the route (as discussed in the preceding section), and increased the accuracy of their ‘translation’ of

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<sup>38</sup> A handhold that slopes towards the climber providing no edge into which to hook his or her fingers. Using these holds requires good friction between the climber’s hand and the rock as well as good balance, as the climber cannot, in the absence of a positive edge, use this hold to pull him or herself toward the rock.

the affordances by introducing another modality, that is higher up in the hierarchy of senses. While the above example illustrates the role of ‘beta’ in acquiring tactile information, the following indicates that the same is true for kinaesthetic information.

On route twelve the ‘top-out’ presented the climber with two possible moves. In the first instance, one could pinch the small vertically aligned rectangular block in their left hand and rock on to a foothold that would require one to lift their right foot so that it was almost level with his or her waist about fifty centimetres to the right. Alternatively, one could crimp the outer edge of the rectangular block and ‘top out’ using a ‘lay back’<sup>39</sup>, by twisting ninety degrees to the left, and using an ‘inside step’<sup>40</sup> with the right foot, onto a foothold slightly to the left of the handhold about one meter below it. The second option would put more pressure on the fingers of the left hand, but would require much less body tension, and consequently less energy to maintain balance throughout the move.

I had originally intended to top out from this position using the ‘rock on’ option, believing that the hold was flat on both edges, which would have made the ‘crimp’ necessary in the ‘lay back’ option quite strenuous. When my left hand reached the hold, however, I found it to be massively ‘in-cut’ on the left hand side, which meant that I could hook all four of my fingers into it, a characteristic that made the ‘crimp’ and ‘lay back’ option far more appealing than the ‘pinch’ and ‘rock on’. The reason for this is that a ‘positive’<sup>41</sup> edge provides much more purchase for one’s fingers, meaning that there is far less tension in the hand, making this move generally more efficient. After having completed the problem I told Felix that the top handhold was massively ‘in-cut’, that it

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Lay back’: A technique for climbing with side pulls (handholds gripped from the side as opposed to the top) in which the climber twists his or her body such that they are in a sideways position relative to the rock, and in which they pull sideways on a handhold to create room to step higher with the leg that is closest to the rock face. In this technique the legs are used in opposition to the arms, pushing against the pull of the arms so as to generate enough sideways force to be able to use the side pulls.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Inside Step’: A technique suited to sideways rather than upward movement on a climb. If a climber is moving to his or her left, an inside step would entail moving the right foot onto a hold that is to the left of the left foot’s position. This is achieved by twisting to the left and passing the right foot between the left leg and the rock face.

<sup>41</sup> A handhold is ‘positive’ when it is in-cut so as to enable one to hook ones fingers into it. It is a term that can apply to both large and small holds that provide a raised edge for the fingers to hold onto.

felt 'big enough to park a car in' and, consequently that the 'lay back' was the best approach to take.

The above two examples illustrate how tactile and kinaesthetic information can be incorporated verbally into the visually constructed model of a problem. It increases the climber's chances of success by providing information that would otherwise have to be discovered en route. Put differently, good 'beta' could see a climber avoid having to waste time and energy making these discoveries for themselves. By collecting second-hand tactile and kinaesthetic information to complement the visually based anticipated sequence of moves one intends to use, one is able to attempt a problem with a far more accurate idea of what to expect.

What must be noted here, however, is that when obtaining 'beta' climbers do not and cannot approach just anybody. The reason for this is that the difficulty of routes and problems is subjective in that it is relative to the level at which the climber is climbing, and also to their particular climbing style. For example, a climber with an 'on-sight' level of twenty-seven, will find a 'route' graded twenty-five quite easy, whereas a different climber with an 'on-sight' level of twenty-one will find the same 'route' quite difficult. It therefore follows that 'beta' will be most valuable if it comes from a climber with roughly the same 'on-sight' level.

Beyond simply the level of the two climbers, their climbing style is also a factor that needs to be considered. Take for example the case of Malcolm and Gus, as relayed in a conversation between Andrew, Matt and myself at the UCT training wall. We were talking about a 'problem' set by Matt and Malcolm, the seventh move of which was a very long 'span'<sup>42</sup>. The move required a lot of power to reach the small crimp about a meter and a half to the left of the pair of equally small crimps from which it started. And if one successfully covered the distance it required tremendous strength to support oneself on one's outstretched arms. This type of move, the 'span', had become a staple

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<sup>42</sup> Describes a move in which the climber has both arms stretched out horizontally between two handholds and is supporting his or her bodyweight on these outstretched arms with more or less support available from foot placements.

of Malcolm's problems, and both Andrew and I were battling to 'stick'<sup>43</sup> this particular one.

As we were talking about this problem our conversation shifted to how Malcolm's strength in this area was a product of the types of problems he had customarily set in his climbing training. Andrew remarked how significant this kind of individual style is by way of a comparison of Malcolm with Gus. He asserted that it is possible to imagine both of them being able to climb sport routes graded twenty seven, but each being unable to climb the same twenty sevens because they have such different styles. Malcolm's strength is his power, strength and reach, while Gus's are his hand strength and endurance. Andrew conjectured that Malcolm would thus enjoy more success on shorter routes requiring power and reach, while Gus would perform better on longer problems in which hand strength and endurance come into play.

This is not to say that 'beta' from a much better climber than oneself is of no value, as they may be able to offer technical advice that one may otherwise not have thought of. In fact, working on projects with a climber better than oneself, or with a different style and set of strengths and weaknesses, is one of the best ways of expanding one's repertoire of moves, which will ultimately expand the set of affordances available on 'routes' and 'problems'. What it does say however is that it is essential to have a working knowledge of the climbing level of the person from who you are getting information, as this will only be usable if it can be situated relative to one's own climbing history with that particular individual. This is because individual climbers have particular strengths and weaknesses, so that a move that is easy for one may be difficult for the other, and vice versa.

### **Observation-assisted Simulation.**

This third strategy is doubtlessly the one that would be most difficult for a non-climber to note, as it involves only standing still in front of problems and watching other climbers attempt them while judging the merits of the 'moves' they select to negotiate the

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<sup>43</sup> To 'stick' a move is to complete it successfully.

arrangement of holds available to them. In short, this strategy involves watching other climbers on 'problems' and noting which 'moves' work in difficult situations and which do not.

This strategy featured strongly in my own approach to the problems, most notably on problems eight and one. On eight the 'top-out' was the move that I considered to be the most challenging. It required one to move off a sloping 'rail' and cover about seventy centimetres to grab the top of the wooden panel that formed the structure of the bouldering wall. I thought the move difficult because both of the possible foot placements were awkward. In the first foot option one could keep one's right foot on a hold so far down the wall that one would be at full stretch, one's arms almost straight above one's head. In the second option one could get one's left foot up to the next available foothold which would be at roughly the height of and in line with one's hip as one hung at full stretch. Each of these possible 'moves' would be quite difficult, I thought, with the first option requiring a large dynamic jump (made difficult by the slope of the 'rail', which afforded nothing 'positive' to hold on to, but which would put less pressure on one's fingers), and the second option requiring a very controlled 'static' move during which it would be difficult to maintain balance and avoid slipping off the rail, and which would be asking a lot of one's right hand, which would have to 'crimp' the 'rail' on its own while the left slowly reached for the top. I was proved correct in my judgment of the difficulty presented by this configuration of holds when I noted that most of the climbers not finishing the problem were coming off on the 'top-out'.

