Comfort: Bodies and their Boundaries

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Abstract

The original contribution of this work is its engagement with the conceptualisation of modern bodies and the impact of the bounded body on our understanding of the idea of comfort. The way in which modern bodies are constituted as bounded, immune entities, differentiated from their surroundings, is of paramount importance in defining comfort as protective, compensatory and passive - a zero grade feeling or avoidance of stimuli. Taking a definition of comfort from John Crowley's influential work on the topic as 'a self-conscious satisfaction between one's body and its immediate physical environment' as its point of departure, this thesis interrogates this in-between space to argue for comfort as an affective and intensive experience. Approaching the theme from an interdisciplinary perspective, a genealogical method combined with inspiration from new materialisms challenges dualisms such as nature/culture. body/mind, inside/outside, body/environment and comfort/discomfort. Following the trajectory of work from Nietzsche to Foucault to Deleuze, phenomenological and psychoanalytical ideas of boundedness and identity are displaced with a theory of bodies as fortuitous and dynamic compositions of forces, where affirmative difference replaces negative difference. As a result, the comfort zone, comfortable numbness and sitting comfortably are transformed from states of indifference to intensive events of difference whereby boundaries and borders are reconstituted as thresholds and spaces of transformation.

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Introduction

Norwegian Student Ida Beate Loken gave up her home comforts for a cave. The 19year-old sleeps on a bed of straw and sheepskin and collects rainwater to wash with and to drink. 'It's no paradise,' reports *The Independent*, 'the ceiling tends to crumble away in her hands, a stray cat ate her butter, and when it rains she has a slippery and cold climb home after a day's studying [...].' Quoting from Disney's *The Lion King*, Loken remarks, 'home is where your rump rests.' She insists that her lifestyle is a reaction to the technologies we use and the gadgets we own, stating that she sent home several car loads of material possessions deemed useless in her new habitat. However, despite her lack of home comforts, she still manages to post on Facebook and text her mother every night. How she charges her phone is apparently the most frequent question that she is asked, the answer to which remains a mystery.¹

We live in a world that promises to offer us ceaseless comfort. Comfort is, according to Harvie Ferguson, 'the manifest goal of contemporary social life' which is 'preoccupied with the elimination of discomfort.'² Never have we had such a range of commodities to deal with our vast array of discomforts, from painkillers, antidepressants and sedatives to clothing, furniture, central heating and air conditioning, to airbags, seatbelts and inoculations. We are even concerned about dying in comfort. Yet, paradoxically, comfort represents something undesirable – we are told to get out of the comfort zone – implying that a comfortable existence is a passive one. To be comfortable is the occupation of a middle ground, it is an inbetween state, neither intense pleasure nor pain, and in material terms, neither living in poverty nor in excessive affluence. To be comfortable is a middle range existence, part of the quotidian that goes largely unnoticed. Georges Teyssot defines comfort as appealing to the 'body's alleged preference for a state untroubled by external disturbance: the zero degree of corporeal excitation.' Comfort is thus defined as a form of well-being equated with 'the absence of external stimulation' or 'sensory

¹ Charlotte McDonald Gibson, 'Wild at Heart: Norwegian gives up home comforts for a cave', *The Independent*, 19th April 2014, p. 33.

² Harvie Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 73.

deprivation.³ Rather than complete avoidance of excitation, comfort is defined in terms of positive stimuli for Judith Davies, author of *Emotional Comfort, the Gift of Your Inner Guide*, a self-help book. Davies states that '[w]e are most comfortable when we are able to deal with negative stimuli and can maintain an optimal level of positive stimuli.⁴ Comfort, then, also becomes equated with maintaining an inside space within a boundary or border – it marks a delimited space; a body, a psyche, a zone, a home. But what if comfort was not a zero grade experience, nor concerned with the avoidance of negative stimuli? What, indeed, could comfort be if it did not occupy this middle ground? Or rather, what would the middle imply for comfort if it were not a homogenous, empty space, but a threshold, an encounter, a space of intensity? This thesis seeks to reconfigure comfort as an active and intensive phenomenon based on a view of the in-between as such, challenging the idea of boundedness relating to both the idea of comfort and the modern body.

Defining comfort

Comfort is no easy term to define despite its widespread use in contemporary Western society. The English word *comfort* comes from the Latin *confortāre*, meaning 'to give strength' or to strengthen (*-fort* meaning strong and *con* meaning with, but also acting as an intensive prefix).⁵ Con later became *com* via phonetic change as *confortāre* passed through Old French (*confort*) to Middle English, and became *comfort*. The verb *comfort* has a wide range of meanings which are now thought of as obsolete. Most closely related to its Latin roots, comfort meant to encourage, or to inspirit. This sense of encouragement can be seen in terms of providing physical strength or support, as well as to 'invigorate' or 'refresh.' In addition, comfort was thought of in terms of relief, either by means of assisting in sickness or affliction, or to 'soothe in grief or trouble,' or in providing 'relief or support in mental distress' (*OED*, p. 533). As a noun, one can be *a comfort*,

³ Georges Teyssot 'Boredom and Bedroom: The Suppression of the Habitual', trans. Catherine Seavitt, *Assemblage* 30 (1996), 44-61, (p. 48).

⁴ Judith Davies, *Emotional Comfort: The Gift of Your Inner Guide* (Chicago: Wilder Press, 2005), p. 13.

⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition), ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), III, p. 534. Hereafter referred to as *OED* in the main body of the text.

providing comfort to others by offering support or consolation. The relationship between strength and comfort is further seen through the use of discomfort in Middle English, which meant to deprive of courage and dishearten.⁶ Comfort also acquired a legal meaning in the sixteenth century, where a 'comforter' was someone who 'aided or abetted a crime,'⁷ thus continuing to evoke the term's Latin roots through the idea of support and encouragement. In French today, *confortatif* (comforting) 'denotes the current French ideals of consolation, encouragement and the fortifying quality of treatments and remedies,'⁸ illuminating a link between comfort, treatment (not necessarily medical) and well-being. Comfort is also thought of more simply as 'pleasure, enjoyment, delight [and] gladness' (*OED*, p. 534).

Today, we are more likely to think of comfort as a state of 'physical and material wellbeing, with freedom from pain and trouble, and satisfaction of bodily needs; the condition of being comfortable' (*OED*, p. 534), or in historian and influential scholar on comfort John Crowley's terms, 'a self-conscious satisfaction between one's body and its immediate physical environment.'⁹ Often termed as synonymous with comfort is the idea of cosiness, which gives the impression of homeliness, warmth and intimacy. In German there are two adjectives for comfort: *bequem* (comfortable, convenient, cosy and with ease) and *gemütlich. Gemütlichkeit* (the noun) draws together comfort and cosiness, implying a variety of moods. *Gemütlich* can mean cosy, warm, friendly and snug. It also implies a sense of peace of mind and well-being. In addition, the term has a social aspect, and can for example, be used to express a mood of festivity or conviviality. The term also has a temporal implication, and can refer to being relaxed, leisurely and unhurried, for example *es gemütlich angehen* (to take it easy) or *gemütlich hinaufspazieren* (to stroll up to).¹⁰ The idea of *Gemütlichkeit* became linked to nineteenth century ideas

⁶ <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discomfort> [accessed 5th July 2014].

⁷ Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A short History of an Idea* (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. 20.

⁸ Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau, *A Philosophy of Discomfort*, trans. Vivian Sky Rehberg (London: Reaktion, 2012), p. 17.

⁹ John E. Crowley, 'The Sensibility of Comfort', *The American Historical Review*, 104.3 (1999), 749-782, (p. 750). http://www.jstor.org/stable/2650987> [accessed 22 May 2010].

<http://dict.leo.org/ende?lp=ende&lang=en&searchLoc=0&searchLocRelinked=1&search=gem%C3 %BCtlich&trestr=0x8002> [accessed 22 January 2012].

of Christmas through Queen Victoria's German heritage and the writings of Charles Dickens.¹¹ Observing festivities consisting of games, wassail (an alcoholic drink made of spiced cider and brandy), a blazing log fire and a 'substantial supper,' Pickwick remarks 'this is indeed, comfort.'¹² This 'English idea' was not only concerned with material goods and tangible space, but also with imagination and atmosphere. Already, in this short etymological exploration, there is evidence to suggest that comfort has historical associations with the affective despite the passive connotations we observe today.

Comfort has also been defined by Katharine Kolcaba when developing her 'comfort theory,' a holistic principle of healthcare (1987). Kolcaba came up with the term comfort after watching the way in which patients behaved in a situation of what she felt exemplified a positive example of care: they were sociable, cooperative, content and cheerful.¹³ However, she did not realise the enormity of the task of defining comfort for the purposes of her study, and spent two years working on her definition with her husband, Raymond Kolcaba, a philosopher.¹⁴ In terms of nursing, Katherine Kolcaba came up with three central concepts that she saw as central: relief, ease and renewal. Relief refers to the satisfaction of a 'comfort need,' a state of discomfort is specifically addressed. Ease is a more general term relating to 'a state of calm or contentment' and is not related to a specific discomfort. Renewal, which Kolcaba later termed transcendence, is a 'state in which one rises above problems of pain' (p. 9). Kolcaba's work on nursing reminds us that comfort is concerned with well-being, and is intrinsically linked to the body.

¹¹ Andrew Martin, 'Tis the Season to be Cosy', *New Statesman*, 19th December 2005-5th January 2006, p. 59.

¹² Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1837), p. 297.

¹³ Katharine Kolcaba, *Comfort Theory and Practice: A Vision for Holistic Health Care and Research* (New York: Springer, 2003), p. 4.

¹⁴ See Katherine Y. Kolcaba and Raymond J. Kolcaba, 'An Analysis of the Concept of Comfort', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 16 (1991), 1301-1310.

Ghostly and Worldly Comforts

Christian connotations appear to surround the idea of comfort, yet there tends to be some confusion as to how the religious maps onto notions of well-being and the body, necessarily, perhaps, as there is no clear-cut historical transition. Historian John Crowley, a major contributor to scholarship on comfort (whose work is discussed in more detail in the following section) states that 'for centuries' comfort referred to 'moral, emotional, spiritual and political support in difficult circumstances.'¹⁵ Walter Benjamin also comes to a similar conclusion, drawing on this quote from Wladimir Weidlé:

Etymology of the word "comfort". "In English it is used to mean *consolation* ('Comforter' is the epithet applied to the Holy Spirit). Then the sense became, instead, *well-being*. Today, in all languages of the world, the word designates nothing more than rational convenience." ¹⁶

In fact, there is nothing inherently or originally religious about comfort, as we saw from its etymology. Its relation to spiritual well-being coincides with its Christian adoption, where a body/soul dualism denies comforts of the body, privileging spiritual comfort. Franco Moretti states correctly that comfort was first seen in English in the thirteenth century, indicating strengthening and encouragement. He writes that comfort's 'semantic sphere remains more or less the same for another four centuries: "physical refreshment or sustenance", "relief", "aid in want, pain, sickness...mental distress or affliction."¹⁷ In addition, Crowley himself states that before the middle of the eighteenth century, comfort had medical or nutritional connotations.¹⁸ As early as 1303 one could use the term to refer to alleviation from

¹⁵ Crowley, 1999, pp. 750-1.

¹⁶ Wladimir Weidlé, Les Abeilles d'Aristée, Paris, 1936, p. 175, cited in Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge MA: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2002), [I6a,2], p. 225.

¹⁷ Moretti, 2013, p. 46.

¹⁸ Crowley, 2003, p. 4.

physical sickness¹⁹ and in 1541, comfort was used with reference to water that would comfort and clear sight.²⁰ In 1595, Shakespeare makes reference to what we would now describe as thermal comfort: 'Intreat the North/ To make his bleake windes kisse my parched lips/ And comfort me with cold.²¹ In *The Tempest*, comfort is prescribed to counterbalance sadness.²² In Much Ado about Nothing, Leonato says 'men/ Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief/ Which they themselves not feel'.²³ Rather than having an ontologically different meaning, what we might call 'Christian comfort' condemned the centrality of the body in its definition of wellbeing. Perhaps the clearest example of this is found in Thomas More's A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation, written in 1534 whilst More was awaiting execution in the Tower of London.²⁴ In its position 'against tribulation', comfort is defined as a remedy or relief sought at a time of severe pain, suffering or grief. Tribulation in biblical terms can refer specifically to the day of the Lord,²⁵ where those of Christian faith will escape tribulation, or the end of the seven year period 'to atone for wickedness,²⁶ or the day of trouble, wrath, anguish, darkness and gloom.²⁷ More's Dialogue is a conversation set in Hungary between 1527 and 1528, prior to the final invasion of Hungary by the Turks in 1529, between two characters: the elderly Anthony and his nephew Vincent. In the first chapter, Anthony states that the tradition of consolation can be traced back to 'the old moral philosophers'. Tribulation is defined as 'some sort of grief, either pain of the body or heaviness of

²⁵ Isaiah, 13:6

²⁶ Daniel, 9:24

²⁷ Zephaniah, 1:15

¹⁹ A reference to R Brunne Handle in the OED, p. 533.

²⁰ R. Copland Guydon's Formula, cited in *OED*, p. 533.

²¹ William Shakespeare, *History of King John* (1596), Act V, Scene VII. 41, cited in OED, p. 533.

²² William Shakespeare, The Tempest (1611), Act II, Scene I, in Jonathan Bate, Eric Rasmussen and Héloïse Sénéchal (eds)., with the Royal Shakespeare Company, *William Shakespeare: Complete Works* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

²³ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598) Act V, Scene I, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, 2007.

²⁴ Leland Miles, 'The Literary Artistry of Thomas More: The Dialogue of Comfort', *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, 6. 1 (1966), 7-33, (p. 9).

the mind.²⁸ Disease, sickness and pain are specifically referred to (pp. 147-9). Remedies against tribulation can be divided into physical, or 'worldly comforts' and spiritual, or 'ghostly comforts.' God is referred to as 'that high, great and excellent physician' (p. 150). Although comfort can be gained from 'worldly' remedies, these are clearly inferior to 'ghostly' comforts: 'all our principle comfort must come from God' (p. 151). Comfort at times of corporeal suffering could thus be obtained through material practices and spiritual faith. However, comfort of the flesh is seen to be of lesser virtue to that of spirit. This separation between flesh and spirit or body and soul, which can be observed as a more general aspect of the Christian tradition, provides us with a clue as to why the body remains at the periphery of the idea of comfort in modernity. As we will see, the body's relationship to morality undergoes a continuous process of transformation. These moral and religious connotations do not disappear in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries despite the 'death of God' and the perpetuation of 'science as truth,' but are reconstituted through various cultural practices.

Existing Literature

Despite the renunciation of 'worldly comforts' in the Christian tradition, comfort became a prominent idea in material culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has since been tied to ideas surrounding the home. Central to tracing the development of the idea during this historical period is John Crowley's 'The Sensibility of Comfort' (1999), which opens with reference to the 1795 diary of Reverend James Woodforde who, upon returning to his Norfolk home from London, comments on the 'comfortable quiet' of his 'happy thatched dwelling.'²⁹ Woodforde's comforts relate specifically to his well-being and body, and include the quality of his sleep and the temperature of the room. The argument that Crowley makes is that comfort, a seemingly 'natural' idea, is instead socially and historically constructed (p. 750). The main focus for Crowley is the shift from the feudal system to capitalist production and consumption, and the changing attitudes towards consumption. It was during this time that comfort became bound up with ideas of

²⁸ Thomas More, 'A Dialogue of Comfort', *Utopia and A Dialogue of Comfort* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1951), pp. 143-423, p. 149

²⁹ Crowley, 1999, p. 749.

'emulation, refinement, self-fashioning, conspicuous consumption, and romantic illusions' (p. 753). Comfortable living was not defined by physical ease per se, but on the projection of a genteel character -a 'specific set of manners that placed a premium on pleasing others in appearance, conversation, and social interaction' (p. 758). Comfort was therefore closely associated with fashion, dining, architecture and interior decoration - categories that had the possibility to exude taste or style. The word *sensibility* in Crowley's title gives an insight into how a term associated with the body became closely associated with material goods. Sensible was a little used word in the fourteenth century but referred to sense perception or physical feeling. By the seventeenth century it meant 'a conscious openness to feeling.' However, a division occurred in the nineteenth century between sentiment and sensibility, whereby sentimental was used in an emotional sense to describe those who were too indulgent in their emotions. Sensibility escaped this inferior moral denotation and became instead connected to aesthetic judgment and the arts, and therefore with taste.³⁰ Both sensibility and comfort therefore detach themselves from direct bodily inferences and become matters of expressing values in aesthetic terms.

Comfort was hence a term, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, associated with bourgeois or middle class identity. Here it is important to expose its relationship with the term decency, which had a role to play in the definition of comfort, and a particular relationship to a bourgeois body. As Harvie Ferguson writes, 'the bourgeois body image fits "like a glove" [...] a kind of vacuum packaging which the fused the body image to the surface of its material bearer, it is a practical result of the metaphysical polarities that define the experience of Modernity.'³¹ The bourgeois body was said to mirror an infinitely deep soul. This was played out through manners, which Norbert Elias observes, were concerned with a strict regulation of bodily self-control and self-discipline which, via the notion of decency, separated this civilised body from a debased one. Elias, in his instrumental *The Civilising Process*, helps us understand why certain material goods became associated with comfort. Take, for example, nose-blowing. In medieval society people blew their noses with their hands, and also ate with their hands. But, from a

³⁰ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), pp. 280-283.

³¹ Ferguson, 2000, p. 46.

range of eighteenth century examples, Elias shows that blowing one's nose without a handkerchief was considered a 'filthy habit'. In addition, blowing the nose loudly or putting one's fingers in one's nose was seen as repugnant. The handkerchief thus became widespread, yet two centuries prior, it was merely a fashionable and decorative object reserved for use by the aristocracy.³² A similar development can be seen with other material 'comforts' or 'decencies', such as forks, and ideas relating to clothing and modesty. An interconnection of morality and manners helped to define the sensibility that Crowley writes of.

Rather than comfort, the term convenience in eighteenth-century English was used to describe 'physical satisfaction with [the] immediate material culture.³³ Typical items that were consumed included furniture, ceramics, mirrors and fashionable drinks of the time (tea, coffee and chocolate), which were referred to as 'conveniences' and 'decencies' by those who consumed them (p. 752). The coming together of these three terms, comfort, convenience and decency, had much to do with the moral panic surrounding the increasing acquisition of consumer goods. By the nineteenth century this was to become commonplace, as 'conspicuous consumption' exploded with the rise of the middle classes, increasing industrialisation and the role of women as consumers.³⁴ This led to a definition of necessity not only opposing luxury, but being seen as the bare minimum means for survival. Comfort was used as a mediating term situated between these poles to legitimise the increasing consumption of material goods. As Hegel observed in 1820, comfort's role as a middling term was used to constantly redefine the divide between luxury and necessity:

What the English call "comfortable" is something utterly inexhaustible; its ramifications are infinite, for every comfort in turn reveals its less comfortable side, and the resulting inventions are endless. A need is therefore created not so much by those who experience it directly as by those who seek to profit from its emergence.³⁵

³² Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners: The Civilising Process, Vol. 1*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 143-149.

³³ Crowley, 1999, p. 761.

³⁴ See Thorstein Veblen, *Conspicuous Consumption* (London: Penguin, 2005), first published in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899.

³⁵ G. W. F Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §191, p. 230.

The term 'comfortably off' was used as early as the eighteenth century to describe a state of financial ease (OED, p. 534) and indeed is still used today to describe a state of satisfactory wealth, a state which is involved in a constant negotiation between limits. Franco Moretti observes this transition in his reading of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). Comfort undergoes a transition where it is no longer that which returns us to a 'normal' state from adverse circumstances, but what takes normality as its starting point and pursues well-being as an end in itself, independently of any mishap: 'a thing that produces or ministers to enjoyment and content (usually, plural, distinguished from necessities on the one hand, and from luxuries on the other).³⁶ Moretti observes that both senses of comfort, restorative and unlimited, appear side by side in the text. After the shipwreck, Robinson makes it to the mainland, 'where, to my great comfort, I clambered up the cliffs.' In this sense, comfort is restorative, a relief and feeling of safety after a dangerous incident. However, he later states, 'my habitation grew comfortable to me beyond measure.'37 In the second sense, comfort is seen an open-ended state which is seemingly unlimited. However, it becomes used to justify a middle ground, constantly being renegotiated as a middling term.

Other studies on comfort tend to focus on the domain of the home and domestic space. The idea of comfort enjoyed its zenith in Victorian Britain. John Gloag's *Victorian Comfort: A Social history of Design from 1830 - 1900* (1973) traces comfort through domestic spaces, objects and practices. Gloag claims that the 'Victorians loved comfort without shame.'³⁸ He highlights the importance of bay windows, net curtains, ornaments, antique furniture, fireplaces and bloated sprung armchairs that played a central role in defining comfort as a middle class dream of 'exclusive privacy.' Ideas surrounding domestic space continue to dominate recent scholarship on comfort. Daniel Miller's anthropological study, *The Comfort of Things* (2008), is a collection of portraits of the residents of one South London street.

³⁶ Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 46.

³⁷ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford: basil Blackwell, 1927), p. 65, p. 222, cited in Moretti, 2013, p. 46.

³⁸ John Gloag, Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design from 1830-1900 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), p. 28.

The first two essays, 'Empty' and 'Full' give an insight into the cultural expectations we have of the home today. Miller describes his first reaction to George's flat in 'Empty': 'What I can barely remember encountering is a habitation devoid of any form of decoration. There is a violence of such emptiness.³⁹ This is set in stark contrast to the full, warm, convivial house in the following chapter, 'Full,' where the house of Mr. and Mrs. Clarke is brimming with Christmas decorations, food preparation, the serving of drinks, Mr. Clarke's stamp collection and a close relationship between husband and wife. Dickensian cosiness appears to continue to shape our definition of comfort today. Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau's 2004 book. A Philosophy of Discomfort, opens with thoughts about his old childhood home, which now, in a state of disrepair, 'infested with spiders, cold and damp' still feels 'good.'40 Although his study specifically focuses on comfort as well-being, this is no doubt a well-being that centres on the home. In addition, Witold Rybczynski's Home: A short History of an Idea (1988) again attempts to define comfort through the idea of the domestic. Rybczynski grapples with the difficulty of trying to define comfort, and by the end of the book, he is left frustrated with a circular definition: 'The scientific definition of comfort would be something like "Comfort is that condition in which discomfort has been avoided.""⁴¹ This thesis attempts to free comfort from being defined negatively against discomfort, as well as moving beyond the confines of domestic space. Instead, it takes bodies as its starting point, acknowledging that the way in which we have viewed modern bodies has had a significant bearing on our understanding of comfort.

The Problem of the Modern, Bounded Body

Mirroring a mode of modern dwelling where separate living quarters saw a privatization of living space, the modern body also underwent a process of privatization. Here I would like to suggest that the history of 'the' body, and also the corporeal nature Freud's theory of trauma have contributed to defining comfort as an avoidance of stimuli and as a zero grade aesthetic experience. The modern body has

³⁹ Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 8.

⁴⁰ Pezeu-Massabuau, 2012, p. 7.

⁴¹ Rybczynski, 1988, p. 226.

become a metonym for the subject, a bounded, individuated unit. Of the medieval, grotesque body, Mikhail Bakhtin writes '[...] it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits.' ⁴² 'The limits between the body and the world are erased,' leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects (p. 310). In contrast to the open, pre-modern body, the bodily functions ('sexual life, eating, drinking and defecation') of the modern body bear no relation to social life and instead inhabit a 'private and psychological level' (p. 317). As a result, 'all orifices of the body are closed' (p. 320). Rather than belonging to the continuous cycle of life and death, the body in modernity is a body that produces itself, according to Harvie Ferguson, where the human world 'creates itself from itself'. rather than emanating from some divine, mysterious principle. Ferguson writes, 'free from earlier forms of subjugation, modernity comes to itself in perpetual inner motion, as a continuous process of restless self-production.⁴³ Central to our understanding of the modern body is not only the idea of autonomy, but an array of dualisms, including subject/object, self/other, and Ego/world. The body, since Descartes, has been spatially located, seen as a subjective inside opposed to an objective outside. Therefore hardness and impenetrability, as well as space-filling extension have become central to the way in which we visualise it (pp. 6-7). In addition, as Elizabeth Grosz shows us, there is no separation between a real, material body and its cultural and historical representations. Our conception of the human and animal body is informed by the physical sciences and shaped by medical, chemical and biological knowledge.⁴⁴ As a result, 'the' body lives as an idea historically constituted by wider systems of belief that shape the epochs that we inhabit.

Ideas relating to the modern body and the sciences have also influenced psychoanalysis, which in turn has enforced our understanding of the body as a bounded entity. For Claire Colebrook, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is the

⁴²Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 26.

⁴³ Ferguson, 2000, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. x-xi

'classic meditation on the image of the bounded body'.⁴⁵ Freud's theory of trauma uses the metaphor of the irritable cell membrane as a model for consciousness. Freud writes:

Let us imagine living organisms in their simplest possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of irritable matter; its *surface*, inasmuch as it faces out towards the external word, is thus differentiated by its very position, and serves as the vesicle's receptor organ.⁴⁶

In an encounter with external stimuli, the surface or skin becomes permanently altered to a certain depth. To avoid destruction of the organism, the outer layer must become 'inorganic': 'the outer layer becomes necrotic' (p. 66) so that it allows the inner to escape the same fate. Thus the Ego develops a protective barrier or stimulus shield to avoid damage by trauma. Freud's theory of consciousness was modelled on an image of a body bounded by skin, the baked on crust assimilating the inner and outer world yet maintaining a barrier between the two. It allows for a dialectical exchange or communication between an inside and an outside. A completely closed body would not be able to sustain life, and neither would a completely open body. Colebrook writes:

What is required then is a border or membrane that enables communication with an outside, but an outside that is always an outside for this bounded body, and that is managed so as to produce only the alteration and perturbation required for self-maintenance.⁴⁷

This idea continues through to contemporary neuroscience. For neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, there is a necessary link between an organism bounded by a skin or membrane and consciousness. He writes:

Life is carried out inside a boundary that defines a body. Life and the life urge exist inside a boundary, the selectively permeable wall that separates the

⁴⁵ Claire Colebrook, 'Time and Autopoiesis: The organism has No Future', in *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 1* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2014), pp. 116-139, p, 126.

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London: penguin, 2003), pp. 43-102, p.65.

⁴⁷ Colebrook, 2014, p. 126.

internal environment from the external environment. The idea of the organism revolves around the existence of that boundary.⁴⁸

For Colebrook, drawing on Freud and noting Damasio, the bounded body is inextricably linked to a formation of the subject based on trauma, where trauma is 'imagined as the rupture of a border.'⁴⁹ Therefore, Freudian psychoanalysis contributes to our image of a bounded self and body and the notion of continuous identity. But it has also had repercussions on the way in which we perceive comfort, where comfort is perceived as the exclusion of negative stimuli and discomfort seen in terms of trauma – an invasion from the outside. Comfort has become a form of immunity where the body is in opposition to its environment. Challenging comfort as a zero grade term relating to the avoidance of stimuli will therefore involve a critique both of the bounded body and the idea of subjectivity based on trauma.

Approach and Methodology

Although focused on bodies and their boundaries, this thesis is not restricted to what might be understood as physical comfort, as a body/mind dualism is far from its intentions. Its original contribution to the topic firstly lies in an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together ideas about modernity, spatiality, medicine, religion and psychoanalysis, exploring how these ideas have shaped our understanding of both the body and the idea of comfort from 1840 to the present day. It suggests that comfort, modernity and the body are therefore intertwined in such a way which is broader and more complex than existing literature on comfort may suggest. What is at stake is the passive element in our present understanding comfort – that which is linked to ideas such as the comfort zone and comfort as a zero degree feeling. I seek to show that our understanding of the body itself as a bounded entity is central to this definition of comfort, and by theorising bodies as open, malleable and fortuitous – as compositions of forces rather than as fixed forms – comfort can be redefined as an active and affective experience.

⁴⁸ Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 137.

⁴⁹ Colebrook, 2014, p. 125.

With the corporeal as the point of departure, a study of comfort must first and foremost be concerned with matter. But like the idea of comfort itself, matter is an idea taken for granted by Philosophy, which has tended to be engaged with 'a host of immaterial things,' such as language, consciousness, subjectivity, soul, mind, and imagination.⁵⁰ By contrast, historical studies of comfort have been preoccupied with the material (architecture, domestic appliances, furniture), but have had the tendency to omit the materiality of the body. Materialist thought, from Freud to Marx to Nietzsche, helps to situate our understanding of corporeal comfort from the mid nineteenth century to the present day. In addition, this thesis also draws on inspiration from new materialism, engaging with developments in the physical and biological sciences (including neuroscience) in the attempt to reconsider the idea of comfort. Although, as Coole and Frost state, there is no 'simple passage' or direct mapping from the natural to the social sciences, the mutual influence of the two has the potential to shed new light on our understanding of bodies, and thus their relationship to comfort. In particular, this study looks at nineteenth century ideas about the body and science, which view matter as Euclidian and passive, and objects (including bodies) as discrete and space-occupying, to argue that existing dominant ideas we have about comfort, as passive and an-aesthetic, come from the view of bodies as delimited or bounded. It then challenges these ideas with twentieth and twenty-first century thought in a transdisciplinary manner, with a view of bodies as active, space-creating and affective. In doing so, this study argues that the idea of intensive strength-giving is not obsolete in the idea of comfort but can be reconfigured in new ways.

Given its concern with the history of the body, a further methodological concern of this study is that of genealogy. This method is indebted to Nietzsche's work, in particular *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), which is reflected upon and further utilised by Michel Foucault. In his essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', Foucault asserts that genealogy is not a search for an origin (*Ursprung*) because 'The origin always comes before the Fall. It comes before the body, before the world and time [...].⁵¹ Nor does it 'pretend to go back in time' to expose an

⁵⁰ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds.), 'Introducing the New Materialisms', in *New Materialisms, Ontology, Agency and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-43, p. 2.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 79.

'unbroken continuity,' showing that the past exists in the present (p. 81). When applying this method to this thesis, it would be false therefore to find an argument that an unchanging idea of strength exists and has existed in all comfort's different historical and disciplinary contexts. It would also be unfaithful to this method to perceive that any notions of the body today that lean towards openness replicate ideas surrounding the pre-modern body. The body occupies a central position in both the work of Nietzsche and Foucault. Foucault sought to expose the body as subject to forces and power relations in a historical process that saw the body as neither constant nor stable. Instead, it is 'moulded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances' (p. 87). In addition, genealogy is not concerned with constructing a linear history, but embraces discontinuity in its method. Foucault wrote 'knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting' (p. 88). My aim is therefore not to construct a continuous narrative history of comfort and the body from the mid nineteenth century to the present day, but to understand through 'unfinished dialogue'⁵² how older materialist views of the body had, and continue to have a bearing on our understanding of comfort through particular examples and incidences. A genealogical method helps to underpin how specific and discontinuous tropes may lead to particular pockets of understanding of comfort's relationship to the body. It should be noted that the use this thesis makes of genealogy differs to Foucault's method employed in The History of Sexuality (1976) in two ways. First, Foucault's treatment of sexuality was intended to historically contextualise a term that was felt to be without history. He shows how power relations were involved in the construction of an idea that has been accepted as scientific truth.⁵³ Comfort has not been thought of in these terms. As the review of the existing literature has shown, comfort has a history that revolves around material culture and domestic space. I am suggesting that a gap in our understanding of comfort in corporeal terms exists because ideas surrounding bodies have not been paired with ideas surrounding

⁵² The term 'unfinished dialogue' is used by Andrew Hussey in his book *Paris: The Secret History* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. xvi, drawing on Peter Ackroyd's approach, which opposes the history of a city as fixed narrative in *London: The Biography* (2000).