I also noted that most of those failing to finish were attempting to get a left foot up and do the move statically. Given the lack of any 'positive' purchase offered by the 'rail' those coming off were falling because they were unable to avoid slipping off as a result of the backward force (pushing them almost directly away from the wall) generated by the action of raising their left foot to just slightly left of their left hip. If the rail were 'positive' it would have been possible for climbers attempting the 'high-step' to use the fingers of their right hand to pull themselves in and hold their weight close to the wall. As it was, however, staying close to the wall would in this instance have depended more

on raw strength, flexibility, and balance. Doing the move this way would require more static strength than would the dynamic alternative and would as a result be less energy efficient.

Those climbers doing the move dynamically from the lower of the two possible footholds were enjoying far greater success and, noting that climbers who I knew to have better hand strength, and who were shorter than myself (both of which would make the ‘high-step’ easier), were falling on this move, I decided to take the dynamic approach. I also observed Matt coming off on the route as a result of using the wrong foothold on a lower move. So when I sat down to begin the ‘problem’<sup>44</sup> I had decided exactly what I was going to do. I had seen Malcolm come off on the first move earlier, which he had attributed to his trying to do it statically. So I did it dynamically. On the second move I remembered Matt coming off and put my left foot on the lower foothold. When I came to the top-out I carefully changed feet on the lower foothold and did the move dynamically, and got maximum points for having ‘flashed’ the route.

What these three strategies illustrate, as did Felix’s advice to me on *Silver Streak*, is the role played by the habitus in the construction of the idiolectual matrix. In all cases, barring what I have called solo-simulation, the solution to the problems facing the climbers was at least partially constructed within an interaction between climbers; each building up vicariously an idea of what would be effective as a solution, and contributing to the production of a public record on the basis of the relative success of the various proposed solutions. The imaginative and technical work needed to unlock affordances is thus undoubtedly a product not only of individual practical experience, but also of social learning (a point that will be pursued in the next chapter when I explore the nature and construction of the climbing body). For the climber to be successful, however, this must become part of his or her climbing idiolect; of the orientational structure of the body.

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<sup>44</sup> All the competition ‘problems’ required a ‘bum-start’, meaning that the last part of the climber to leave the ground when attempting the ‘problem’ must be his or her ‘bum’.

What I have done in this chapter is use climbers' narratives (both verbal and performed) of routes they have encountered as a position from which to re-imagine the relationship of culture to space by moving away from the vertical integration rationality (critiqued in the preceding chapter) that has tended to dominate Western thinking under modernism<sup>45</sup>. Demonstrating the centrality of embodied simulation in climbers' narratives of routes they have climbed in the past, and showing the centrality of 'acception' (anticipatory simulation) in their construction of a sequence of moves when preparing to climb an unfamiliar route, has enabled me to side-step the problem of how to get beyond both the isomorphism of culture and place that Gupta and Ferguson (1992) critique, as well as the problem of doing anthropology in a world characterised by globalisation (assuming the latter to be the case). This is achieved by demonstrating that the spatial competence of rock climbers is not cultural in the sense that different cultural traditions give rise to different ways of conceiving of space, but in the sense that an individual's knowledge of space – as a matrix of 'moves' that give rise to places – is nothing other than their cultural idiolect, that aspect of the orientational structure of the body that allows them to *know without knowing* how to acceptably and effectively act in a climbing context – how to select and execute the techniques required to perform the multitude of activities that structure the region in which they dwell as climbers. In sum, the environment is organised around the cultural body in that the perception of the environment proceeds from the orientational structure of the body, and thus collapses into the cultural idiolect. What follows in the next chapter will illustrate the extent to which this cultural idiolect (although personal by definition) is the product of individual practical experience in dialogue with the collective wisdom of what Goodenough (1994) terms the public record.

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<sup>45</sup> The point I am making here is well illustrated by the distinction between 'traditional knowledges as enframed in the discourse of modernity' and 'traditional knowledges as generated in the practices of locality' (Ingold and Kurttila 2000: 184). The former a product of ordering rhetoric, vertical integration, the latter of ongoing experience in a particular setting – a distinction that mirrors Goodenough's (1994: 268) distinction between the public record and the cultural idiolect.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THE CLIMBING BODY AND THE CORPOREALITY OF THE SOCIAL**

### **PLACING CULTURE AND SPACE TOGETHER IN THE CLIMBING BODY**

In the preceding chapter I have argued that both the individual's knowledge of the spatial arrangement of their environment, as well as of how to operate effectively in the situations afforded by that environment (what Goodenough 1994 calls culture), are primarily sensuous and embodied. Using Alain Berthoz's (1997) distinction between representation and simulation as models for thinking about human perception of the environment I proposed that Ichikawa's notion of the orientational structure, the aspect of the body unconsciously directed towards the environment (Ozawa-De Silva 2002), be extended to include the notion of 'acceptation' – a portmanteau aimed at emphasising perception as simulated action. In this way I was able to construct an image of the orientational structure as the repository of corporeal capital, understood as the knowledge of 'way'. The word 'way' containing an ambiguity that perfectly suits my goal of uniting knowledge of space with knowledge of effectiveness (culture). In the first instance it pertains simply to navigation, as in 'Do you know the way to the nearest police station?' While, in the second, it carries with it the implication that there is a particular way of finding out the way to the police station, and of getting there. It thus implies not only spatial knowledge, but knowledge of propriety and effectiveness as well.

Corporeal capital I have argued is the historically contingent basis for knowledge, firstly of space, and secondly of how to act properly in space, as the perception of space is nothing other than the simulation of action in that space. What separates the climber from the non-climber then is acceptation. What to the non-climber appears as only a rock face or boulder shaped by the chemical and mechanical processes of erosion, appears to the climber as a series of moves. What the climbers see is a function not of cultural

categories, but of embodied action over time. In fact, what separates a seasoned climber from a novice has to do with the ability to translate the rock's features into moves, a process made possible by the intimacy of acception.

Successful navigation and action (which must, of course, be the same thing given the argument presented above) thus depends on successful mobilisation of the necessary corporeal capital. The orientational structure must therefore be understood as the condition of possibility for the existence of a subject capable of knowing the way to move and act along the ways of their life. Success in performing spatial tasks such as climbing a familiar or unfamiliar 'route' or 'problem' is a product of achieving the necessary unity between the orientational structure and what Ichikawa terms the intentional structure (that aspect of the body consciously directed at the accomplishment of a task or action), as when unity is attained here we experience ourselves "as the centre of freedom", whereas if the level of unity between these structures of the body is low, as in illness, we experience the full weight of bodily existence (Ozawa-De Silva, 2002: 27).

Corporeal capital is thus not something individuals possess and can simply use at will – there are conditions that must be met before it can be deployed. While one would be correct in saying, as I have, that corporeal capital is a product of the individual's entire history of movement in the matrix or region in which they dwell (just as it produces the region as illustrated in the preceding discussion of building) it must be emphasised that much of this capital requires a high level of unity between the pre-conscious and conscious in order to be deployed. A brief example might make this clearer. When suffering from a heavy bout of the flu one is able to move around the house, go to the bathroom, prepare food and perform other simple tasks at home. It could be said that there is sufficient unity between the level of the orientational structure and the intentional structure for the capitals necessary in the performance of these tasks to be deployed. In this weakened condition however one would be unlikely to attempt, let alone, succeed at climbing a difficult route or problem as the lack of unity between intentional and orientational structure, what we experience as illness, prevents the mobilisation of the necessary capital.

Up to this point I have examined the aspect of spatial comprehension and competency that pertains solely to the individual. In what follows I make the argument that it is in their efforts to ensure unity between the orientational and intentional structures, essential for successful action, that individuals come to participate in social life. I examine how the individual draws from the realm of the social (Goodenough's (1994) public record) to maximise their performance. More specifically I examine the use of technologies, training regimes and scripts, in climbers' ongoing attempts to improve, and show how these features of the social world are crucial in producing the level of unity needed for maximum performance. This chapter thus further pursues the notion that culture and region<sup>46</sup> meet in the body, by exploring how the body is extended in attempts to maximise the individual's ability to achieve and maintain the unity needed to effectively act in the climbing context. Before such an examination is possible, however, the meaning of success in climbing must be outlined.

In Michael's (2000) very enlightening argument, illustrating the role played by hiking boots in facilitating a particular relation with the environment, he distinguishes between two modes of relating to the environment: the 'sublime'; and the 'taskscape', and he treats the two as separate throughout his discussion. I believe this is partially due to his use of historical and literary analysis, particularly the work of Nye (1994) and Williams (1973), to structure his discussion of the sublime, without including any research into the phenomena of the individual's experience. Nye (1994) has shown how the object of the sublime has been historically contingent "shifting at the height of American industrialisation from the natural to the technological" (Michael 2000: 109), while Williams (1973) has "traced out in dazzling detail how the sublime relation fits into a complicated literary history that is a reflection of the manifold shifts in the relation between city and country." (Michael 2000: 110). Yet absent from Michael's discussion is any statement on the nature of the experience of the sublime, or its conditions of possibility, other than to say that:

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<sup>46</sup> Here region is understood in Ingold's (2000) terms, as the laterally integrated history of movements through a lifeworld.

For Burke it was nature itself which triggered this response, whereas for Kant the mind played a much greater part. However, our view of the sublime is mostly shaped by the Romantics. To Wordsworth and Coleridge, the sublime serves in the transcendence of both mind and nature (Michael 2000: 109).

While my own discussion has thus far looked at the conditions of possibility for the individual's effective functioning in the taskscape that is the climbing context, one of the most central goals of effective functioning in this particular context is achieving the sublime experience. I base this largely on my own experience of being on rock, and the euphoric and triumphant feeling that only occasionally accompanies the end of a climb, and that somehow goes beyond the feeling that can be described as fun. Especially at the crags at Silvermine nature reserve I have often remarked to Felix that I love the way climbing makes me feel so 'awesome', energised and powerful, to which he would always reply 'me too'. I can only describe the feeling as a deep inner joy and wonderment that makes me want to stand and scream at the world, as needing to somehow convey and release the intensity of my sensuous experience and achievement.

The centrality of this experience to climbing is further illustrated by Felix's remarking to me one afternoon after climbing that, for him, climbing is addictive. I believe that the addiction is to this feeling, to encountering the sublime in enduring the strain of the moves. If you can hold it together to finish a difficult route, or just make a difficult move, what are central are both the sensuous experience, and (more importantly) the ability to maintain unity against the odds; to 'hold the move'. The centrality of maintaining unity against the odds is supported by the fact that the narrative accounts of 'routes' or 'problems' that I encountered during my fieldwork all revolve around succeeding or failing to execute moves that are perceived by the narrator to be at or beyond the limits of the protagonist. Boring or routine climbs never become climbing stories.

In the same vein as Nye's argument that the object of the sublime is historically contingent, I am arguing that it is culturally contingent<sup>46</sup>, that it would be different for a hiker than for a climber. Michael defines the sublime as follows: "To experience the sublime in nature is to indulge in a sense of astonishment, the mind being so overwhelmed by the natural object that it is, in part, horrified" (Michael 2000: 109). Countering the Cartesian dualism inherent in this formulation I argue that the sublime is a function not of the disembodied mind, but of the degree of unity between the orientational and intentional structures of the body relative to the challenge posed to this unity by the natural object<sup>47</sup>. Activities like climbing and hiking bring the individual into sustained sensuous and strenuous contact with the natural object in an environment hostile to the human organism's intention, and again I remind the reader of Poincare's point that the sense of movement is central to the sense of space as without this sense of movement the individual will be unable to distinguish between changes in the environment and changes in state (Berthoz 1997: 38). I maintain that, in one's ongoing sensuous interaction with, and acceptance of, the magnitude of the natural object, one's body brushes against the realisation of its own contingency, and experience of the sublime is produced (provided sufficient unity is maintained) by the strenuous and sensuous experience of that magnitude, and the ability to maintain the necessary unity in the face of it. I would thus rephrase Michael's (2000) definition of the sublime as follows: to experience the sublime is to indulge in a sense of astonishment, the body being so overwhelmed by the natural object that it is brought face to face with its own contingency.

For hikers this may be the magnitude of a vista, where the sheer magnitude of nature dwarfs the body. For sport climbers and boulderers it is the magnitude of the moves demanded by the affordances of the route, the experience of pitting oneself against the rock. But in all instances the experience of the sublime is only possible if the individual

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<sup>46</sup> I remind the reader of the definition of culture I am employing in this argument, namely the knowledge needed to operate reasonably effectively and acceptably in a particular sphere of human activity such as climbing.

<sup>47</sup> 'The natural object' must be distinguished from 'nature'. While 'nature' can and has been contrasted with 'culture', 'the natural object' is a phrase that foregrounds the discursive production of certain aspects of the environment, such as mountains, as 'natural' rather than 'cultural'

is not pulled away from it by what Michael (2000: 114) calls ‘parasites’ – objects that disrupt the flow of meaning between communicator and receiver. Using the example of hiking boots, Michael (2000) argues that mundane technologies of this sort mediate and transform the dialogue between humans and the environment. The inclusion of these mundane technologies in actor networks facilitates the appearance of a ‘pure’ relation to nature precisely by factoring out those parasitic messages, such as pain or fear, that disrupt the desired interaction with the environment. Put differently, a parasite is anything that undermines the unity needed to maintain the sensuous contact with an environment that highlights the body’s contingency, as it is the perfection of the unity needed to endure real physical stress that is experienced as sublime<sup>48</sup>. The more marginal the situation, the more total the focus needed to achieve and maintain unity between the orientational and intentional structures of the body, and consequently the greater the experience of the sublime. If, however, the action of parasites such as fear or pain calls the necessary unity into question, then the experience will be one of terror rather than of the sublime.

I thus argue that the sublime is not a way of relating to the environment, as is the taskscape, it is rather something that is afforded by certain taskscapes and that, in the context of climbing, it can only be achieved if there is a high enough level of unity between the orientational and intentional structures of the body to enable climbers to pit themselves against a tough route; to experience and endure the unyielding and unforgiving forces of geology and gravity, without being too distracted from one’s ongoing experience of enduring and tapping into these forces by the pain and danger involved in pushing one’s physical limits. My assertion then is that the aim of climbing is the achievement of this experience, as well as the successful completion of the route one is on, and to that end the remainder of this chapter explores the ways in which the climbing body is structured in its attempts to meet these goals.

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<sup>48</sup> Here it is worth reiterating Ichikawa’s point that when the level of unity between the orientational and intentional structures is high we feel ourselves as the centre of freedom (Ozawa-De Silva, 2002). I am proposing that when a high level of unity can be maintained in the face of extreme conditions that feeling is amplified into the sublime, an experience of awe, horror and personal power.

There is of course nothing new in asserting that the body does not end with the skin that apparently encloses it. Both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty argued against viewing the body in the narrow biological sense as a closed physiological system (Crossley 1996: 100). The shortcoming of such a narrow approach is most obvious when one considers the way in which the body can be extended by technologies that facilitate or optimise its functioning in particular settings. A diver would not be able to enter the underwater world without SCUBA, and would function much less effectively without the ‘flippers’ that transform her feet into powerful fins. In this example the diver is drawing from the ‘diving’ public record in employing SCUBA technology to alter the structure of the body and thereby enable it to function optimally in an underwater setting. Even the skin’s task of helping to maintain a constant body temperature is extended by the wetsuit, which thus enables her to enter cold water and more or less comfortably endure her time there without risking hypothermia. The body’s ability to operate in this underwater context is thus so contingent upon the use of these technologies, and consequently so bound to the social realm, that the technologies and the social space of their production effectively become part of the body. Importantly for my argument, if technologies such as SCUBA extend the possible range of actions available to the individual, then they must necessarily alter ‘acception’, or the embodied historical root of perception proposed in the previous chapter.