⁵³ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: the History of Sexuality: 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London, Penguin, 1998).

comfort. My deployment of genealogy therefore seeks to expose relationships between bodies and comfort that contribute to our present understanding of corporeal comfort. In doing so, I select ideas that are taken for granted as comfortable in the cultural imagination, such as sitting, numbress, and comfort food, and focus on uncovering historical relationships between the way in which bodies are thought of and these beliefs about comfort. In doing so, it is sometimes necessary to look outside of the period of industrial modernity to the present day, as complex ideas surrounding the body and modernity need to be understood in relation to Judaeo-Christian morality, the history of which predates the time period spanning 1840 to the present day.⁵⁴ The second way in which my approach differs from Foucault's use of genealogy lies in the application of cultural and critical theory to historical ideas. Once I have exposed relationships between ideas about the body and ideas about comfort (and these ideas are often those which lead to defining comfort as passive), I use theoretical ideas from a range of thinkers (outlined below) to present an argument for comfort as an active and affective experience. This thesis therefore combines cultural history, or cultural genealogy with a critical, theoretical approach.

Rethinking comfort will require thinking boundaries, immune systems and bodies. It requires questioning comfort as a conscious state and the human as an *a priori* condition for its experience. It requires challenging dualisms such as inside/outside, self/other, nature/culture, Ego/world, mind/body, movement/stasis as well as comfort/discomfort and well-being/ill-being. 'Radically rethinking dualisms,' according to Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, is at the heart of new materialist thought. The term 'new materialism' or 'neo-materialism' was coined in the 1990s by Manuel DeLanda and Rosi Braidotti, independently of each other. New materialism proposes a cultural theory that 'does not privilege the side of culture' as existing studies on comfort have done, but focuses, for example, on what Donna Haraway calls 'naturecultures.' New materialism allows for an approach that starts with matter and acknowledges that scientific thought is deeply interconnected with cultural thought. ⁵⁵

⁵⁴ This is of particular importance in chapter 4.

⁵⁵ Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (eds.), 'The Transversality of New Materialism', in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 93-114, p. 95.

The works of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (including his collaborative works with Félix Guattari) have formed the basis to new materialist thought. Deleuze gave a new platform for 'minor' figures in materialist philosophy including Spinoza and Nietzsche, who, directly and indirectly have an important bearing on this thesis due to the centrality of the body in their work. As previously mentioned, the work of Foucault has an important role in this project, in recognising the historicity of the body and thereby justifying a genealogical mode of enquiry. However, as Rosi Braidotti has said, new materialism does not mean rejecting Foucault, but '[r]ethinking the embodied structure of human subjectivity after Foucault.' Deleuze's work gives new scope to scholarship on the body because the Deleuzian subject is an 'in-between,' not strictly subject to power relations but involved in a form of subjectivation which is both a process of folding from the outside-in as it is the inside-out.⁵⁶ Rather than viewing the body as passive matter, the body's borders need to be considered as 'relations and encounters.' Foucault's power relations, as observed by Gilles Deleuze, put up their own boundaries, power coming from an outside. Thus, Deleuze asks

What happens, on the other hand, if the transversal relations of resistance continue to be re-stratified, and to encounter or construct knots of power? [...] How can we "cross the line"? And, if we must attain a life of power of the outside, what tells us that the outside is not a terrifying void ...?⁵⁷

The process of subjectivation therefore depends on a continuous folding and unfolding, a topological thinking, that Deleuze proposed marked a difference to a phenomenological understanding of an intentional body (theorised by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) which is generated in Euclidean space (p. 110). As a result, with reference to Deleuze, Elizabeth Grosz writes, 'subject and object can no longer be understood as discrete entities or binary opposites. Things, material or physical, can no longer be seen in terms of rigid boundaries, clear demarcations [...].⁵⁸ Whereas

⁵⁶ Rosi Braidotti, 'Teratologies', in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 156–72, p. 158, p. 159, cited in Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 2012, p. 95.

⁵⁷ Gilles Deleuze, 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)', in *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1986), pp. 94-123, pp. 94-5.

⁵⁸ Grosz, 1994, p. 167.

Lacan's mirror stage constituted the speaking subject as 'a site of desires, relations, drives, fantasies and projections that cannot possess the coherence of the body, Deleuze's post-Lacanian thinking challenges this view of the unity of the subject as both historically and linguistically constructed.⁵⁹ Deleuze's new dialectic informs a body beyond that of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, one based on affirmation rather than negation, which brings into question stasis, passivity and boundaries. Ideas from topology have permeated recent thinking in a range of disciplines, from Philosophy to Media Studies to Social and Cultural Theory, ⁶⁰ and run throughout this thesis. What can be termed post-Lacanian or post-mathematical topological thinking views the boundary as a join as well as a divide. The idea of nonhierarchical self-organisation is also important. No longer are space and time taken as given or *a priori*; spaces (including surfaces) are 'relational fields of emergences.' Movement or transformation no longer applies to 'fixed forms in space and time', but is conceived of as 'the ordering of continuity' which composes the 'forms of social and cultural life themselves' (p. 6). Topological thinking of this sort is present in many of Deleuze's ideas, both in his single-authored work and co-authored work with Guattari, including the virtual, the fold and intensities. It is these ideas in Deleuze's work that are therefore particularly important in forming the argument for an affective understanding of comfort. In addition, topological ideas from other thinkers, such as Peter Sloterdijk, inform this thesis. Whereas Lacan contrasted the fluidity of Möbius strip to the totalising sphere,⁶¹ Sloterdijk's theory of spheres draws on Heidegger's idea of being as dwelling, viewing spheres as intersubjective spaces and their inhabitation as a dynamic process. Thus, in theorising comfort, bodies and their boundaries, it is not my intention to do away with borders completely, but to see them as something other than fixed dividing lines. It is by

⁵⁹ Colebrook, 2014, pp. 116-120.

⁶⁰ Celia Lury, Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova, 'The Becoming Topological of Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29.4-5 (2012), 3-35. It should be noted that this article's key focus is not the use of topology in social and cultural theory, but the becoming topological of culture as the title implies. Mathematical topology can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century and the work of Karl Friedrich Gauss and Bernard Riemann, who conceived of surfaces as spaces organised from within rather than relating to set of external coordinates.

⁶¹ Steven M. Rosen, *Topologies of the Flesh: A Multidimensional Exploration of the Lifeworld* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 5-16. In mathematics, topology is a relatively recent science and is closely aligned with modernism. However, the topological ideas dealt with in this thesis can be described as post-Lacanian, present in the work of, for example, Deleuze and Guattari, Brian Massumi, Erin Manning and Peter Sloterdijk.

looking at the border as an environment in itself, a threshold or in-between space that we can begin to question the dualisms implied by the bounded body. Skin, after all, as Steven Connor notes, is an entire *milieu* or environment itself. 62

For Deleuze, sensation is something other than sensory perception that is ordered by the organs of the body. Sensation, taken away from thought and language, has the capacity to become contemplation itself. It therefore has the potential to move comfort away from the sensibility described by Crowley, a mode of aesthetic judgement, taking it towards an affective form of the sensible. The study of affect, also indebted to the work of Deleuze whose work draws on Spinoza, has a particular role to play in breaking down dualisms. Affect, according to Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 'arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon.⁶³ Theorising comfort as affective has the potential to move away from older materialist thought such as psychoanalysis, as well as going beyond a Marxist critique of its historical connection to bourgeois life. Not restricted to the human, affect opens a space to define comfort as a nonanthropocentric state. The in-between-ness of affect also has a special function to fulfil in a study of comfort in which comfort has become not only a theme of the mundane, banal and every day, but as a state of passivity. Drawing on Roland Barthes' structural text, The Neutral, Seigworth and Gregg see the role of affect as exploring the 'subtlest of shimmering intensities' (p. 2). Recognising comfort as an affective state does not mean separating it from its everyday status but appreciates its nuanced and subtle influence on everyday life and subjectivity.

Chapter Outline

Not limited to Deleuze or Deleuzian thought, this thesis draws on a vast array of thinkers, theorists, philosophers, scientists, architects and artists who share the desire to break down dichotomies and focus on the in-between. These include Peter Sloterdijk, Bruno Latour, Buckminster Fuller, Donna Haraway, Manuel DeLanda, Dorion Sagan, Isabelle Stengers, Ilya Prigogine, Friedrich Nietzsche, Brian

⁶² Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p. 27.

⁶³ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (eds.) 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-25, p. 1.

Massumi, Erin Manning, and Catherine Malabou. Their work does not form a total body of thinking; rather, ways in which their works converge and diverge elucidate various themes and open up spaces that are useful in rethinking comfort. In keeping with an opposition to linear history, the organisation of the following chapters is not meant to imply a continuous narrative. Instead, each chapter starts with a particular theme relating to comfort, which it seeks to reconstitute in this new context, moving beyond the idea of comfort as boundary maintenance. Chapter 1, 'Spheres of Comfort: Against a Culture of Practical Naturalism' takes the nineteenth century bourgeois home as remarked upon by Walter Benjamin as a point of departure, challenging a static, protected form of dwelling that separates nature and culture. By beginning with Heidegger's understanding of dwelling as building, it seeks to focus on inhabitation as a form of space-creation rather than occupation. Dwelling, or as Peter Sloterdijk terms it, the creation of spheres in modern times, is the creation of immune systems, a compensation for the death of God that throws the naked human into the open. Yet Sloterdijk's spheres are not 'monadic ego orbs', they are interconnected, overlapping and intersubjective spaces. This chapter looks at connections between the work of Sloterdijk and Buckminster Fuller, who created his famous geodesic domes based on the principle that insides and outsides are only relative. Using the work of Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway, I show that architectural principles can be used to think the body. These spheres and domes can lead us to understand comfort not only as a form of protection, but also following Latour, as a form of emancipation.

Chapter 2, 'The Comfort Zone: From Indifference to Intensity' takes a journey through the history of this term, showing that comfort has been as much a focus of the workplace as it has the home in the twentieth century. A relationship to productivity and survival is also implied in comfort's biological connotations. Although seen as an optimum temperature range for productivity with relation to thermal comfort in the early twentieth century, the comfort zone has, in terms of business management become a place of stagnation and complacency. This chapter looks at the relationship between the biological and physical sciences in the twentieth century. Drawing on the work of cultural historian Anson Rabinbach, who argues that thermodynamics had a marked effect on the way in which people conceived of their bodies, I show how ideas about closed system thermodynamics and fears of entropy became conflated with the process of homeostasis. Using

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Freud's Project for a Scientific Psychology (1895) as an example of this, I suggest that these ideas have played a vital role in shaping comfort as a 'zone of indifference.' Open system thermodynamics provides a theory whereby stasis as disequilibrium can transform the comfort zone. Deleuze had a particular interest in thermodynamics which facilitated the development of his notion of intensities and asymmetrical synthesis. Using the work of Stengers and Prigogine, I show how the synergies between Deleuze's work and non-linear systems can lead to conceiving of the comfort zone as a 'zone of intensity.' Due to comfort's association with life, intensive comfort belongs to a singular and indefinite life – 'a life', in Deleuze's terms.

Chapter 3, 'Comfortably Numb: Anaesthesia and the Utopian Body' looks at the idea of the utopian body in relation to over-the-counter painkillers, a product of the anaesthetic age of modernity. Drawing on the philosophy of Ernst Bloch and the work of Zygmunt Bauman, utopia is considered as a process rather than as a fixed form. In our late modern times, utopia has become a concern of the individual body. However, combining this with Ernst Bloch's comments on health, the painkiller corresponds to a utopia that maintains the status quo - an 'abstract,' nonrevolutionary utopia in Blochian terms. In addition, although it has in one sense revolutionised our experience of comfort, or at least our expectations of it, the painkiller does not mark a complete shift away from older, religious utopian dreams of comfort, as hope remains an important intensive component. This chapter evaluates the usefulness of the concept of utopia in defining comfort in intensive, affective terms, concluding that, even when utopia is considered an open process, comfort continues to be posited in the future or as other worldly. Rather than in the no-where of utopia, both bodies and the idea of comfort need to be considered in the erewhon or now-here.

Chapter 4, 'Comfort Food: Asceticism and the Search for Well-being through Ill-being' directly draws on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* to gain an understanding as to why we see comfort/discomfort, well-being/ill being, and pleasure/pain as exclusive opposites through the idea of the ascetic ideal. It follows three philosophers, Havi Carel, Nietzsche as read by Pierre Klossowski, and Gilles Deleuze, reading their work as methods to overcome their own suffering. Of particular interest within this are their relationships with food, drink and asceticism. Whereas Carel takes a phenomenological viewpoint, basing her reconfiguration of

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her ill body on the re-moulding of her body image, Nietzsche and Deleuze go beyond the fixity of the phenomenological body and the mode of subjectivity that it implies, seeing the body instead as a fortuitous composition of forces or intensities. Deleuze's body of active and reactive forces, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs demonstrate an openness of the body which can be used to overcome the view of discomfort as a negation of comfort.

Chapter 5, 'Are You Sitting Comfortably? Refuting Physical and Philosophical Stasis' asks how sitting has come to define comfort in the cultural imagination despite recent and historical concerns of its negative health implications. Whereas the previous chapter touched on habit in the formation of body image, this chapter is an explicit exploration of habit, plasticity and repetition in relation to comfort. It argues that to see sitting as a choice of comfort implies a docile body, subject to power from an outside. Focusing on movement instead as a necessary state of the body, physical movement is used as a motif of Deleuze's new dialectic of affirmative difference – which he saw as true movement in philosophical terms. On one hand, dance requires the conditioning of the body as a culturally specific art form. However, as a unique affective practice, dance, as Erin Manning shows, brings to life Deleuze's idea of difference in repetition. Finally, I argue that the plastic rhythm of dance also serves as a mode of thinking or 'thinking-feeling' that can posit comfort below the threshold of consciousness. Comfort becomes an event of microperceptions, ceasing to be defined negatively in opposition to discomfort.

1. Spheres of Comfort: Against a Culture of Practical Naturalism

If need be, I'll put my territory on my own body, I'll territorialize my body: the house of the tortoise, the hermitage of the crab...

-Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari⁶⁴

Fashioning a Shell

For Gaston Bachelard, the shell, alongside the nest, the corner, and the drawer, chest and wardrobe, represents safety and protection. 'Everything about a creature that comes out of a shell is dialectical', he states.⁶⁵ Bachelard was inspired by Paul Valéry's writing on the shell, where he reads the process of building as more than protection. 'One must live to build one's house, and not build one's house to live in.' he writes (p. 106). On picking up the sea shell, Valéry not only contemplates its form, he imagines how one might go about creating such a dwelling place. First, he imagines that he is composing it from a sheet of paper, which he rolls to form a cone.⁶⁶ However, it is not this general form that interests him so much as the particularities of individual shells, their 'knobs or spines,' their 'protuberances' bumps and tiers (p. 114). He is particularly fascinated by the fact that some spiral clockwise and others anticlockwise, likening this to the way in which people are either right or left-handed, remarking that this phenomenon does not follow a law, but is accidental or follows a kind of 'statistical dissymmetry' mirroring the formal dissymmetry of the shell itself (p. 115). He approaches his object here like the child who looks for the first time (p. 116), asking 'who made this?' (p. 117). The adult way of viewing the world is in itself a form of making or remaking, and through this observation, Valéry begins to connect creation, being and subjectivity. How should

⁶⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brain Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 353.

⁶⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 108.