It is however not just the body’s ability to function that can be extended with technologies and other objects, so too can its ability to represent and experience. Whether we like it or not, our bodies are seen by others, and inferences are made about us on the basis of what is seen. Such variables as age, gender, ethnicity, class, consumptive patterns, religion and many more, are inscribed upon our bodies, and these are ‘read’ by actors around us and affect the interactions we have with them either positively or negatively. In much the same way as in the SCUBA example, individuals extend their bodies with technologies and other objects to maximise the likelihood of their achieving what they regard as desired responses from others. Some women augment their breasts with push-up bras and discipline their hip line with ‘trim ‘n lift’ underwear to bring themselves into line with the type of body they believe will be appreciated by the society

that pressures them into striving to achieve and maintain a particular proportion. People are in sum, socially positioned, resist this positioning or strive towards a new positioning through the use of technologies that alter the messages that can be read off their bodies. To distinguish between the body and these additions would be to forego an examination of the body as it is inscribed by, and used to resist, the attempts of power to dominate it.

With reference to technology's impact on the body's ability to experience the environment, I recall my father returning from cycling training while I was still a teenager. His training would take him and his friends along roads in the town that they would regularly travel by car. Often upon returning he would relate things he had seen along the way that were of interest to him, and I was left with the impression that what he enjoyed most about cycling was the different perspective it afforded him to that of his car. Although cycling along roads he travelled daily in his car, the reduced speed, and the absence of an isolating glass and metal box of windows and doors opened up for him a whole new world of experience, of sights, sounds and smells from which he was usually insulated by the pace and structure of the car.

The impact of technology on people's experience of their environment is well illustrated by the work of Ingold and Kurttila (2000). These authors conducted research into "the ways in which Sami people living in northernmost Finland perceive their environment" (Ingold and Kurttila 2000: 186-7). They were primarily concerned to determine whether any local experience of environmental change could be linked to wider climatic changes as recorded by meteorological stations in the area. What they found however was that they had underestimated the complexity of the question they were asking, and were erroneously trying to marry Sami statements about the weather with meteorological data about the climate, two very different things, the former a product of experience, the latter of scientific record. Quoting from Huber and Pedersen (1997) Ingold and Kurttila (2000: 187) distinguish between weather and climate by defining climate as a set of 'global, quantified interrelationships', and weather as a system of 'local qualitative relationships'. On the basis of this, the authors conclude that much of Sami people's perceived change in

local weather had to do with changes in local modes of travel and the introduction of ‘new’ transport technology.

The speed of motorised travel further magnifies the impact of wind and the severity of wind chill. Of course the construction of the road network, and the possibilities for travel by bus or private car, not only afford a degree and speed of mobility unimaginable to earlier generations, but also insulate the traveller to the extent that the practice of travel is not so totally an experience of weather as it used to be. One can, for example, see the frost without being bitten by it, hear the rain without being drenched in it, or watch the wind in the trees without feeling it on your face (Ingold and Kurttila 2000: 188).

What this illustrates is that the technologies we employ to extend our bodies in terms of function and representation, as outlined above, also impact on our sensuous experience of the environment, regardless of whether this is by design or not. Thus, while the above are examples of the three areas in which technologies and other objects extend the body beyond that which is enclosed in the skin along the axes of performance or function, of representation, and of experience, the findings of Ingold and Kurttila (2000) illustrate well that it is impossible to put any one technology exclusively in one of these categories, as every functional extension has a representational element and also mediates the individual’s sensuous experience.

Ichikawa moves beyond the skin in his analysis of the body by pursuing the idea of *mi* (the body as potential whole), a point that illustrates well the extent to which our commonsensical understanding of our bodies as bounded by the skin is bound to the meaning of the words we have to consider it with. Though a term specific to Japan, Ichikawa views *mi* as a concept with universal applicability that is able to express the actual lived body explicitly (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 27). He lists and examines fourteen meanings of the term:

1. *Mi* as fruit (e.g. a living plant)
2. *Mi* as dead flesh (e.g. a dead animal)
3. *Mi* as living flesh (e.g. a living animal)
4. *Mi* as a whole body (of a person)
5. *Mi* as the way of the body

6. *Mi* as garments on the body (e.g. all the belongings of a person)
7. *Mi* as life
8. *Mi* as the meaning of the existence of social life
9. *Mi* as self
10. *Mi* as multiple individual selves (e.g. myself, yourself, ourselves)
11. *Mi* as socialised self
12. *Mi* as social status, social position
13. *Mi* as heart
14. *Mi* as whole existence (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 27-8).

This examination of the meanings of the term leads him to the notion of meta-bodiness, the expansion of the body beyond the skin. Ichikawa maintains that meta-bodiness lies beyond the limits of individual consciousness, and thus necessitates the simultaneous expansion of the consciousness into a meta-consciousness through bodily practices (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 29). In this model, the lived body (*Mi*) extends outward into social life, becoming a part of it, while the practices of this lived body simultaneously produce social life and its meaning as a meta-consciousness that extends beyond the limits of the ego.

### **ACTOR NETWORKS: BODIES IN DIALOGUE BEYOND THE SKIN**

Ichikawa's consideration of the lived body fits well with my argument that the matrix of pathways and positions inhabited by individuals mirrors the matrix of knowledge I have been referring to as the cultural idiolect, and the way in which the practices associated with these bodies expand both bodies and consciousness beyond their individualness into a shared social world. Yet, Ichikawa's work is but preliminary (Ozawa-De Silva 2002:29). And, while it provides a vocabulary for articulating corporeal capital and the unity required to mobilise this capital, its esoteric language does not lend itself easily to a discussion of the ways in which the climbing body is extended into its environmental and social context. Far more manageable in this regard is the notion of the actor network as used by McNaghten and Urry (2000 8-9).

Actor-networks consist of sets of humans, objects, technologies and scripts that contingently produce durability and stability, a social order of particular leisure landscapes involving various hybrids that roam the countryside and deploy the

kinaesthetic sense of movement (as when walking, sailing, climbing, driving the open road and so on) (McNaghten and Urry 2000: 8).

Interpreting “durability and stability” above as unity in the sense used by Ichikawa, the notion of actor networks allows for a more easily structured discussion of how individuals extend their bodies into and by means of the social, than does Ichikawa’s preliminary work on meta-bodiness. And it does so without losing the emphasis I have placed on the centrality of unity in both successfully climbing a route, and experiencing the sublime by testing the limits of that unity.

Whether aiming to ‘send’ a particularly intense boulder problem, complete a ‘pumpy’ overhanging sport route, or endure an epic multi-pitch adventure climb, if the unity needed for deploying the skill or technique needed to pull through a hard move or to conserve energy is not maintained, failure will always result. What follows is an illustration of the ways in which climbers draw from the public record to extend their bodies in order to ensure that unity is maintained.

Through my participant observation, I identified five factors that impact on achieving success on a route or problem: Firstly, mechanical grip; secondly, physical strength; thirdly, technical ability; fourthly, a sense of security; and fifthly, endurance. Thus the actor network for each sub-discipline of climbing is aimed at ensuring that all these elements are in place in the proportion that best suits the particular sub-discipline, dictated by the public record.

The most ubiquitous pieces of climbing equipment are the climbing shoe and the chalk bag. Every climber has at least one pair of shoes and a chalk bag, regardless of whether they do traditional climbing, sport climbing or bouldering. The shoes work by increasing the mechanical grip between the climber’s feet and the rock. They do this in two ways: by increasing the traction of that part of the foot that comes into contact with the rock; and by assisting the foot in maintaining a rigid shape. The soles are made of a thin layer of soft ‘sticky’ rubber with excellent traction that extends around the toes and heel - those parts of the foot that most commonly come into contact with the rock. It is also common

practice to buy climbing shoes a size smaller than one's foot so that they painfully bunch up the toes and shape the foot into one rigid unit. The reason for this is that toes are fairly weak digits that would easily bend under the strain of pushing off of a tiny point or narrow edge. Some shoe designs force the foot into a downward pointing curve so that it is quite impossible to walk normally in them. These shoes intended for bouldering and sport climbing (according to the salesman I bought a pair from) are designed to be very powerful off tiny foot placements. They achieve this quality by focussing the foot's structure into a hard point capable of precisely transferring the energy of the leg muscles onto a tiny area. They may thus be characterised as high performance shoes.

A traditional climber is unlikely to buy such a pair of shoes, as they do not usually require such precise instruments as do boulders or sport climbers. Additionally, given the fact that traditional routes are much longer and offer few opportunities to take off ones shoes, the pain of climbing in a pair of these for a few hours would be excruciating and may become an obstacle to success, rather than an asset.

Whereas climbing shoes increase the mechanical grip of the feet, 'chalk' (magnesium carbonate powder) increases the mechanical grip of the hands. The sweat produced from the palms of the hands (like all sweat) is slippery, 'chalk' is thus used to counteract this slipperiness and to increase the amount of friction between the hands and the rock, reducing the amount of exertion needed to hold onto the rock features being used as handholds.

Though both chalk and climbing shoes increase the climber's ability to use the affordances of the rock, it still, more often than not, requires extreme physical exertion, and strong fingers and a powerful upper body are required to execute the more challenging moves. To the end of developing this strength there is a range of specialised equipment. I will discuss just that which I encountered in my fieldwork, as there are many types, and as climbers push the limits further and further new strength and power-building exercises come in and out of vogue. The two most common devices used by my research participants and I are, the campus board and the fingerboard.

The campus board consists of a slightly overhanging wooden board mounted on a wall about one and a half metres above the ground. It is about a meter wide and at least three meters high, with numbered parallel horizontal strips of wood about one centimetre thick attached to it at roughly thirty centimetre intervals<sup>49</sup>. The object of the exercise called ‘campussing’ is to hang from these narrow strips by the fingers and using only ones upper body (no legs), climb up to the top of the board.

It was common when training with Andrew, Matt or Malcolm to set each other problems on the campus board. For example ‘one, four, six, match, double jump to eight, double drop to five’ would be a typical problem. What this means is that the climber would begin hanging by his fingers from the bottom strip (number one) he would then have to pull up, skipping strips two and three and move his right or left hand up to the fourth strip. From this position he would again have to pull up and move whichever hand remained on strip one up to strip six, missing out number five. He would then have to match on six (so that both hands are on six), then jump from six to eight (moving both hands simultaneously so that for a second there is no contact with the board), and finally drop off from eight back to five (again moving both hands simultaneously.)

Campussing is excellent for building upper body and finger strength, but is very stressful on the fingers and arm joints, so much so that novices are advised to avoid it until such time as they are used to the physical stress climbing places on these joints. The fingerboard is thus a better place to start strengthening these muscles and joints without exposing them to nearly as much pressure.

Typically a fingerboard is a moulded piece of rough plastic about eighty centimetres wide that has up to eight different types of holds mimicking the typical hand positions a climber will encounter on the rock, and that can be used in two ways. One can either

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<sup>49</sup> I give rough figures based on the proportion of the campus board at the University of Cape Town, but there are no fixed rules or measurements that need to be adhered to. Matt’s personal campus board is much larger than the UCT one, the strips are narrower and the intervals between them are larger.

‘dead-hang’ off whichever type of hold one wants to work on, a ‘sloper’ or a ‘crimp’ or a ‘pinch’ or a ‘pocket’, or one can use these holds to do sets of ‘pull-ups’ off them.

Adding more weight to oneself while doing the exercises can increase the effects of the campus or fingerboard. Donovan and I would, for example, hang a ten-kilogram weight from our harnesses before using the fingerboard to do pull-ups in a bid to increase our strength-to-weight ratios. Matt does this as well and in addition, uses weight on the campus board as well as on easier routes on the rock and at the UCT bouldering wall in order to gain as much strength and power as possible.

Being strong is, however, not always enough as difficult moves also demand technique from the climber. Technique is important as, although it may be possible for a strong climber to simply power through the crux of a route, this will cost a lot of energy and may see them run out of steam on subsequent easier moves. In this regard the best training device is the bouldering or sport-climbing wall, as it allows one to set up ‘routes’ or ‘problems’ geared at perfecting particular techniques (it of course helps develop strength as well). In the climbing gym one can safely work on one’s ‘drop-knees’, ‘rock-ons’, ‘dynos’, ‘laybacks’, ‘heel hooks’ and so on by constantly repeating problems designed with the development of these techniques in mind. This is vital in developing the necessary corporeal capital needed to quickly and correctly identify the technique required by a route’s affordances and to successfully translate that into a movement.

The bulk of the equipment for climbing, however, falls under the category of ‘protection’ and is aimed at making the climbing environment as safe as possible, rather than at improving the strength and skill of the climber. In all variations of climbing (barring solo climbing) there is safety equipment available. Safety is of course a very important point in a pastime that sees its practitioners in positions on cliffs from which a fall could be fatal, and being comfortable in these positions is essential for successfully finishing a route.

The sport climber has a harness, attached to a rope, attached to a belay device secured to the harness of the belayer, and *in situ* bolts, cemented into the rock as anchors to which she can fix the rope with the aid of quick draws. The setup is exactly the same for the traditional climber, except that she has two ropes, and there are no *in situ* bolts. Rather she has to carry with her an assortment of ‘nuts’, ‘friends’, and ‘rock-centrics’ which she places in fissures in the rock to serve as anchor points for the ropes. For the boulderer there are no ropes, so bolts, and other protective devices would serve no purpose. The reason for this is that bouldering problems are typically short enough that a fall would not be fatal. The possibility of injury from a fall is still very high, however, and to minimise the likelihood of it happening the boulderer relies on two things. The first is the ‘bouldering mat’, a mattress of stiff foam covered in a durable fabric that is placed on the ground below the point at which the climber feels she is most likely to fall, usually the ‘crux’ or the first really challenging move. The second, is the ‘spotter’, a second climber who stands below the climber that is on the problem to make sure that, should he fall, he will not fall awkwardly. If the climber comes off the problem, the ‘spotter’ will try to both absorb some of the force of the fall, and ensure that he lands on his feet by placing his hands in the small of the falling climber’s back to break, guide and control the fall.

The best illustration of the role of safety equipment in the actor network, of its effect on the climber’s ability to mobilise the corporeal capital needed to convert affordances into moves, is the difference that I noted in climbers’ performances when leading and topropping the same route<sup>50</sup>. The first case in point is one of three routes that Felix and I had used as a ‘warm-up’ on a visit to a crag called ‘the Hole’ in September 2003. These routes were all graded nineteen and as such were well within my ability. But, while leading the first of these, I became quite nervous approaching the third bolt as I was having difficulty finding a stable and comfortable position from which to ‘clip’ it, were I to fall from this position I would tumble four meters before the rope would catch me, and while this would not be fatal, the possible collision with the rock face that would have been the result of such a fall would really have hurt. The result was that I would climb up

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<sup>50</sup> I deliberately gloss the obvious point that my own life, and the lives of all the climbers that participated in this research have been saved many times by this equipment as it goes without saying that this is the safety equipment’s primary reason for being included in the actor network.

to the bolt, not be able to 'clip' it, then 'downclimb' to a position in which I could rest before trying again. I am not sure how long this went on for, but it felt like an age during which I became progressively more demoralised and angry. Once I had finally finished the route, clipped the chains at the top, and come back down, I immediately repeated the route and finished it very quickly, finding it unbelievably easy.