⁶⁶ Paul Valéry, 'Man and the Sea Shell', in *Paul Valéry: An Anthology*, selected by James R. Lawler from *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, ed. Jackson Mathew (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 108-135, p. 113.

one go about fashioning a shell? (p. 120). The mollusc who makes the shell involves itself in the process of creation with neither blueprint nor design. The creature has no idea in his mind, and requiring neither knowledge nor memory, proceeds to habitually fashion his house. Taking his raw material of calcium salts, which are ingested and pass into the blood stream, the mollusc exudes its 'epithelium,' its outer layer. Valéry writes:

This gives us the outside of the shell. But it grows in thickness, and this growth involves very different material, structure, tools. Protected by the solid rampart that the edge of the mantle has built, the rest of this admirable organ fashions the refinements of the inner wall, the water-smooth lining of the animal's home. There is nothing too precious or delicate for the meditations of a life so much of which is spent at home; successive layers of mucus spread a coating as thin as a soap bubble over the deep, twisted cavity into which the solitary creature withdraws in concentration (p. 129).

Of the final structure, he observes:

The pattern of the furrows or bands that curve round the shell, and the bands that intersect them, reminds us of "geodesic lines" and suggests the existence of some sort of "field of force" which we are unable to discern, but whose action would give the growth of the shell the irresistible torsion and rhythmic progress we observe in the finished product (p. 132).

The act of building the shell has no meaning to 'man's little intellectual sphere' (p. 127), and this is what makes the shell such an object of curiosity for Valéry. Relating the activities of this organism to the human, Valéry comes to imagine the mollusc as a private being, dwelling in his 'den,' 'fortress,' or 'masterpiece.' He must confront two different 'realities' or 'geometries'- that of the outside and that of the inside of his dwelling place. 'Perhaps', he playfully suggests, 'he measures his private "time" by the sensation of secreting a little prism of calcite and putting it in place' (p. 133).

Valéry's 1936 observations of the mollusc are as much a reflection on culture as they are on nature, evoking a relationship between the interior and exterior and the public and the private, which characterised nineteenth-century dwelling. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin made a connection between the act of fashioning a shell and nineteenth-century bourgeois dwelling. He wrote, 'the nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived of the residence as a receptacle for the person.⁶⁷ This receptacle was replicated through many objects of encasement that characterised material culture of the time:

What didn't the nineteenth century invent some sort of casing for! Pocket watches, slippers, egg cups, thermometers, playing cards – and in lieu of cases, there were jackets, carpets, wrappers, and covers ([I4,4], pp. 220-1).

Benjamin states that the bourgeois interior may remind us of 'the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet' ([I4,4], p. 220). The trace of the subject is left as an imprint, moulded by repetitive, habitual habitation:

"To dwell" as a transitive verb – as in the notion of "indwelt spaces"; herewith an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behaviour. It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves ([I4, 5], p. 221). 68

The problem with nineteenth century dwelling for Benjamin was the difficulty in seeing it as a historical condition, as the idea of dwelling conjured up images of the 'eternal.' Rather than Valéry's shell, for Benjamin, it was the maternal womb which featured as the most primal of these images. Its nineteenth-century material replication came in the form of upholstery and padding which served as a reaction to modern city life, comforting the inhabitant from the shocks of new technologies which produced 'alienating forms of experience.'⁶⁹ An historical bourgeois identity was created under the mask of an eternal subject. Through the fashioning of the shell, the casing is left to bear 'the impressions of its occupant.' Traces lead to a static type of dwelling, not only reified, but dead, for Benjamin expressed in spaces such as the crematorium and the hotel room ([I4, 4], p. 220). Traces must be erased.⁷⁰ The velvet-lined case, or *étui*, as Georges Teyssot observes, appears again

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2002), [I4, 4], p. 220.

⁶⁸ This is translated from the German "Wohnen als Transitivum – im Begriff des 'gowohnten Lebens' z.B" (footnote 12, p. 966). The adjective gewohnt means customary, habitual, familiar or usual.

⁶⁹ Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 10.

⁷⁰ 'Erase the traces' is a line from Berthold Brecht's 1926 lyric cycle, *Handbook for City Dwellers*. Benjamin repeats this line in his 1933 essay 'Experience and Poverty.'

in Benjamin's essay 'The Destructive Character,' in its personified form: the *étui*-man, the enemy of the destructive character.⁷¹ The problem with the *étui*-man is that he seeks comfort, a non-creative, non-revolutionary state of being. Whereas the destructive character opens up space, erasing traces, the *étui*-man seeks to shrink back into his interior or shell. Due to his avoidance of creative work, the destructive character embarks upon a different kind of dwelling, occupying space by exposing its transience and historicity in piles of rubble.⁷² He therefore creates space through the destructive act.

As Peter Schmiedgen writes, Benjamin's conception of the nineteenth-century bourgeois interior 'strives for the appearance of both completeness and fullness, insofar as it is a field of surfaces and things available for the general inspection of guests and hence a stage for the performance of the bourgeois self before others.⁷³ This echoes Habermas's observation of the private sphere. Following the 'privatisation of life,' the salon became the space of festivity, 'the family room became a reception room in which private people come together to form a public.⁷⁴ Thus, 'subjectivity, as the innermost core of the private, was always already oriented to an audience (Publikum)' (p. 49). Habermas acknowledges the importance of architecture in the 'privatisation of life,' whereby from the mid-eighteenth century, space was divided into smaller rooms, many of which were for use by the individual rather than the whole family, and with the exception of the salon and courtyards, were positioned at the rear rather than at the centre of homes (pp. 44-45). Therefore the salon, although it occupied the private space of the home, could not truly be defined as private space. What Habermas explores here shows that the public and private spheres of the nineteenth century could never be defined in terms of physical space, but were rather dependent upon ideas about space. This concept is again

⁷¹ Georges Teyssot, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations* (Cambridge MA, The MIT Press, 2013), p. 85.

⁷² Walter Benjamin, 'The Destructive Character', in *Selected Writings (1931-1934), Volume 2, Part 2,* ed. and trans. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 541-542.

⁷³ Peter Schmiedgen, 'Interiority, Exteriority and Spatial Politics in Benjamin's Cityscapes' in *Walter Benjamin and the Architecture of Modernity*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Charles Rice (Melbourne, Re.press, 2009), pp. 147-158, p. 152.

⁷⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 45.

relayed through Benjamin's writings on the nineteenth-century interior. The interior as impressionable surface 'does not produce a hermetic seal against the external world,' writes Charles Rice, 'but rather is activated through the inhabitant's relation to the city and the world of publicness, business and commerce.'⁷⁵ In *One Way Street*, as Schmiedgen observes, Benjamin describes the self as a house with a cellar.⁷⁶ Behind the social façade, one is to find the debris of the subject, closeted, banished and excluded from consciousness. Whereas Bachelard only saw intimate dream spaces in the hidden spaces of the abode, Benjamin sees a connection between psychoanalysis and the act of dwelling in the privatization of the modern subject.

A nineteenth-century bourgeois idea of comfort was very much situated in this distinction between the public and the private, the inside and the outside. According to historian John Gloag, the 'Victorians loved comfort without shame.' A certain middle class ideal founded upon the notion of 'exclusive privacy,' this idea of comfort was facilitated by the rise of the railway and the growth of the suburbs, an idea, like Habermas's public and private spheres, founded upon a spatial organisation of the imagination rather than a phenomenon based on the physical separation of space. A desire to keep oneself to oneself in clean, leafy and open surroundings became a model for a new type of dwelling.⁷⁷ This utopian idea of privacy defined the home as a 'safe haven,' distanced from the threatening disorder of public space.⁷⁸ Thus, comfort referred to a specific mode of dwelling, encasing the subject in a sphere of the inside (manners, living standards, suburban dwelling, hygiene, culture), protecting her from the chaos of the outside (disease, disorder, predators, nature).

What is at stake then, in this nineteenth-century idea of comfort based on exclusive privacy, is the definition of comfort as protection inside a sphere. It is an idea supported by modernity's obsession with dichotomous opposites – nature/culture, outside/inside, public/private, one acting as a protection mechanism over the vastness implied by its opposite. These dualisms play a role in a normalising

⁷⁵ Rice, 2007, p. 9

⁷⁶ Schmiedgen, 2009, p. 149.

⁷⁷ John Gloag, Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design from 1830-1900 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), p. 28.

⁷⁸ David Sibley, 'Private/Public', in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*, ed. Atkinson, Jackson, Sibley and Washbourne (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 155-159, p. 155.

process, in the words of Donna Haraway, imposing the ideology of 'racist, male dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as a resource for the production of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other - the relationship between organism and machine has been a border war.⁷⁹ A nineteenth-century bourgeois definition of comfort can also be seen as an immune system - as a form of 'border war.' But could comfort be something other than this – more than shelter and protection? In this chapter I will argue that there is a twofold process at work in a comfort of dwelling, one of both protection and emancipation. Moving beyond dualisms means focusing on the spaces between them. To do this I concentrate on the materiality of the sphere, an object that two thinkers have based their philosophies on: firstly, German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, with his theory of Sphären (Spheres), and secondly, American architect, engineer and thinker Buckminster Fuller, whose geodesic domes were developed through a process of rethinking the sphere.⁸⁰ I suggest that these theories offer an architectural manifestation of Haraway's 'naturecultures' and an alternative to her Cyborg Manifesto to challenge the nature/culture divide.

In addition, I draw on the work of Bruno Latour, who sees certain synergies between his own work and Sloterdijk's to argue why the opposition between nature and culture is so difficult to overcome. A space of the in-between, for Latour must be more than an 'intermediary,' a mere connection between two poles that changes nothing. We have already seen comfort in such a light in terms of eighteenth and nineteenth-century consumer culture, where it is defined as a middling position between luxury and necessity. Despite this, comfort became a legitimising term for the increased acquisition of material goods. It transformed nothing, instead negotiating between two constantly shifting poles. However, Latour's concept of mediation re-casts the space of the in-between as a space of transformation, which

⁷⁹ Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 149-181, p. 150.

⁸⁰ Sloterdijk's thinking on immune systems is not limited to his theory of *Spheres*. His theory of 'anthropotechnics', outlined in *You Must Change your Life* (2014) centres on the notion that humans create 'symbolic immune systems and ritual shells' through their practices and training. Immunology thus becomes fundamental to the definition of the human (see Peter Sloterdijk, *You must change your life*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity, 2013)). However, this chapter focuses on *Spheres* due the topological focus is shares with Buckminster Fuller's work, and due to the connection with Bruno Latour's work on mediation and modernity.

also shapes the two poles between which it mediates. This is the very space that, for Latour is invisible and therefore impossible for the moderns to conceive of. However, Sloterdijk's and Fuller's spheres provide the possibility to visualise this space.

Spheres of Nature and Culture

What does it mean to dwell? If we are to see comfort as a phenomenon offering more than protection and shelter, we must first conceive of dwelling as making a space rather than *being in* a space. This question is addressed by Heidegger in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking.' Every building, not only the house, but the bridge, power station and stadium are in the domain of our dwelling, even if we do not consider them to be so. We inhabit them even if they do not provide us shelter. Through an etymological exercise, Heidegger demonstrates that building and dwelling are closely related. Bauen, (to build) comes from the High German and Old English buan, meaning 'to dwell.' Although we are inclined to think of building and dwelling as separate activities, this mutual stem helps to close the gap, whereby dwelling is not a static occupation of space, but an active process, as we observe in Valéry's encounter with the mollusc. Furthermore, Heidegger shows that the boundaries between spaces that we inhabit become dissolved when dwelling is considered as a form of being, for bauen and buan are in ich bin (I am), and du bist (you are). 'I am' is therefore transformed into 'I dwell.'81 For Heidegger, to be human is to dwell. In addition, Heidegger observes, bauen also means to protect, to cherish, to preserve and to care for, especially in the sense of tilling the soil and cultivation. Dwelling, as being and cultivation are therefore expressed in the habitual; the 'Gewohnte' (p. 145).

By adopting this Heideggerian perspective which defines dwelling as building, we can no longer accept that comfort is a mode of *being inside* a protective space. Peter Sloterdijk draws on the spatial already inscribed in Heidegger's *Dasein* in the first volume of his magnum opus, *Spheres*. Describing the modern age as 'shelless,' he argues that modernity since Copernicus displaced humans from their

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 2001), pp. 141-160, p. 145.

cosmological centre as the sun displaced the earth as the centre of the universe, exposing us to a new outside. Mankind is 'towered above on all sides': 'Taking part in modernity means putting evolved immune systems at risk.'⁸² The shattered illusion of our home's central position in space deprived us of 'the comforting notion that the earth is enclosed by spherical forms like warming heavenly mantles.' Science, the modern form of truth, came to replace religion, the death of which also plays a major role in exposing the human being. As a result, the moderns 'have had to learn how one goes about existing as a core without a shell' (p. 23). The bursting of 'God's shimmering bubbles' leaves the modern being exposed and shelless; he preoccupies himself with creating spheres, protecting himself from the abyss of infinite space (p. 24).

Sloterdijk's concern with *Dasein* is that it does not ask where a being is thrown into the world. As Bruno Latour states in addressing Sloterdijk's work,

Dasein has no clothes, no habitat, no biology, no hormones, no atmosphere around it, no medication, no viable transport system even to reach his little *Hütte* in the Black Forest. *Dasein* is thrown into the world so naked that it doesn't stand much chance of survival.⁸³

Dasein is thus the core without a shell. As a response to shelless times and the inadequacy of *Dasein*, Sloterdijk's spheres include the construction of architectural creations and new technologies, communication methods and psychoanalysis. Sloterdijk describes all the above as 'immune systems' or the 'new immune constitution':

Now networks and insurance policies are meant to replace the celestial domes; telecommunication has to re-enact the all-encompassing. The body of humanity seeks to create a new immune constitution in an electronic medial skin.⁸⁴

⁸² Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume 1: Bubbles: Microsphereology*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2011), p. 23.

⁸³ Bruno Latour, 'Spheres and Networks: Two Ways to Reinterpret Globalization.' A lecture at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, February 17, 2009, *Harvard Design Magazine* 30, (2009), 138-144, (p. 140).

⁸⁴ Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 25.

These technologies or spheres stop us questioning where we are and, particularly notable in the practice of psychoanalysis, instead allow us to focus on who we are (p. 30). But what kind of a space is a sphere? Sloterdijk writes:

The sphere is the interior, disclosed, shared realm inhabited by humans – in so far as they succeed in becoming humans. Because living always means building spheres, both on a large and small scale, humans are the beings that establish globes and look out into horizons. Living in spheres means creating the dimension in which humans can be contained. Spheres are immune-systematically effective space creations for ecstatic beings that are operated upon by the outside (p. 28).

Therefore, to exist within a sphere is not to exist in isolation. Such isolation is seen to occur in two ways by Sloterdijk. Firstly, it is to exist as a 'monadic ego orb' (p. 86) where no mediation takes place between the monad and the world; no outside really exists and the subject is self-sufficient. As Leibniz states, the monad 'cannot be altered in quality or internally changed by any other created thing.⁸⁵ A 'perceptual living mirror of the universe (§56, p. 248), its only interaction with the outside is through reflection. It can exist in harmony with its surroundings, but never through a process of exchange with its environment. Leibniz states that monads have no windows (§7, p.219), which Walter Benjamin saw as a feature of the nineteenthcentury panorama and arcades.⁸⁶ The other extreme form of containment is the 'Jonah complex,' where the ego is fully contained by its cavity, as Jonah was by the whale. Whereas the monad contains the universe, Jonah is fully contained by it. Both models point to a conception of the sphere as homogenous space whereby space is that in which objects reside, rather than 'one of the many connections made by objects and subjects.⁸⁷ Although taking on the spatial evoked by Heidegger, the concept of spheres indicates a move away from existence within a world. Instead, we are space-creating beings. Spheres is a theory of intimacies, which is not to be mistaken for a saccharine theory of 'homely intimacies' that one might expect to

⁸⁵ Gottfreid Wilhelm Leibniz, 'The Monadology', (1714) in *The Monadology and Other*

Philosophical Writings, trans. Robert Latta, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 215-277, §7, p. 219.

⁸⁶ Benjamin, 2002, [Q2a, 7], p. 532.

⁸⁷ Latour, 2009, p. 142.
encounter in a study of comfort. It is rather an intersubjective intimacy based on the rupturing of space, albeit one where insides and outsides continue to exist. Spheres are immune systems opposed both to creating isolated bubbles and to militaristic defence from a hostile exterior.

Sloterdijk's intersubjective theory of spheres, like Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*, actively challenges the concept of the immune system based on absolute insides and outsides. Haraway's feminist response to the dualisms that have persisted in modern thought is strongly informed by modern biology, which has experienced a shift from microbiology to immunology. Against the view of the 'victorious self' distinguished from the nonself, Haraway writes:

Immunity can also be conceived in terms of shared specificities; of the semipermeable self able to engage with others (human and non-human, inner and outer), but always with finite consequences; of situated possibilities and impossibilities of individuation and identification; and of partial fusions and dangers.⁸⁸

Instead of closing off the self, life should be seen as a 'window of vulnerability.' The possibility of the destruction of the organism is also that which enables it to live. Science and culture are not distinct categories; rather, science is culture (p. 230). Drawing on some striking illustrations of 'the orchestra of the immune system' by Richard K. Gershon, who discovered the T-cell, Haraway observes that each picture shows G.O.D. controlling the orchestra. G.O.D., she explains, is a 'bioreligious, Nobel Prize winning 'joke' about the coded bodily text of post-DNA biology and medicine – the Central Dogma of molecular biology, specifying that "information" flows only from DNA to RNA to protein. These three were called the Blessed Trinity of the secularised sacred body...' (p. 206). The biological immune system is itself a sphere of modernity, replacing God with a new sphere of comfort, G.O.D. Haraway's response to the immune self, which enforces the dualism of self and non-self, is her 'Cyborg Manifesto' (1991), a mythological theory of a hybrid machine-organism in a post-gender world, which 'appears precisely where the boundary

⁸⁸ Donna J. Haraway, 'The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Constitutions of Self in Immune Systems Discourse', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 203-230, p. 225.

between human and animal is transgressed.⁸⁹ The cyborg breaks down dichotomous relationships between the public and private, and nature and culture, so that 'the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other' (p. 293). Whilst both Haraway and Sloterdijk offer us alternative definitions of immunity, Sloterdijk holds onto insides and outsides. This is perhaps recognition that despite our efforts to see beyond insides and outsides, we are not quite ready to dispose of them. But this is already implied in Haraway's writing, where the cyborg had to be created as a science fiction character precisely because we are unable to think beyond gender differences. Divides persist. As we have seen, they are ingrained in modern thought.

Bruno Latour views Sloterdijk's project as sharing one of the same fundamental concerns as his own: the 'apparent divide between nature and society'⁹⁰ which is also central to Haraway's work. In his 1993 book, We Have Never Been Modern, Latour states that modernity 'designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time.⁹¹ Modernity is contrasted to the archaic and the stable. breaking the regular passage of time. Central to the definition of the modern are the processes of 'translation' and 'purification.' Translation is a set of practices that 'creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture.' However, purification is interested in the ontological separation between nature (nonhumans) and culture (humans). To be modern, Latour argues, is to consider these two processes separately. To consider them simultaneously is to stop being modern. Why? Modernity is founded on a series of paradoxes that are linked to the death of God (or the 'crossed-out God' in Latour's words) and the rise of science – both the natural and social sciences. Natural sciences help to define nature from a scientific standpoint, which is also implicitly a humanistic one in so far that science is a human practice. At the same time, the rise of the social sciences counteracted 'excesses of naturalisation,' in defining nature as human construction (p. 35). Even though the human-nonhuman relation exists, the modern paradox manages to remain blind to it. To be modern is to believe in both the transcendence

⁸⁹ Haraway, 2001, p.152, p. 151.

⁹⁰ Latour, 2009, p. 139.

⁹¹ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 10.

of nature – we can do nothing against its laws, but also its immanence – we have unlimited possibilities to shape or exploit it. This is also true of culture or society. Society's immanence tells us that there are endless social possibilities, yet its transcendence states that we are futile in changing its laws or structures. Thus, writes Latour, 'everything happens in the middle, everything passes between the two, everything happens by way of mediation, translations and networks, but this space does not exist, it has no place. It is unthinkable, the unconscious of the moderns' (p. 37). This space of the in-between does not exist, yet everything set up in this separation is made possible because of it. The death of God also occupies a similar impossibility: If you accuse the moderns of atheism, they will 'speak to you of an all-powerful God who is infinitely more remote in the great beyond', but if you tell them God is dead, they will tell you that He occupies a private, internal space (p. 39).

These relationships, which compose what Latour terms the 'Modern Constitution,' hold the key to the invincibility of the moderns. However, Latour argues that the modern world has never happened as it has never been able to separate these two processes of translation and purification. However, the moderns had to think of themselves as different - 'unable to conceptualise themselves in continuity with the pre-moderns.⁹² Thus they hold on to this nature-culture dichotomy, unaware that what they are actually doing in the attempt of separation is multiplying hybrids through mediation. Mediation is thus both cancelled out and specified by the moderns simultaneously, because every hybrid is conceived of as 'a mixture of two pure forms' (p. 78). The in-between or 'Middle Kingdom,' the space between nature and culture, is thus central to Latour's theory, relying on a distinction he makes between intermediaries and mediators. An intermediary 'transports energy from one of the poles of the Constitution' (p. 77) - the poles being nature and culture. The intermediary is a void, passive because nothing is produced by or in it. However, a mediator is 'an original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays a mediating role' (p. 77). It is a dynamic process, not only creating the in-between but also shaping the two points that it mediates between. However, if mediation were truly to occur, we would be thrown back into a pre-modern state, where nature and culture are produced by each-other occupying non-polar positions. Mediation is therefore combined with purification by the

⁹² Latour, 1993, p. 39.

moderns in a way that keeps every hybrid the construction of the two *a priori* forms. We encounter examples of these hybrids on daily basis, in cases such as the ozone layer, frozen embryos, and conservation schemes (pp. 1-2). For example, we are told that we can shape the future of the hole in the ozone layer by our individual use of CFCs, yet simultaneously, we are made to believe that we are powerless against the processes of nature. Or in the case of genetics, as Donna Haraway remarks, 'Human babies with baboon hearts evoke national ethical perplexity – for animal rights activists at least as much as the guardians of human purity.'⁹³ It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of a cyborg as anything but a nature-culture hybrid.

Attempting to reconcile the two poles poses further problems. The worst case for Latour is a form of reconciliation whereby society is subsumed by nature through 'naturalisation,' or nature is subsumed by society through 'socialisation' or social construction. These are the same tendencies observed by Nick Land in his controversial blog, *The Dark Enlightenment*:

Either nature expresses itself as culture, *or* culture expresses itself in its images ('constructions') of nature. Both of these positions are trapped at opposite sides of an incomplete circuit, structurally blinded to *the culture of practical naturalism*, which is to say: the techno-scientific/ industrial manipulation of the world.⁹⁴

Both Latour and Sjoerd van Tuinen argue that Sloterdijk's project goes against this culture of practical naturalism. Central to Sloterdijk's spherology in contrast to Heidegger is that finitude is characterised by 'bornness' or being born rather than 'throwness.'⁹⁵As we encountered in Walter Benjamin's idea of dwelling, the womb is cast as an eternal place of comfort. However, for Sloterdijk the motif of the womb comes second to the egg which is the 'old cosmological motif of the genesis of all life.'⁹⁶ It is our emergence from the egg or the womb, the process of being born, which teaches us the importance of the unity and protection that the interior offers.

⁹³ Haraway, 2001, pp. 164-5.

⁹⁴ Nick Land, *The Dark Enlightenment* http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/ [accessed 26th February 2014].

⁹⁵ Sjoerd van Tuinen, 'Air Conditioning Spaceship Earth: Peter Sloterdijk's ethico-easthetic Paradigm', in *Environment and planning D: Society and Space*, 27, (2009), 105-118, (p. 108).

⁹⁶ Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 23.

Birth is a process of de-shelling that propels us into an exterior that we constantly negotiate. Thus 'humans are never completely at home.' We therefore have to constantly 'reconstruct and deconstruct our shared "house of being"' through the building of spheres.' ⁹⁷ However, we need to get past thinking that we are born *into* space, which assumes an absolute inside and outside. Such a view leads us to see nature for the technological exploitation of humans. Instead, 'nature must be understood as the nonoutside of these processes' – the processes of building of spheres. The spaces we inhabit are 'hybrids of nature and culture' (p. 111). As Nick Land states, 'There is no essential difference between learning what we *really are* and re-defining ourselves as technological contingencies, or *technoplastic* beings, susceptible to precise, scientifically-informed transformations.'⁹⁸ For both Latour and Sloterdijk, it is the space in-between nature and culture that must be interrogated, which for Latour has become a void in modern consciousness.

Latour's insights into the modern constitution unveil a revelation that helps us to historically position an understanding of Victorian comfort based on protection inside a dwelling space, based on a separation of an inside and outside, a purification of the two poles and an in-between space that is connected by an intermediary but not truly mediated. You cannot control the threat provided by the dirt and disorder of society but you can hide away in your suburban house and shelter from it. You cannot control the acts of crime occurring but you can install a burglar alarm to offer individual protection. This view of comfort maintains the public and private sphere as separate entities when in fact they contain each-other. In addition, Sloterdijk's spherology gives us a way of understanding spheres not as absolute containers, but as interrelated spaces that we create through the process of dwelling. Thus both nature and culture, or the inside and outside, can and must be thought of as mutually created phenomena. In the next section we turn our attention to another thinker of spheres, Buckminster Fuller. With specific focus on his thinking of spheres leading up to the construction of his famous geodesic domes, his work can be seen as a material manifestation of some of the theoretical perspectives that have been encountered through the exploration of the work of Bruno Latour and Peter Sloterdijk.

⁹⁷ van Tuinen, 2009, p. 108.

⁹⁸ Land, 2014.

Spaceship Earth: Buckminster Fuller's Geodesic Domes

The work of Richard Buckminster Fuller did much to challenge thinking around spheres. Born in 1895, in Milton, Massachusetts, he broke a family trend in failing to graduate from Harvard. In 1917 he decided to dedicate his life's research to the question of dwelling, his inspiration the post-First World War housing crisis. He saw his time as one of great technological advances, born in the year of the introduction of the automobile, wireless telegraph and X-ray, at the turn of the twentieth century which was characterised by a shift from the inert to the dynamic.⁹⁹ Fuller saw housing as a service, and believed that home ownership was redundant, remarking that 'you don't have to own the ocean to have a boat.'¹⁰⁰ Fuller's biographer Martin Pawley describes Fuller as a 'small and inadequate child' who only grew to the height of five feet two inches by the time he reached adulthood, his 'left leg more than an inch shorter than his right' (p. 27). Bullied at school and fired from many jobs, Fuller's first attempts at creating his housing solution led to the liquidation of Fuller Houses Inc. in 1946. Yet today, he is fondly remembered for his dymaxion car and home, and his geodesic domes, which remain objects of architectural fascination. Fuller's concern about housing and resources continues to be relevant today making the 'global world' habitable is a key question for Latour in his commentary on Sloterdijk's work. Spheres and networks, according to Latour, which may look like a reduction of the global to 'tiny local scenes,' should be understood, rather as 'a search for space, for a vastly more comfortable inhabitable space.¹⁰¹ The global is an outside than can never be accessed.

Fuller was a transdisciplinary thinker, describing himself as a 'comprehensive anticipatory design scientist.'¹⁰² He was an architect, a practical philosopher, inventor, cartographer and a geometrician. His project was concerned with housing, shelter, transportation, education, energy, ecological destruction, and poverty, which

⁹⁹ R. Buckminster Fuller, 'Buckminster Fuller Chronofile', in *The Buckminster Fuller Reader*, ed. James Meller (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1970), pp. 13-37, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ R. Buckminster Fuller, cited in Martin Pawley, *Buckminster Fuller* (London: Trefoil, 1990), p. 27.

¹⁰¹ Latour, 2009, p. 141.

¹⁰² <http://bfi.org/about-bucky/buckys-big-ideas> [accessed 11th February 2014].

were all components of what he termed 'Universe.' K. Michael Hayes and Dana Miller write:

Starting with Universe, Fuller sought the most basic of nature's forms and forces, or in his words, "how nature builds." Universe (he used the word usually without the definite article and always capitalised) is everything humanity has even been or can ever become conscious of – or as Fuller put it, "Universe is all that isn't me and me."¹⁰³



Figure 1.1: Buckminster Fuller's geodesic spheres

Fuller saw housing, or 'shelter' as he preferred to call it, as the primary human problem of the future. Although more of a maverick than a Marxist, Fuller was perplexed by the obsession of home ownership in North America and saw ownership as something quite removed from the question of dwelling. Inhabiting a living space was a question of 'the entire system of elements and forces, distances and movements, that must converge and connect in order to construct that particular local event of being housed' (p. 2). The geodesic dome was the turning point of his career.

¹⁰³ K. Michael Hayes and Dana Miller, *Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe*, ed. K. Michael Hayes and Dana Miller (New Haven and London: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with Yale University Press, 2008), p. xii.

In the thinking and building leading up to the emergence of these structures, thinking around the sphere itself was central to Fuller's philosophy. The beauty of bubbles was one source of inspiration. Fuller writes:

Looking back at the wake of my ship one day in 1917, I became interested in its beautiful white path. I said to myself, "That path is white because of the different refractions of light by the bubbles of water - H2O (not H π O). The bubbles are beautiful little spheres. I wonder how many bubbles I am looking at stretching miles astern?" I began to make calculations of how many bubbles there were per cubic foot of water. I began to find that in calculating the ship's white wake I was dealing in quintillions to the fourth power times quintillions of the fourth power or some such fantastically absurd number of bubbles. And nature was making those bubbles in sublimely swift ease! Any time one looks carefully at a bubble, one is impressed with the beauty of its structure, its beautiful sphericity glinting with the colours of the spectrum. It is ephemeral – elegantly conceived, beautifully manufactured and readily broken.¹⁰⁴

Fuller's scepticism of nature's use of the irrational constant Pi was also teamed with cynicism of geometry. The Greeks wrongly assumed there was something called a solid. Fuller writes:

We've been told by the Greeks, and we've accepted it for far too long, that a sphere is *a surface equidistant in all directions from a point*. What I am going to show you about the sphere may be considered by you as typical of the way axioms are both erroneous and experimentally inadequate. Because a sphere was designed by the Greeks as a surface equidistant in all directions form a point it could not have holes in it. Because if it had any holes in it, it would turn inwardly as you came to the holes and therefore the surface would no longer be the same distance from the centre.¹⁰⁵

The result of adhering to this Euclidian definition of the sphere would 'divide the whole universe into all the universe outside the sphere, and the rest of the universe inside the sphere because there are no holes in it.' (p. 82). This relationship is one

¹⁰⁴ R. Buckminster Fuller, 'Conceptuality of Fundamental Structures', in G. Kepes: *Structures in Art and Science* (1965), p. 66, cited in R. Buckminster Fuller, *Your Private Sky*, ed. Joachim Krausse and Claude Lichtenstein (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 1999), p. 457.

¹⁰⁵ R. Buckminster Fuller, *Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity*, (London: Allen Lane/ The Penguin Press, 1970), pp. 80-81. Emphasis as original.

where there is no flow or 'traffic' between the inside an outside of the sphere – it becomes a monad. However, Fuller observes, 'All systems are full of holes' (p. 82), a conclusion he came to observing the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, where all systems including the universe see an energy flow from high to low (this idea is discussed at length in chapter 2). He also observed, macroscopically, Kepler's tensional coherence of the solar system, and microscopically, the structure of the atom, the nucleus bound to the negatively charged electrons by electromagnetic force. In these two examples, a larger sphere is composed of a relationship between points, or smaller spheres held together by forces. Thus, Fuller began to rethink the sphere in terms of events:

The best definition that we can have of a sphere is a plurality of events approximately equidistant in approximately all directions from approximately one event, at approximately one time (p. 82).