Felix's explanation was that the fear I experienced approaching the third bolt caused me to lose focus and strength, whereas with the security of the top-rope I was able to focus on the task at hand without being distracted by the possibility of a potentially damaging fall. Fear then acts as a parasite, altering the orientational structure, increasing one's heart rate, causing one to breathe more shallowly, and causing the palms to sweat. It also reduces fine motor coordination and one's ability to think clearly, while the release of adrenaline causes one to burn energy faster, making one tire very quickly (Hattingh 1998: 45). The preconscious orientation of the body to the environment thus moves further away from the intention of the climber who then comes to experience the full weight and contingency of bodily existence as the unity Ichikawa speaks of is lost (Ozawa-De Silva 2002).

Donovan had a similar experience to my own on *Talking to the Trees* at Peer's cave. He was leading the route and while he was clipping the 'quick draw' into the 'hanger' of the third 'bolt', I noticed that his feet were offering him no support and shouted up to him from my position as 'belayer' "sort out your feet before you try to clip the rope". He did not and, as he was battling to get the rope through the 'gate' of the 'quick draw', his left hand gave way in the absence of any support from his feet and he took a rather scary six metre fall, the rope catching him literally millimetres from the ground. On this occasion I finished leading the route and he proceeded to climb it with ease once the 'top-rope' was in place. Afterwards I said to Donovan that the problem was his foot placement, and that I had called up to him to place them better so as to remove the strain from his hand. He told me that he really did not remember much about being up there as he had been so nervous that he could not really think beyond the need to get clipped in. These two incidents lead me towards the conclusion that the 'top-rope' is an extension of the body

that increases the likelihood of succeeding on a route by limiting the parasitic effects of fear, which is what makes ‘top-roping’ so much less gratifying than ‘leading’.

Actor networks are however not constructed simply out of actors and the equipment with which they functionally extend their bodies. A third element is the inclusion of scripts that regulate bodily practices, especially aimed at regulating the preconscious orientational structure of the body to as great an extent as possible. In climbing, these scripts are vital in maximising performance by, to some extent, exercising deliberate control over the orientational structure through limiting the intrusion of parasitic factors like fatigue and fear.

A good illustration of a script aimed at holding off the onset of muscle fatigue occurred at Peer’s Cave in November, and involved Felix, Steven and me. At Peer’s cave there is a short route, only eight or nine meters high, called *Digital Manoeuvres in the Dark* that is graded 26, and which, as the name would suggest, is a rather technical route demanding precision. The required moves are long, the holds are tiny, and the foot placements are few and far between. We decided to spend some time trying the route after ‘sending’ two routes graded 22 as a warm-up<sup>51</sup>. On my third attempt of *Digital Manoeuvres in the Dark*, on which I finally succeeded, as I was pulling through the second move, requiring me to get the toe of my right foot into a small ‘pocket’ high up to my right, ‘lock off’ with my left hand on the small ‘crimp’ and ‘rock on’ to get up to an even poorer handhold almost a metre above my left hand (a tiny crimp that was painful to hold) Felix reminded me to remember to breathe. I was too busy concentrating on the pain in my right index finger and the strain of readjusting my feet to know whether I took his advice or not, but the discussion that followed between Felix and Steven serves to illustrate a script aimed at controlling the orientational structure of the body in order to counter the onset of fatigue.

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<sup>51</sup> This encounter also serves to illustrate the necessity for unity between the orientational and intentional structures and the role of the parasite. On the previous weekend Steven had taken part in a triathlon, and somehow had managed to get his feet well sunburned. The result of this was that his climbing shoes caused him such pain that he was unable to climb any routes on the day.

Steven immediately asked Felix just what he meant by his statement that I should remember to breathe, as he had heard other climbers saying the same thing, but had always found it easier to pull hard moves when holding his breath. This is not uncommon among novice climbers as holding one's breath helps to keep the ribcage expanded and rigid, providing a stable structure to anchor the massive effort of the back muscles. This piece of knowledge clearly forms a part of Steven's climbing idiolect, his personal idea of what is effective. Felix then explained that while it might seem to make hard moves more manageable, it results in getting 'pumped' more quickly for the simple reason that "air equals energy". Thus while holding one's breath may make a hard move more manageable by using breath pressure to assist the muscles in holding a rigid position, it impedes the intake of oxygen needed by the muscles to convert fuel into energy, and therefore makes failure on the route more likely by diminishing one's ability to complete subsequent difficult moves.

The above episode is significant for two reasons. Firstly it illustrates one of the scripts used by climbers to maintain the necessary unity when operating at the edge of their physical ability. Secondly, it illustrates how it is at the level of one's efforts to ensure unity between one's orientational and intentional structures that the cultural idiolect comes into dialogue with the public record.

The reassuring role of the 'top-rope' is of course quite an obvious point. But what about controlling fear while 'leading', where there is no 'top-rope'? The spacing of the 'bolts' on the 'route' means that if one has clipped the second bolt but falls while trying to clip the third (as happened with Donovan) one will fall twice the distance between the bolts before the rope becomes taut and catches one. So, if the 'run-out' between bolts is three metres, one would fall six metres and that is potentially dangerous as one could hit into the rock and injure oneself. Here there is no comforting 'top-rope', so a different mechanism is needed to manage the fear.

Felix explained to me that when he is leading a route he observes at least six points. First, he is always conscious of the possibility of a fall so, before attempting a move he is

not sure he will manage, he plans what he will do if he does not make it and has to fall. This helps him feel secure enough to try a difficult move as believing he will fall safely in a controlled manner reduces his fear of falling. Second, he always tries to judge whether or not he will be able to reach the next bolt, and if he feels he will not, he rests before making the attempt. Being in tune with his limits helps him reduce his chances of being stuck in a situation where an uncontrolled fall is inevitable. Third, he always makes sure that he knows where his ‘quick draws’ are so that he does not waste any time while ‘clipping’, as it is then that the climber is at his most vulnerable. With only one hand on the rock while the other clips, wasting time is not an option as that hand may suddenly fail under the strain as happened with Donovan on *Talking to the Trees*. Fourth, he always announces to the belayer that he is clipping. This is important because, if the belayer does not give him the necessary slack quickly enough, the result will be the same as if he couldn’t find a ‘quick draw’ in time. Fifth, he tells his belayer to keep the rope quite taut when he is climbing above the last clipped bolt as this will reduce the distance of the fall, and sixth, he encourages himself to stay focussed on the moment, not to think too far ahead, and definitely not to lose focus on the task at hand.

After hearing all this I realised that I was approaching leading quite differently, much the same as I would approach top roping, without considering any of the above points. These six scripts, like Felix’s instructing me to breathe on *Digital Manoeuvres in the Dark*, or my instruction to novice climbers to keep their arms straight as much as possible while climbing (as this conserves energy) are aimed at overcoming any obstacles that might interfere with the unity between the orientational and intentional structures of the body, in this case fear. Because Felix has had more experience on the rock, and has a higher ‘on sight’ level<sup>52</sup> than I, I take his advice to heart in the same way that Steven did. In this instance, my idiolectual understanding of effective leading was brought into dialogue with Felix’s and as the less competent climber I defer to his wisdom – at least for the time being – as my dialogue with the public record is ongoing, and it is thus not inconceivable

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<sup>52</sup> On sight level describes the grade of those ‘routes’ or ‘problems’ a climber is capable of climbing literally on sight. I have for example climbed two routes with a grade of 26, I however worked hard with Felix on achieving this over a period of a few weeks, visiting the routes to try different sequences of moves. A climber with an onsight level of 26 would by contrast be able to climb these routes on their first attempt without ever having seen either of them previously.

that my approach to leading may change over time through future practical and discursive experiences.

I am thus drawn into agreement with Ichikawa's point that it is through the extension of the body, in a bid to achieve and maintain the precious unity needed to successfully act in a given context, that the individual comes to participate in the dynamics of social life. Both the example of Steven's questioning Felix's advice to me about breathing, as well as that of Felix's advice to me about how to approach leading, are examples of Goodenough's point that it is through language that idiolectual knowledge of acceptability and effectiveness contributes to the production of a shared public record (Goodenough 1994: 268).

### **THE BODY IS TO THE EGG AS NATURE IS TO THE CHICKEN (OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?)**

But this is not the only way in which actor networks bring individuals into contact with the social. Embedding individuals in actor networks also leads to the social production of different types of 'nature' (McNaghten and Urry 2000). The primary distinction between the sport and traditional climbers' actor networks is the use of fixed bolts in sport climbing, and I would like to close this chapter by going full circle and using this distinction to demonstrate how the actor network is not only a product of activity in a particular setting, but also how it is instrumental in producing these settings<sup>53</sup>.

As stated earlier, the traditional climber is forced to carry with her a range of protective devices, nuts, friends and rock-centrics being foremost among them, with each requiring expertise to place in cracks and other natural fissures afforded by the rock in order to provide anchors for the pair of climbers should one of them fall. While advancements in the technology of protective devices, particularly the development of the Active

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<sup>53</sup> I choose to close this chapter with this point to highlight the mutually productive relationship between place and the body: neither is primary, and both are constituted out of the constitution of the other, in a model where the lines between them become increasingly hard to find.

Camming Device or 'friend' in the late 1970s has made 'trad' climbing considerably safer in recent times (Hattingh 1998: 81), an inescapable fact of the placement of protection in this type of climbing remains. That is, that as a 'trad' climber you can only be sure that the protection you have placed will save you in a fall after the fact. Lewis (2000) has argued that this uncertainty brings the traditional climber into contact with their own mortality as the uncertainty of the protection and not wanting to test its ability to hold a fall are inescapable features of this type of climbing that are always in the minds of its practitioners.

The result of the uncertainty of the safety afforded the climber by traditional protection has resulted in several scripts aimed at filling this gap. The first of these is the adage that "the leader must never fall". This is because a fall would call the protection into question, as there is no guarantee that it will hold, and its failure to do so could cause a chain reaction that will pull both climbers off the mountain with dire consequences. The second script follows from this and is aimed at ensuring the maintenance of the first. It states that 'trad' climbers should always climb well within their limits. Knowing what one is capable of as a climber, and climbing only routes with grades below that capability ensures that the leader will never get into a situation he or she can't 'downclimb' out of.

With the introduction of fixed bolts and the advent of sport climbing, scripts aimed at avoiding falls have lost their earlier relevance and position within the actor network. The role of the bolts in the actor network are thus to afford the climbers the space in which they can push their limits, without much fear of serious injury.

The introduction of fixed bolts to the actor network of sport climbing has the effect then of creating a 'nature' that more resembles a playground than a dangerous environment in which humans are pitted against the elements in an epic adventure. "Climbing isn't climbing unless there is the potential for a good epic" Tony Dick, a local climber, is quoted as saying in Edmund February's column 'Ed's World' in the climbing magazine *High Life*. February goes on to explain, "rap anchors<sup>54</sup> and huts take away the epic

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<sup>54</sup> Rap anchors are bolts fixed into the rock to allow for a safe and easy abseil down the route.

potential from the normal route” (February, 2001). The nature of the epic is then further clarified in a discussion of how the warder of the Mount Kenya national park intended putting a bolted abseil route on the north side of the mountain, feeling that that side of the mountain was dangerously unprotected. “He also said that he is really worried about the safety aspect of that side of the mountain and that a number of people have had huge epics there” (February, 2001).

The ‘epic’ then seems possible only in the absence of *in situ* protection and built accommodation. It is thus the product of facing the mountain alone, with only one’s climbing partners and what protection one can carry. It is a struggle against the ‘wild’ unpredictable mountain in which the dangers are real, and the fun is in pitting oneself against that unpredictability with only one’s wits and what ‘protection’ can be carried and ‘placed’, a point in keeping with Lewis’s (2000) argument that the attraction of traditional climbing lies in the pursuit of the marginal moment.

Contrast this view of nature with a phrase Felix would often cite at the end of a day of sport climbing. He would say to me in a triumphant and jovial tone “we rocked that crag”. The first point of difference is the scale – the crag rather than the mountain. The second and more important point is the difference between ‘rocking’ and having an ‘epic’. The former is indicative of carefree fun, while the second could be its opposite and involves a real struggle against a foreboding and unpredictable mountain. It is thus on the rather mundane bolt that two different ‘natures’ swing.

Here we have a clear indication that the technologies included in different actor networks lead to the production of different ‘natures’. Perhaps a clearer illustration of this point is the example of buildering that I used to illustrate the notion of acception in chapter two, an idea that I am drawing on again here. Now, however, I use it to make the point that acception cannot be considered as proceeding from a body conceived of as a closed physiological system. Rather it must be considered as proceeding from the extended body that is the culturally specific actor network, and which is itself an imaginative response to the ‘nature’ it produces. As such, the distinction between ‘trad’ and ‘sport’

climbing sees two sets of climbing bodies roaming the countryside producing 'nature' out of their corporeal capital as they go – 'acceiving' the world into being by way of the practical synthesis that proceeds outward from the activities in which they are engaged.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis opened with a meditation on the revisions proposed to anthropology's construction of the relationship between space and culture. Appadurai (1997 & 2000), Stoller (1997) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992) propose revisions to the anthropological understanding of the relationship between culture and space that appear untenable as a result of the degree to which they misapprehend the extent to which the notion of space against which they are writing is implicated in the notion of culture they continue to employ. The modernist principles of Cartesian dualism and vertical integration which, I have argued, are at the center of this obscure conspiracy of received ideas, and can only be bypassed by a revision of the concepts space and culture which places at the center of each the purposeful and active human body. The model of culture that I have argued will lead beyond the two problematic received ideas I outline in Chapter one is located in the acting individual, rooted in their activities, which are located in the sense that they 'take place'. With every complex of related activities in which an individual takes part, they develop cultural capital for the effective and acceptable performance of the associated activities: in this instance, rock climbing. This forms a matrix of activity-based knowledge that is enfolded within every sphere of action, but which is the product of action in many. I call this matrix the cultural idiolect, with the 'public record' being the negotiated product of the understandings of these idiolects (even as they are the product of the practical testing of the public record in different settings and situations).

In as much as these individuals take part in a complex of interrelated activities, they produce a public record of their ideas of what is effective and acceptable within that context, an account of their criteria for doing what they do and for judging good from bad practices. This public record is constructed within the world of language and symbol, where the stake is the definition and possession of the symbolic capital – those criteria for the measurement of good and bad practices with which comes prestige and perhaps even material gain.

This understanding of culture is in keeping with my attempt to shift away from a vertical mode of integration towards a lateral one. This is precisely because of its foregrounding the fact that the public record is vertical integration used rhetorically to legitimate and delegitimate laterally integrated cultural beings on the grounds of a range of criteria that is always under contestation as individuals struggle to make their voices decisive and their actions effective.