For Fuller, the idea of homogenous space thereafter was overtaken by a view of the universe characterised by relationships. The idea of the inside and the outside therefore also lost meaning. Fuller noted that there was no 'inherent inside or outside of the aggregate of universe's ages of nonsimultaneous events' (p. 87). 'In' can only express a relationship towards a specific body, and 'out' is what appears to have no shape.

Having shattered the continuous surface of the sphere, Fuller began to think of 'Universe' in terms of 'movements, distances, patterns, and intensities.'¹⁰⁶ He became excited about the relationship between 'events,' or points. He observed that for example, a single event has no connections, but two events have one. There are three possible connections between three events, six between four, ten between five and so on. This relationship can be described by the formula:

$$r = \frac{n^2 - n}{2}$$

¹⁰⁶ Hayes and Miller, 2008, p. 3.



Figure 1.2 The relationships between points or events and the closest packing of spheres

This led to his discovery of the relationship between spheres and tetrahedra, whereby the vertices of a tetrahedron lie on a sphere (the 'circumsphere'), whilst another sphere, the 'insphere,' can be traced inside its face (p. 92). Fuller's 'energetic

¹⁰⁷ Fuller, 1970, p.90.

geometry' was based on such a relationship between spheres and tetrahedra, more particularly in the closest packing of spheres, 'each sphere being conceived as an idealised model of a field of energy in which all forces are in equilibrium, and whose vectors, consequently, are identical in length and in angular relationships.'¹⁰⁸ This, incidentally, was the same relationship observed by Sir William Bragg, the Nobel Physicist, in 1924, which he had also called closest packing, but Fuller is said to have discovered the theory independently (p. 40). The following rules apply to the packing of spheres around a single, central sphere. The first layer around the central sphere consists of 12 spheres, the second of 42 spheres, and the third of 92 spheres. Fuller noticed analogies between this pattern and uranium, the 92nd element in the periodic table. The sum of the spheres in each layer, 12+42+92 = 146, the number of neurons in uranium. The total number of spheres in any layer can be expressed by the following calculation:

The square of the layer number x 10 + 2

For example the 3rd layer is 3 squared x 10 + 2 = 92 (p. 40) (The arrangement in the closest packing is also shown in figure 1.2). Overlaying each of the spheres in this closest packing composite is the relationship to the tetrahedron. Thus it became evident to Fuller that a large spherical structure could be constructed from a web of tetrahedra, challenging the assumption that the sphere required a smooth surface. An analogy for this, in Fuller's mind, was the surface of a balloon. Writing of Fuller's observations, Marks notes, although we might think of a balloon as a solid surface that molecules of gas bounce off, that is not the case. 'But if the skin of a plastic balloon is viewed through a microscope, it is found to be full of holes. Therefore it was clear to him [Fuller] that an accurate description of a balloon is a "network" – but one in which the holes in the network are smaller than the molecules of gas' (p. 56).

Fuller began to build a structure drawing on this spherical relation between tetrahedron-octahedron combinations which he called the 'Octet Truss,' which formed a 'complex of vector equilibriums' providing an omnidirectional and equal

¹⁰⁸ Robert W. Marks, *The Dymaxion World of Buckminster Fuller* (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1960), p. 40.

dispersion of load pressures, with 'no member of the truss duplicating the function of any other' in a matrix of alternating tetrahedra and octahedra.¹⁰⁹ The first attempt at building a dome was made in 1948 at Black Mountain College (a rural Bible belt art college set up by John Rice, a maverick professor formerly at Rollins College Florida, sacked for suggesting the abolition of the eight-hour working day).¹¹⁰ Fuller was invited to teach a design class and instructed his students to build a 15 metre dome from old venetian blinds, bolted together at their intersections. The dome collapsed as it was unable to support its own weight. It was christened 'supine dome' (p. 119). Fuller was invited back for the whole summer school the following year and attempted the dome again, this time assembled with a compound curvature casted out of fibreglass and bonded with resin. Due to the humidity of the summer the structure would not set and the dome was again abandoned (p. 120). Finally, he mastered the secret which was exposed by one of his students. Kenneth Snelson, who began constructing small structures with discontinuous compression, separated by tension wires. This method was later termed 'tensegrity' by Fuller (p. 120), a portmanteau of 'tensional integrity,' where 'continuous tensile stress and discontinuous tractive tension interact with a maximum distribution of labour.¹¹¹ The key to the strength of such a structure is the 60 degree angle created between the struts. As well as rejecting right angles, Fuller challenged the idea of the sphere as a continuous surface and as a product of calculations involving Pi. In the geodesic structure. Fuller explains, the strength of the structure depends on a balance of forces:

As triangles are non-distortable this intersecting, if substantially structured, represents a rigid trussing of the spherical surface. If, between each of the vertexes or intersections of the great circles occurring in the surface of the sphere, we will construct chords or straight lines which lines must fall below the surface between their surface terminals, the lines converging at any one vertex all leading away below the point on the surface, must form a convex intersection or a pyramidal point. As we press against any convex vertex, and

¹⁰⁹ Marks, 1960, p. 55.

¹¹⁰ Pawley, 1990, p. 116.

¹¹¹ R. Buckminster Fuller, *Your Private Sky*, ed. Joachim Krausse and Claude Lichtenstein (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 1999), p. 401.

if the other ends of the line are elastically restrained, the vertex will subside and the lines will tend to form a flat plane. 112



Figure 1.3: Fuller with a student building a geodesic dome (1948)

The geodesic dome was to become Fuller's success story, and in 1949, he founded Geodesics Inc., which instantly received attention from the U.S. Military, who commissioned geodesic structures for military stores and hangers for jet fighters.¹¹³ The dome was patented in 1951 and Fuller received all royalties (p. 125). Although the military commissions were important, Fuller's Ford Rotunda roof dome represented the first commercial sponsorship of the geodesic structure. Its aluminium 28 metre diameter structure was glazed with transparent polyurethane, starting a trend for see-through structures. In addition to achieving commercial success, Fuller saw the geodesic dome as a real solution for dwelling space, making shelter 'more comfortable and efficient' and economically effective.¹¹⁴ Fuller even lived in a dome

¹¹² Buckminster Fuller, Perspecta, 1 (1952), 28-37, (p. 31).

¹¹³ Pawley, 1990, p. 124.

¹¹⁴ <http://bfi.org/about-bucky/buckys-big-ideas/geodesic-domes> [accessed 11th February 2014].

home himself which he constructed in Carbondale, Illinois, in 1960, in which he lived with his wife Anne for over a decade.¹¹⁵ He noted several advantages to living in a hemisphere. Although upon appearance, rectangular buildings seem spatially efficient, spheres are more volumetrically efficient because, as the dimensions are amplified, the rate of volume increases to the power of three proportionately to the increase in surface area.¹¹⁶ Thinking back to Fuller's observations of the bubble, the mundane yet beautiful soap bubble forms as soapy water, which has less surface tension than water without soap, forms the shape where the transformation uses the least amount of energy. Just like Fuller's geodesic dome, the soap bubble has the least surface area for any given volume.¹¹⁷ Due to the height of the sphere in relation to the ground area, Fuller saw it appropriate that a second floor should be installed in a dome home to fully utilise the space.¹¹⁸ In addition, the dome is an energy-efficient dwelling space, requiring fewer building materials due to its shape. It reflects and concentrates interior heat, lessening radiant heat loss.¹¹⁹ The dome shape creates a good flow of heated air, creating what Fuller termed a 'comfort atmosphere.' ¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Fuller, 1952, p. 32.

¹¹⁵ <http://new.dwell.com/contests/rethinking-preservation/submissions/the-fuller-dome-preservation-project> [accessed 11th February 2014].

¹¹⁶ Fuller, 1952, p. 32.

¹¹⁷ Helen Czerski, Pop! The Science of Bubbles, (UK: BBC 4, 9th April 2013) [TV broadcast].

¹¹⁸ Fuller, 1952, p. 32.

¹¹⁹ <http://bfi.org/about-bucky/buckys-big-ideas/geodesic-domes> [accessed 11th February 2014].



Figure 1.4: Buckminster and Anne Fuller in their dome home

Fuller's plans for his geodesic domes did not stop at domestic or corporate space. He imagined that the geodesic dome could be realised on a monstrous scale, enclosing an entire city:

A dome one mile in diameter appropriately skinned in may, in the future, economically encompass the activity of a city. Such a city would require no weather walls for its individual parts and could be entirely air conditioned.¹²¹



Figure 1.5: Fuller imagines a dome encompassing Manhattan

¹²¹ Fuller, 1952, p. 31.

No such dome was ever built.

Possibly the most well-known geodesic dome structure in the UK on a vast scale is the Eden Project. Here it is worth pausing on this example in order to look at the geodesic dome through a Sloterdijkian lens. Can synergies be observed between these theories of spheres? The Eden Project was opened in 2001 in Cornwall which, along with the Millennium Dome and London Eye, was part of the British Millennium projects. The structure was designed by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners, and Tim Smit, of Arup Engineering. Referred to as the 'modern Garden of Eden,' the Eden Project's aim is to 'educate visitors about the importance of a sustainable environment through the study of and education of plants.¹²² The Eden Project features two giant, interconnected greenhouses, which blend into the surrounding environment, 'hugging' the landscape, representing two different climate zones with their typical vegetation: the humid tropic biome, and the warm temperate biome. 'The Eden domes are geodesic spherical networks,' where each biome is a composite of four geodesic domes. They are described as networks where the 'elements' of the network (the nodal points) 'lie of the surface of a sphere' without actually being geodesic (curved) themselves.¹²³ The entire building uses straight edges, but no right angles, and does not require any internal supports despite spanning 240 metres. The structure is therefore faithful to Fuller's invention. The official name for this particular structure is 'hex-tri-hex', incorporating an outer shell of mainly hexagons and some pentagons, and an inner network of triangles. Making use of the advantages Fuller described, the domes are energy efficient, the hemisphere shape helping to conserve heat due to its large volume to surface area ratio. In addition cushions of ETFE (ethyltetraflouroethylene) transparent foil are used for the glazing, letting in ultraviolet light.

¹²² <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch504ukgreenarch/CaseStudies/EdenProject1.pdf> [accessed 13th March 2014].

¹²³ Klaus Knebel, Jaime Sanchez-Alvarez, Stefan Zimmermann, *The Structural Making of the Eden Domes*, MERO GmbH & Co. KG, D-97084 Würzburg, Germany
<http://www.solaripedia.com/files/260.pdf> [accessed 13th March 2014].



Figure 1.6: The Eden Project

Thinking about the sphere led Buckminster Fuller to a reconceptualization of the inside and outside. Could the nature/culture divide also be reconsidered using the Eden Project? Nicholas Grimshaw looked to nature to find this design solution. inspired by honeycomb. However, Fuller did not look to nature when he designed his geodesic structure. The very idea of Fuller's aforementioned 'Universe,' consisting of everything that was him and not him, already implies no such nature/culture divide. The practices of design and architecture can be seen as tools for a 'remaking of nature,' a theme that became important to Latour through his reading of Sloterdijk, which points to an in-between space between nature and culture. Encountering a definition of design as 're-looking' that he initially considered bland, Latour returns to this definition which, he argues, has become an increasingly important process. Not limited to the professions of engineering and architecture, Latour states that 'design has been extended from the details of daily objects to cities, landscapes, nations, cultures, bodies, genes, and, as I will argue, to nature itself - which is in great need of being designed.¹²⁴ Drawing on Sloterdijk scholar Henk Oosterling's phrase "Dasein ist design," Latour again comments on the difference in Being between Heidegger and Sloterdijk:

¹²⁴ Bruno Latour, 'A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps toward a Philosophy of Design with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk', in *In Medias Res: Peter Sloterdijk's Spherological Poetics of Being*, ed. Willem Schinkel and Liesbeth Noordegraaf-Eelens (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 151-164, p. 151.

When we say that "Dasein is in the world" we usually pass very quickly on the little preposition "in". Not Sloterdijk. In what? he asks, and in where? Are you in a room? In an air-conditioned amphitheatre? And if so, what sort of air pumps and energy sources keep it up? Are you outside? There is no outside: outside is another inside with another climate control, another thermostat, another air-conditioning system. Are you in public? Public spaces are spaces too, for goodness' sake. They are not different in that respect from private spaces. They are simply organized differently, with different architectures, different entry points, different surveillance systems, different soundscapes (p. 158).

For both Sloterdijk and Fuller, there is no absolute outside. All space is a product of design, in a constant process of being made and re-made. Architecture in itself can show us this. According to Elizabeth Grosz, architecture has always been concerned with the categories of nature and culture. Grosz argues that

Nature, in cultural and architectural discourses, is conceived of either as a passive, inert, ahistorical burden – in architecture, the burden of site specificity or the natural limit of materials – or else as a romanticised refuge or haven from the cultural, a cultural invention for its own recuperatively included "outside." ¹²⁵

Grosz's observation that architecture is 'a kind of probe that seeks out and remakes geological and geographic formations while being directed by the requirements of an aesthetic, economic, corporate, and engineering amalgam' (p. 101) is useful in overcoming both the problem of nature as a passive outside, or nature, in Nick Land's terms, as culture expressed in images of nature. For Grosz, architecture is a tool for accessing the in-between, a space that for her has no identity, but yet that makes identity possible (p. 91). The structure of the geodesic dome where the network of points or 'events' in relation to each other are visible to us allows this invisible in-between to be revealed. As a result we can conceive that our dwelling places do not shelter us from 'nature' but are themselves a nature-culture hybrid.

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, 'In-between: The Natural in Architecture and Culture', in *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 91-108, p. 97.

Does Sloterdijk himself appreciate the synergies between his own work and Fuller's domes? In Sloterdijk's terms, a structure such as the Eden Project's biomes can be categorized in terms of Islands, a concept he develops in the third book of the Spheres trilogy: Schäume [Foams] (2004). Islands can either be absolute, for example the submarine, representing an 'absolute idea of insularity,'¹²⁶ The next category is the atmospheric island, which includes air-conditioning systems, greenhouses, such as the Crystal Palace, or Kew's glass house, or Arizona's 'Biosphere 2.' The third type, the anthropogenic island, is a manner of selfgenerating life. The Eden project, according to Bárbara Freitag Rouanet, is an example of the atmospheric island, not simply because it is an air-conditioned greenhouse, but because its structure is a network of bubbles depicted by Sloterdijk's Foams. Sloterdijk's theory of foams is one of both isolation and cohabitation, or 'coisolation' which is to say, using Sloterdijk's architectural imagery, that to an extent we exist in apartment blocks, detached from our neighbours, but at the same time we are interconnected by the same walls that separate us. Immunity is also community. Again influenced by Heidegger, Sloterdijk maintains that people are ecstatic beings. 'forever held outside in the open; they can never definitely be included in some container.'127 For Sloterdijk, the outside occupies a paradoxical position. On one hand, we are always on the outside to some extent, but on the other, the place of the absolute outside does not exist. Thus, rather than abolishing insides and outsides. Sloterdijk multiplies them. Latour envisages this as a process of enveloping:

...we are enveloped, entangled, surrounded; we are never outside without having created another more artificial, more fragile, more engineered envelope. We move from envelopes to envelopes, from folds to folds, never from one private sphere to the Great Outside.¹²⁸

The Eden project's architecture expresses this multiplication of insides and outsides in its design. Yet, the extent to which Fuller's structure can be seen as Sloterdijkian is limited in Sloterdijk's opinion. In an interview with Jean-Christophe Royoux, Sloterdijk is asked what he thinks of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes and the

¹²⁶ Bárbara Freitag Rouanet, 'The Trilogy Spheres of Peter Sloterdijk', *The Journal of Oriental Studies* 21 (2011), 73-84, (p. 79).