In this formulation the treatment of culture as isomorphic with place is no longer problematic so long as one is talking of the cultural idiolects of individuals and not the public record. This is because, whereas the former is a product of necessarily located activity, the latter is the product of the power relations between individuals that act locally and as such has no location. Treating the public record as isomorphic with place would be merely inscribing a product of social power (the public record) into an instrument of political power (the map). To properly examine the relationship of the cultural makeup of individuals to the places in which they act, what is needed is an account of how the individual makes sense of space. That is because, if culture is rooted in activities and activities are located in places that are more than passive, then the structure of the cultural idiolect will mirror the structure of the world the individual inhabits. That in turn is because knowledge of effectiveness and acceptability will be rooted in the places in which the action occurs.

The discussion, informed by my participant observation of rock climbing has thus been largely theoretical in pursuit of the point that if anthropologists are going to take an interest in space, they have to set aside the convenient and powerful topographic rhetoric and begin with a focus on the bodies of actively mapping subjects, as it is this corporeality that makes possible the intimate knowledge of an environment required to be considered 'local'. Consequently the study of the reproduction of spatial intimacy must be the study of what Ingold (2000) has termed 'region' – the laterally integrated matrix of movement along those pathways down which the activities of life lead, each of which is the product of the culturally extended activity-specific actor network. The reason for this

is in short the fact that what I have termed 'acception', proceeds from the body and not a neutral environment. In this formulation, the body is understood as culturally extended beyond the skin that has commonsensically marked its borders and thus into the social realm through its being embedded in activity specific actor networks so as to maximize the effective and acceptable performance of said activity.

A focus on space must therefore examine how the body is extended into the social with discursively and experientially produced scripts and technologies, and further; how the extension of the body for the performance of particular tasks is both related to notions of what is effective and acceptable in that setting (culture), while at the same time contributing to the cultural production of the setting. An anthropological treatment of space must therefore necessarily be the study of the mutually constituting relationship that exists between the active and extended body, and the 'nature' or environment of which it is the product/producer.

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## **APPENDIX:**

### **Glossary of Rock Climbing Terms**

**Each of the terms that appear below is footnoted in the text on its first appearance.**

- Belay:** 'The 'system' used to stop a fall by means of a rope – includes the anchor, the belayer and the belay devices or method. To 'belay' is to hold the rope in such a way as to arrest a fall' (Hattingh, 2000:154).
- Beta:** 'Beta', is the second hand information about the particularities of a climbing 'problem' or 'route' a climber is attempting, obtained from a person that has already climbed the 'route' or 'problem'.
- Bolt:** 'A metal expansion bolt, glued or fastened into a predrilled hole in the rock face; used for belays or running protection' (Hattingh, 2000:154).
- Bouldering:** 'Unroped climbing on any small rock surface, including climbing walls and buildings' (Hattingh, 2000:154).
- Chalk:** Powdered Magnesium Carbonate used to keep the climbers hands dry and ensure maximum mechanical grip between the fingers and the rock.
- Crag:** 'A smallish outcrop of rock, usually with routes of only one or two pitches' (Hattingh, 2000:154).
- Crimp:** The term 'crimp' describes one of many ways of gripping the rock, and describes both the action of holding with the very tips of ones fingers, as well as the thin edge of rock being held onto.
- Crossover:** The act of crossing one hand over the other to reach the next available handhold on the route while the other hand is holding onto a hold already.
- Drop knee:** A footwork technique in which twisting the leg from the hip so that the knee of that leg ends up facing down, where the leverage

generated from dropping the knee moves the centre of gravity higher, allowing for a longer reach.

- Dyno:** The word 'dyno' is drawn from the dynamic nature of the move it describes. In short, to dyno simply means to jump from one hold to another, a very spectacular move, as for a brief period the climber has no contact with the rock at all.
- Flash:** To flash a 'route' or 'problem' means to complete it with no falls on ones first attempt. This term is most commonly applied in bouldering, and is not used in traditional climbing at all
- Grade:** The 'difficulty rating' given to a climb; determined by general consensus.
- Inside step:** A technique suited to sideways rather than upward movement on a climb. If a climber is moving to his or her left, an inside step would entail moving the right foot onto a hold that is to the left of the left foot's position. This is achieved by twisting to the left and passing the right foot between the left leg and the rock face.
- Jug:** A vernacular description of a particularly easy to use handhold that is so in-cut that the climber can hook his or her fingers into it with very little strain.
- Lay back:** A technique for climbing with side pulls (handholds gripped from the side as opposed to the top) in which the climber twists his or her body such that they are in a sideways position relative to the rock, and in which they pull sideways on a handhold to create room to step higher with the leg that is closest to the rock face. In this technique the legs are used in opposition to the arms, pushing against the pull of the arms so as to generate enough sideways force to be able to use the side pulls.
- Match:** To 'match' is to move so as to place both of ones hands on the same handhold at the same time.

- Pinch:** Like 'crimp', pinch refers to a way of gripping a feature of the rock between the thumb and other fingers. It also refers to those features of the rock that can be gripped in this way.
- Positive:** A handhold is 'positive' when it is in-cut so as to enable one to hook ones fingers into it. It is a term that can apply to both large and small holds that provide a raised edge for the fingers to hold onto.
- Problem:** A 'problem' refers to a short climbing route, typically within the context of bouldering.
- Pumped:** A vernacular term applied to muscles that have been so heavily used that they are engorged with blood and aching from lack of oxygen at a cellular level. It is most commonly applied to the muscles of the forearm.
- Quick-draw:** A quick-draw consists of "two carabiners joined by a short sewn sling. Many variations exist, but most climbers prefer one end to have a straightgate carabiner, which clips the bolt or peg, and the other a bentgate clipgate, which allows the rope to be clipped quickly and easily" (Hattingh, 2000:66).
- Redpoint:** Redpoint describes the successful completion of a sport route in which the climber places no pressure on any of the anchor points. It means leading a route without falling or resting on the tension of the rope.
- Roof:** A 'roof' is a part of the rock that is so over hung as to be horizontal, also referred to as a 'ceiling'.
- Rock on:** A footwork technique in which one of the climber's feet is placed high relative to the other and the climber's weight is rocked onto this higher foot, which ends up taking most of the load.
- Run out:** Describes either the distance between two points of protection on a 'route', or a long section of a route that is not protected. The longer the run out, the further the potential fall, as the distance of the fall will be twice that of the run out.

<b>Side-pull:</b>	Describes a handhold that is gripped from the side rather than from the top.
<b>Sloper:</b>	A handhold that slopes towards the climber providing no edge into which to hook his or her fingers. Using these holds requires good friction between the climber's hand and the rock as well as good balance, as the climber cannot, in the absence of a positive edge, use this hold to pull themselves toward the rock.
<b>Span:</b>	Describes a move in which the climber has both arms stretched out horizontally between two handholds and is supporting his or her bodyweight on these outstretched arms with more or less support available from foot placements.
<b>Sport climbing:</b>	A type of roped climbing that utilises fixed anchors for the rope in the form of in situ bolts.
<b>Stick:</b>	To 'stick' a move is to complete it successfully.
<b>Top out:</b>	To 'top out' is to successfully reach the top of a 'route' or 'problem'. Completion of the 'route' or 'problem' is achieved when the climber reaches the hold deemed to be the 'top'. Taking this hold is called the 'top out'.
<b>Top rope:</b>	"To climb a pitch [or 'route'] without leading it; the rope is attached from above" (Hattingh, 2000:155). A rope attached from above is in addition referred to as a top rope.
<b>Trad climbing:</b>	A type of roped climbing defined by the use of 'natural' or 'traditional' protection, which is placed by the lead climber to protect the team, as opposed to reliance on fixed or permanent bolts as are relied on in Sport climbing.
<b>Undercling:</b>	A handhold that is gripped from below (with the palm of the hand facing upward) rather than from above.