¹²⁷ Sloterdijk, 2009, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Latour, 2011, p. 158-9.

'biomorphic tendency that returns so strongly in architecture today.' Sloterdijk's response is that he loves Fuller's 'radically new equilibrium.' He thinks the domes are worthy of praise, and admires the 'ultra-refined structures he [Fuller] called tension integrity structures or tensegrities – structures that replaced static pressure with a tension between the elements of a constructed body more emphatically.¹²⁹ Here it is not clear if Sloterdijk is aware that these very structures he admires form the networks involved in the construction of the geodesic domes. Of biomorphic architecture in general, he is of the opinion that mathematics has caught up with nature. Thus we can assume that Fuller's geodesics, never intended as a representation of nature, would be of importance for this reason. In a later 2009 interview (an interview with himself), Sloterdijk is more explicit about the connection between his own theories and Buckminster Fuller's structures. He says 'There are no rectangular shapes in foams, and that is interesting news. [...] Within them, reciprocal forces of deformation are always at work that ensure we get structures that are not smooth and in which more complex geometric rules prevail.¹³⁰ He then, clearly stating that he draws on Fuller, speaks of the way in which tensegrity structures challenge our thinking about load-bearing structures, stating 'Tensegrities form the technical transition from the metaphor of foam to modern buildings.' (p. 7). It is therefore possible that he sees the connection between geodesic domes and his own theory of spheres.

Nature/Culture and the Body

We have come thus far to see that thinking through the spheres of Sloterdijk and Fuller can aid us in an understanding of a sphere that breaks down the boundaries between nature and culture and the inside and outside. Is it possible to apply this thinking to the body itself, as Haraway did with her 'Cyborg Manifesto?' Genetics, according to Paul Rabinow, a form of what he terms 'biosociality' following

¹²⁹ Jean-Christophe Royoux and Peter Sloterdijk, 'Foreword to the Theory of Spheres', in *Cosmogram*, ed. Melik Ohanian and Jean-Christophe Royoux (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2004), pp. 223-240, p. 238.

¹³⁰ Peter Sloterdijk, 'Spheres Theory: Talking to Myself About the Poetics of Space.' Transcript of a lecture with Sloterdijk, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 17th February, 2009, *Harvard Design Magazine*, 30 (2009), 1-8, (p.7).

Foucault's Biopower, also has the potential to challenge the nature/culture divide. Faced with the possibility that genetic sequences will become made-to-order commodities, their sequencing not even requiring a biological component, leads to a process whereby 'nature will be known and remade through technique and will finally become artificial, just as culture becomes natural. Were such a project to be brought to fruition, it would stand as the basis for overcoming the nature/culture split.¹³¹ Our particular time period is marked by the older concepts of eugenics, which were 'modern social projects cast in biological metaphors' which did not emerge from scientific thinking (p. 241). This new phase of immunology however is characterised by the 'tracking down of risks, it is a prevention based on the surveillance of the probability of acquiring disease, on 'impersonal factors' rather than the individual and his or her behaviours. This new kind of immunology does not eradicate old categories for Rabinow, but threatens to bring back and partially redefine older categories. Genetic manipulation also suddenly diverts from Sloterdijk's Spheres as much as Haraway's Cyborg, being based on risk prevention, normativity and enclosure. Whilst Nick Land and Peter Sloterdijk have also made reference to the overcoming of the nature/culture divide with genetics, their writing has been criticised as belonging to a fascist, eugenicist repertoire. Land states that defining our bionic-horizon relies on a 'nature-culture' fusion, by which we are indistinguishable from our technology.¹³² Sloterdijk's essay Rules for the Human Park focuses on a similar theme, yet Sloterdijk frames the argument as the domestication of man. Drawing on Nietzsche, he refers to the moulding of the human being as 'pet' through various methods of habituation such as teaching, religion and genetic manipulation.¹³³ Following Europe's Holocaust history, it was the term Auslesen that apparently caused the outrage, meaning 'selection,' 'culling,' or 'sorting out.'¹³⁴ It was used by the Nazi's, for example by Interior Minister Wilhem Fick in detailing the Nazi eugenicist programme of eradication, sterilisation

¹³² Land, 2014.

¹³¹ Paul Rabinow, 'Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality', in *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone, 1992), pp. 234-252, p. 241.

¹³³ Peter Sloterdijk, 'Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the Letter on Humanism', trans. Mary Varney Rorty, in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27 (2009), 12-28.

¹³⁴ Mary Varney Rorty, For Love of the Game: Peter Sloterdijk and Public Controversies in Bioethics http://www.stanford.edu/~mvr2j/for_love.html [accessed 21st March 2014].

and euthanasia.¹³⁵ According to Mary Varney Rorty, the play on language was lost on the critics (to read, *lesen*, and to select, *auslesen*). Sloterdijk's argument was that he was only exposing what we are already doing in genetic manipulation; the possibility of eugenics is already present. Humans participate in their own 'domestication' without understanding the project in which they are involved. The reaction he provoked could therefore be indicative of our inability to comprehend our own '*Anthropotechnik*,' another of Sloterdijk's unpopular terms.

Could there be another way of thinking the body as a nature/culture hybrid outside of the field of genetics? Does speaking of the 'designed limits' of the body necessarily have to suggest a theory of self-improvement or eugenicist ideology? Perhaps we can think of bodies as structures that inhabit the universe, in the same way that buildings do. As Denis Hollier said, there is '[...] no way to describe a system without resorting to the vocabulary of architecture.¹³⁶ We must remember. going back to Heidegger's essay, that act of inhabitation is always a process of building. A design of the body does not have to refer to a blueprint or an idea. When Latour says that Sloterdijk considers 'Dasein as design' and describes Sloterdijk as a philosopher who engages with design as a process of relooking, he is certainly against a plan or blueprint, exclaiming 'imagine that – the real world confused with the white expanse of a piece of paper!¹³⁷ Although people have drawn designs copper, paper and computer screens, 'Nothing, absolutely nothing, ever resided in res extensa - not even a worm, a tick, or a speck of dust' (p. 142). Design without a blueprint, if we recall, is exactly how Valéry described the process of the mollusc fashioning his shell. And that shell, for Valéry suggested a 'field of force' represented in 'geodesic lines.' Although we do not possess an exoskeleton, we could conceive of our bodies in a similar way. A therapeutic practice called Structural Integration, or 'Rolfing' provides a way of seeing the body as such, a practice that has also drawn on Buckminister Fuller's tensegrity structures.

¹³⁵ Claudia Koonz, 'Ethnic Revival and Racist Anxiety,' in *The Nazi Conscious* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 103-130, p. 104.

¹³⁶ Denis Hollier, Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 33.

¹³⁷ Latour, 2009, p. 142.

Structural Integration, or 'Rolfing,' as it is commonly known today, is a physical therapy named after American biochemist Ida P. Rolf, who developed the method in the 1960s. Rolfing consists of both hands-on manipulation of the body and movement education, which are designed to 'realign and rebalance' the body, 'potentially relieving discomfort.' The method aims to 'restore flexibility, revitalise your energy and leave you feeling more comfortable in your own body.'¹³⁸ Ida Rolf was unsatisfied with the limitations of medicine, both the tendency of 'new medicine' to burden the individual with responsibility for well-being and the 'magic' of 'old medicine' whereby cure was based on substances introduced from the outside.¹³⁹ After being awarded her PhD in Biochemistry in 1920, Rolf travelled to Europe in 1927, studied mathematics and physics and also furthered her interest in homeopathy in Switzerland. Interested in osteopathy and chiropractic medicine, as well as yoga,¹⁴⁰ she developed her method of Structural Integration based on her theory of structure and the universe.

Rolf saw that 'physical structure, its order or disorder' might play a vital role in well-being, a response to the problem of both 'old' and 'new' medicine. Structure, as she understood it, implies the presence of space, three dimensions or even four if time is incorporated. Therefore, just as we see in Fuller's writings, structure always implies relationships. It is never absolute. Structure, as she saw the term, was concerned with 'energy aggregates which constitute the matter of our material world.' Structure, then, gives rise to what Rolf calls behaviour which, when applied to the human body, refers to the physical, mental and emotional manifestations related to the functioning of the body. The theory behind Rolfing is that structural manipulation of the body can lead to well-being; changing the structure has an impact on behaviour. Rolfing sees the structure of the body as a plastic medium, which, under Rolf's definition means that it can be restored to its original form through the release of stress, through the manipulation of the myofascial system, which comprises fascia, tendons, ligaments and bones.

¹³⁸ Rolf Institute of Structural Integration http://www.rolf.org/ [accessed 28th August 2013].

¹³⁹ Ida P. Rolf, *Structure – A New factor in Understanding the Human Condition*, presented June 10,
1978 at the 'Explorers of Human Kind Conference'. Courtesy of Rolf Institute of Structural Integration, Boulder, USA.

¹⁴⁰< http://www.rolfing.org/index.php?id=138> [accessed 28th August 2013].

Central to Rolf's therapy is gravity. She put forward the idea that man's vertical stance is not in opposition to gravity due to the chemical and physical properties of collagen. She stated, 'As we change the physical body, the energy field of the man, the larger field of the earth is able to act differently on the smaller energy field of the individual.' She saw the human body as an energy field, rather than as a mass of matter, and the relationship between the micro and macro as central to wellbeing. Dr Rolf had made further comments on gravity and the body that came to inspire Ron Kirkby, at that time a student of Rolfing, to see the body as a tensegrity structure, the very same structure discovered by Buckminster Fuller leading up to the construction of his geodesic domes. Rolf had commented that 'gravity lifts the body up' and that in a balanced body 'weight does not go through the bones. Soft tissue instead carries the body 'not earthward but skyward.'¹⁴¹ This idea perplexed Kirkby, as he questioned how soft tissue could support rather than yield. His teacher, Michael Salveson, had remarked that the body was like a tensegrity structure. After studying and building tensegrity masts, Kirkby suggested that the spine might be a structure under tensegrity, rather than bearing weight under compression as a column does. In envisaging the body as a tensegrity structure, the balloon again became an important object of visualisation, as it did for Fuller. Inflated, it is under tension and has integrity, as every fibre in its material is supported by every other (p. 2). However, the spine, he believed, was more closely comparable to the tensegrity mast in its state of equilibrium: 'The whole structure is stable because every force is balanced by an opposing force' (p. 4). In addition, an imbalance of tension and compression give rise to situations that mirror those of the human body. For example, if there is too much tension in the verticals of the tensegrity mast, the struts will bend towards the centre, rotating to ease the strain, as could happen with the spine. However, when the tension is correctly distributed, the structure assumes its maximum height; in Kirkby's terms, 'it comes to its designed limits, rather than to its accidental limits' (p. 5), such as a properly balanced spine effects the posture of the body.

Following Kirkby's research, David L. Robbie, a Californian physician and practitioner of Structural Integration developed the idea of the tensegrity mast as a

¹⁴¹ Ron Kirkby, 'The Probable Reality behind Structural Integration: How Gravity Supports the Body'. Courtesy of Rolf Institute of Structural Integration, Boulder, USA.

model for the body. He also, like Kirby, saw this model as an approximation and noted three key differences between the human body and the tensegrity mast. Firstly, tensegrity masts' tensional units are all lines, whereas in the body, they are surfaces or sheets - the layer of fascia intertwined with muscle and bone are 'networks of sheets.'¹⁴² Secondly, tensional networks in the body are fluid-filled, meaning that hydrostatic forces also play a key role in the structural integrity of the body. Finally, contractile tissue of the muscles is also embedded in the body's tensional network. The effect of this is that 'the body is capable of causing continuous complex changes in the relative length and tension of the various parts of its tensional network. It is dynamic rather than static.' (p. 48). In terms of structural integration, or Rolfing, then, relieving the body of discomfort relies on manipulating the connective tissue and lessening compression in the lumbar spine, so that the spine can elongate and 'begin to function more like a tensegrity mast' (p. 48). In seeing bodies as geodesic spheres, part of 'Universe,' their energy relating to that of their environment, a network of points rather than an inside surrounded a membrane, we begin to see that Fuller's spheres can lead us to thinking of a comfort based on an interaction of forces, requiring a relationship or network between the inside and outside. By viewing bodies as structures, we find another way in which to conceive of ourselves as nature/culture hybrids, sharing structural properties with, and thus forming part of 'Universe.'

We are All Astronauts: Comfort as Emancipation and Attachment

Seeing the body as a tensegrity mast offers us the chance to view it as a structure or network, rather than as a delimited space, an inside sheltered from the outside by a skin or membrane. This exposes an in-between space which I want to suggest performs the role of Latour's definition of mediation, if not strictly between nature and culture then between an inside and outside. As we have encountered, mediation is a process that occurs between two points, that produces something new in-between those points, whilst at the same time creating the points or poles themselves. In the relationship between points, or events in a tensegrity structure, those points are 'fixed' in a relationship, but that relationship depends on an opposing forces in

¹⁴² David L. Robbie, 'Tensional Forces in the Human Body', *Orthopaedic Review*, 6.11 (1977), 45-48, (p. 48).

balance. Change the nature of this force, and the entire structure collapses. The points themselves are meaningless without the relationships that connect them. The tensegrity structure exposes in a visual sense a 'Middle Kingdom' between points that the modern consciousness is usually blind to. In both the structure of the geodesic dome and the body conceived of as tensegrity structure, the outcome of this relationship between points is strength, an ability for the structure to support itself through the balances of forces in a state of equilibrium. This balance of forces, when conceived of in terms of Rolfing, is experienced as a bodily comfort. Yet, this is a relationship that involves both strength and fragility. The structure collapses if its forces are imbalanced. We see this also in the soap bubble, at once made strong by surface tension but prone to popping when met by the slightest disturbance. Rather than a fortress body, a 'hard' immune system that focuses on the exclusion of the outside, Structural Integration does for the body what Buckminster Fuller does for the sphere, exposing relationships rather than maintaining boundaries.

Sloterdijk's spherology leads Latour to the conclusion that in modernity there are two narratives, one of emancipation, the explicit narrative, and one of attachment, the hidden one that Sloterdijk is trying to expose. In the case of comfort, emancipation has remained the hidden narrative behind the hard, protective fortress of both the home and body. Latour's example embodying this combination is the cosmonaut, who is 'emancipated from gravity because he or she never lives one fraction of a second outside of his or her life supports.¹⁴³ However, that emancipation can never occur in an absolute outside: 'Outside you would certainly die as would a cosmonaut, much like the famed Captain Haddock, [who] simply decides to leave the space station without a spacesuit.¹⁴⁴ Latour is referring here to The Adventures of Tintin. In the book Explorers on the Moon, Tintin's drunken companion, Captain Haddock, smuggles whiskey into the spaceship. The artificial gravity fails inside the spaceship, and when the motor is switched off in the attempt to fix the problem, Captain Haddock takes a drunken spacewalk.¹⁴⁵ Sloterdijk uses the space station as a model for being in the world because the image challenges the nature/culture divide, serving as a reminder that humans need to be technicians of the

¹⁴³ Latour, 2011, p. 158.

¹⁴⁴ Latour, 2009, p. 141.

¹⁴⁵ Hergé, The Adventures of Tintin: Explorers on the Moon (Tournai: Casterman, 1954).

world to make it inhabitable. From this viewpoint nature is to be understood as a kind of 'prosthesis for human survival.'¹⁴⁶ The space station analogy was directly influenced by Buckminster Fuller, who popularised the term 'Spaceship Earth.' In *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969), Fuller writes 'we are all astronauts.'¹⁴⁷ For both Fuller and Sloterdijk, dwelling in a spaceship is the only state of being or 'life support' we have known.

The film Boy in the Plastic Bubble tells the story of Tod Lubitch, who is born without an immune system,¹⁴⁸ and expresses this idea. Tod must spend his life in a hermetically sealed 'bubble,' as contact with bacteria or viruses may kill him. The sphere that envelopes him changes as the film follows him from infanthood through to his late teenage years. After birth he is placed in a plastic container, any contact from his parents or the nurses at the hospital is via a pair of plastic gloves forming part of the seal. Any form of touch such as a hug or play is mediated by these gloves. After four years in the hospital, Tod's parents decide to care for him at home, and the bubble is recreated on a larger scale to incorporate the growing boy. By his teens, Tod's sphere becomes an entire bedroom, and he sits behind a screen to interact with his parents, to have dinner, or to converse with his only friend and visitor, next-door neighbour Gina, who becomes his motivation for expanding the boundaries of his world. Gina notices that the bedroom is in fact not completely sealed; there is an opening and a yellow line on the floor. 'What happens if I cross the line?' she asks. Tod explains that a ventilation system keeps the air in the room sterile (presumably by a system of positive pressure), but if she were to come in, or he were to come out, the immune system would collapse.

Tod finds ways to explore the boundaries of his existence. After seeing his neighbour go about her life, where she undoubtedly meets other boys, Tod attends school via a television screen. He is able to see into the classroom, and utilises his panoptic vantage point, playing jokes on the teacher when his back is turned. Talk of space travel inspires a new form of mediation with the world: the bubble must become more portable, closer to the body, so that he can interact differently with the world. A space suit is constructed, and Tod can attend school. The freedom of his

¹⁴⁶ Freitag Rouanet, 2011, p. 80.

¹⁴⁷ Fuller, Cited in Fuller, 1999, p. 350.

¹⁴⁸ Boy in the Plastic Bubble, Dir. Randal Kleiser (USA: ABC, 1st November 1976) [TV broadcast].

body is a turning point, as we watch him run joyfully along the beach. Finally he breaks free, discarding the space suit, his skin now constituting his immune system. This film reminds us that we are always protected by immune systems, contained in multiple containers. It is, in Latour's terms, a story of emancipation and attachment, where emancipation is only possible through a sphere, whether that sphere is a hermetically sealed room, a space suit or the skin. Whether encased in a shell, apartment, or geodesic structure, comfort is to be understood not only as a mode of dwelling based on taking shelter, but as a process of building a fortress. Yet that fortress is not an absolute barrier closing of a great outdoors, but a porous network, a threshold allowing a relationship between nature and culture, inside and outside, attachment and emancipation. Georges Teyssot writes:

[...] spheres are envelopes, ontological membranes between interior and exterior. Spheres determine (and are determined by) the interval between here and there. Placed between proximity and distance, the finite and the infinite, the limited and the limitless, and the symbolic and the diabolical, spheres are defined precisely by an *inter*-betweenness, from the Latin root *inter*, which is also part of *interior*, and even *inter*mediality.¹⁴⁹

Sloterdijk's Spheres, then, are a form of media in the original sense of the word. Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes expose the in-between space as a network of forces, allowing the threshold to become visible. Teyssot also draws us to the importance of the threshold in the Work of Walter Benjmain. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin noted that 'A *Schwelle* [*threshold*] is a zone. Transformation, passage, wave action are in the words *schwellen*, swell, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses.'¹⁵⁰ Rolf Tiedemann's footnote states that Benjamin is incorrect in linking the threshold and the wave. He states '*Schwelle*, cognate with the English word "sill," has its root sense in "board," "structural support," "foundational beam."'¹⁵¹ The threshold is not a boundary, but a support. Like the original meaning of comfort, the threshold is linked to the idea of giving strength. In any process of

¹⁴⁹ Georges Teyssot, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2013), p. 243.

¹⁵⁰ Benjamin, 2002, [O2a,1], p. 494.

¹⁵¹ Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), in Benjamin, 2002, p. 991.

building, we are building structural supports, as well as windows and doors. Dwelling can never be total isolation and concealment. In Teyssot's words:

A human being inhabits thresholds. The door offers the means to settle within, but it is also what permits one to step out, to cross the border, to unsettle. The sedentary notion of lodging should never be thought without the prospect of a nomadic dislodgement.¹⁵²

The in-between nature of a threshold is perhaps what keeps it from modern consciousness. This may serve as one of many reasons why the meaning of strengthgiving is seen as largely obsolete in our understanding of comfort today, as we are unable to see between dualistic divides. To suggest that Fuller and Latour's work could take us back to a pre-modern meaning of comfort would not be wholly correct. As Latour has said, we cannot be thrown back into a pre-modern consciousness where nature and culture simultaneously produce each-other, at best we can mediate between nature and culture and start to become aware of the networks that they are dependent on. A theory of spheres, in its attempt to break down comfort as border war, shows that spheres are about emancipation as much as they are about protection, exposing both strength and fragility in the idea of comfort. Comfort is based on multiple containment, where an interior opens out onto a relative outside, refusing the notion of absolute insides and outsides.

¹⁵² Teyssot, 2013, p. 243.

2. The Comfort Zone: From Indifference to Intensity

The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.

- Michel Foucault¹⁵³

Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg, in her book Lean In, suggested reasons for and solutions to the barriers faced by women in the work place. The book begins with a personal tale of the lack of accommodating factors made for pregnant women at the Google headquarters, Sandberg's former company. Battling with morning sickness and unhelpful comments made by her male colleagues, Sandberg demanded that provisions be made for pregnant employees, the first on her list being a parking bay close to the office. This is one of many steps to be taken to ensure equality between men and women in the workplace: 'The blunt truth is that men still rule the world.'154 In mentioning the book, both The Guardian and BBC Radio 4 chose to focus on another issue altogether: the fact that Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook and Sandberg's current boss, likes to keep the offices at a temperature of 15° Celsius.¹⁵⁵ (Sandberg writes about her professional relationship with Zuckerberg in the book, but no reference is made to the office conditions). Both discussions make the connection between temperature and productivity in the workplace. The Guardian concludes that 15 °C is too cold to glean the maximum productivity from office workers and, drawing on a 2006 study from the Helsinki University of Technology and a 2004 study by Cornell University in New York, claims that somewhere between 22 °C and 25 °C is optimum. Anything out of this zone is distracting, 'forcing us to expend energy on regulating body temperature' and making us irritable. BBC Radio 4's Today is more approving of the 15°C office. One of the programme's guests, Lucy Kellaway, management columnist for the Financial

¹⁵³ Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', in *Architecture/ Mouvement/ Continuité*, trans. Jay Miskowiec. October, 1984.

¹⁵⁴ Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), p.2.

¹⁵⁵ The Guardian, 11th March 2013

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/shortcuts/2013/mar/11/facebook-staff-chill-cold-offices [accessed 19th March 2013]

Times, comments that it is comic that the Facebook offices are kept at a low temperature, as the very hurdle to productivity today is the past-time of 'cyber-loafing,' where one spends time browsing social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter during working hours:

The only option to stop this is to make people so uncomfortable that they will have no option but to do their work. I tried spending the whole day standing up, and I spent no time on Twitter at all that day, and I think the same thing applies with temperature.¹⁵⁶

In addition, a colder office is suggested as a solution to 'pointless meetings that go on and on and on, when we're so warm and cosy and comfy slumped around the meeting table.¹⁵⁷ The concluding remarks from this discussion suggest that whereas making people comfortable in the workplace was a trend over the past twenty years 'giving them fruit, Zumba classes, whatever [...] to try to encourage them to stay at work 24 hours a day,¹⁵⁸ we could be facing a turn towards a new trend: the uncomfortable office. Indeed there is contemporary feel to the relationship between discomfort and productivity. Do we need to get out of the comfort zone?

Comfort at Work

'The comfort zone' is a phrase which draws together survival (and therefore temperature) and productivity. Used in biology to define the conditions which maintain the optimum functioning of an organism, the comfort zone is associated with the process of homeostasis.¹⁵⁹ However, the phrase is commonly used today to denote a stagnant non-productive state, related to work or performance more generally. Despite its common use and familiarity, the slippage between the

¹⁵⁶ Lucy Kellaway, speaking on *Today*, (UK: BBC Radio 4, 13th March 2013) [Radio Broadcast].
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01r5ng0> [accessed 19th March 2013].

¹⁵⁷Celia Donne, an employee of Regus, the UK's largest provider of office space, speaking on *Today*, 13th March 2013.

¹⁵⁸ *Today*, 13th March 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Katherine Barber, *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t150.e14231 [accessed 17th June 2010].

discourses of biology to management science is ambiguous, although biological survival appears to be linked to survival in today's brutal world of work. In terms of business management, Alasdair White traces the initial use of the term to Judith Bardwick's 1991 book, *Danger in the Comfort Zone: From Boardroom to Mailroom* – *How to Break the Entitlement Habit that's Killing American Business*. However, he observes, Bardwick does not define, nor use the term in the text. White defines the comfort zone himself, stating that his definition is for the particular purpose of business management:

The comfort zone is a behavioural state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviours to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk.¹⁶⁰

The main premise of the comfort zone, according to White's definition, is freedom from anxiety, its lack resulting in a limitation or deterioration of business performance. The *OED* defines the comfort zone as 'a method of working that requires little effort and yields only barely acceptable results,' again seeing the term's application to work. It is also more generally defined psychologically as a 'situation in which one feels safe or at ease.'¹⁶¹ Whereas biological comfort may be related to survival of the organism, comfort in the business world designates a form of complacency, forming an obstacle to progress, or at worst, death of productivity. As a result, business and self-help literature tells us that we need to get out of the comfort zone as risk is seen as essential for growth in late capitalism.

Contrary to these definitions, there is evidence to suggest that comfort at work was a desirable state in the early twentieth century, at least in terms of thermal comfort. The first studies of thermal comfort in the workplace are reported to be conducted by Dr T. Bedford, a member of the Medical Research Council working at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, located on London's Gower Street. His 1936 paper, 'Environmental Warmth and Human Comfort,' focused on

¹⁶⁰ Alasdair White, From Comfort Zone to Performance Management: Understanding Development and Performance (Belgium: White and MacLean Publishing, 2009), p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (revised edition), ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, http://www.oxfordrefernce.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview+Main&entry=t140.e15355 [accessed 17th June 2010].

the comfort of factory workers. He defined the comfort zone in terms of a seven point scale of warmth:

Much too warm	1
Too warm	2
Comfortably warm	3
Comfortable	4
Comfortably cool	5
Too cool	6
Much too cool	7 ¹⁶²

Notably, the range described as comfortable itself has a range:

"Comfortably warm" meant that the subject was not uncomfortable but would have preferred a somewhat cooler environment and, similarly, "comfortably cool" indicates a preference for a little more warmth (p. 37).

The aim of Bedford's study was clear: 'we should define the comfort zone' (p. 37). This meant that the perception of the workers' comfort was recorded on the scale in order to delimit a temperature range that could be defined as comfortable, starting an engineering trend: comfort became quantifiable. 70% of workers were comfortable between 58 °F to 66 °F (approximately 14.5 °C to 19 °C). This may seem rather low compared to the current day aforementioned studies, although historical differences in perception and nature of work must be taken into consideration. Freshness and stuffiness also formed part of the study, and the two main discomforts were defined as temperature gradients and draughts. Although this study could be interpreted as a call for care of the employees – an aid for factory owners in providing 'a pleasant and invigorating indoor environment' (p. 38), the interest in thermal comfort of the worker has a much less caring motive, centred on efficiency and productivity. Lisa Herschong states: 'A great deal of research has been done since [the development of technologies of temperature control, such as central heating and air conditioning] to

¹⁶² T. Bedford, 'Environmental Warmth and Human Comfort', *British Journal of Applied Physics*, 1(1950), 33-39 (p. 37). http://iopscience.iop.org/0508-3443/1/2/301 [accessed 1 April 2013].

determine the effects of temperature on human beings, and to pinpoint the "comfort zone" where a person functions most effectively.¹⁶³

Whether defined a psychologically safe state of neutral anxiety, or as a delimited range of temperature, comfort is placed again within an inside space. A further definition of comfort was presented to Witold Rybczynski during his architectural training which again places comfort within a delimited space:

During the six years of my architectural education the subject of comfort was mentioned only once. It was by a mechanical engineer whose job was to initiate my classmates and me into the mysteries of air conditioning and heating. He described something called the "comfort zone," which, as far as I can remember, was a kidney-shaped, crosshatched area on a graph that showed the relationship between temperature and humidity. Comfort was inside the kidney, discomfort was everywhere else. This, apparently, was all that we needed to know about the subject.¹⁶⁴

Thermal comfort is a vital condition for life itself. Elizabeth Shove states: 'Compared with cold blooded creatures, human beings are soft, thin skinned and vulnerable: things soon go wrong if they get too hot, cold, wet or dry.' ¹⁶⁵ The need to control our body temperature at a constant, approximate 37 °C is a biological necessity. Life exists within a range limited by boundaries. If the temperature inside the brain reaches 42 °C or more, or 25 °C or less, death will result.¹⁶⁶ Being inside the comfort zone, at least in the sense of thermal comfort, as in Bedford's study, is not only desirable but 'productive.' How then, did we move from a definition of the comfort zone as productive state, to one which is almost turned on its head, a passive condition that hinders productivity? In addition to the association of growth with risk in late capitalism, insights into this shift can be found in two modern scientific principles: thermodynamics and homeostasis. Homeostasis is a term coined by Walter B. Cannon in 1926. The etymology of homeostasis implies a certain inertia:

¹⁶³ Lisa Herschong, *Thermal Delight in Architecture* (London: The MIT Press, 1979), p.15.

¹⁶⁴ Witold Rybczynski, Home: A short History of an Idea (London: Heinemann, 1988), p. ix.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: The Social Organization of Normality* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 28.

¹⁶⁶ K.F.H. Murrell, *Ergonomics: Man in his working Environment*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. 33.

homeo from *homoios*, Greek for 'like' and *stasis*, staying the same.¹⁶⁷ Almost a century earlier another scientific discovery was made: the founding of the laws of thermodynamics, the second of which describes the idea of entropy. I argue that these two scientific principles became conflated, so that the laws of closed system thermodynamics became intertwined with the idea of homeostasis, in turn producing a view of the organism as a closed system. These ideas also became entrenched in psychoanalytical models of subjectivity which in turn became embedded in the culture of everyday life, so that comfort is often depicted today as a form of homeostasis. We see this in self-help literature, for example:

Homeostasis in our psyche is called our "comfort zones." This is "psychological homeostasis."¹⁶⁸

And:

Often, even when we do try to venture out of it [our comfort zone], we are quickly pulled back in to it. There is a dynamic called "homeostasis" which is critical to this. Homeostasis has both psychological and physical implications and what it's pointing to is the fundamental and biological drive for equilibrium and stability in a system, (and yes, we are including human beings as systems). In effect, homeostasis helps create and regulate our "comfort zones."¹⁶⁹

By reducing homeostasis to an entropy-like stasis, it would appear that comfort appears stagnant, passive and undesirable, at least in terms of productivity, psychological or in the work place. This chapter draws on Anson Rabinbach's cultural history, *The Human Motor*, to establish the connection between thermodynamics and the body, whilst also considering the cross-pollination between the physical and biological sciences which sees the idea of equilibrium as central to the definition of pleasure in Freud's work. In seeking to move beyond viewing comfort as a state of equilibrium, I draw on open systems theory and nonequilibrium

¹⁶⁷ OED online <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/homeostasis?q=homeostasis> [accessed 18 January 2013].

¹⁶⁸<http://healingtoolbox.org/index.php/k2-stub/item/238-habit-body-as-homeostasis-as-comfortzones-as-inertia> [accessed 18 January 2013].

¹⁶⁹<http://www.2130partners.com/are-you-in-your-comfort-zone-2/>[accessed 18 January 2013].

thermodynamics. By viewing bodies as open systems, I will show that entropy does not signal complacency, but is instead essential for survival, and therefore comfort. The critique of closed system thermodynamics was taken up by Gilles Deleuze as part of his theory of asymmetrical synthesis in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), where he argues that difference is intensity. By looking at the body as an open system and using Deleuze's idea of intensity, comfort is transformed from a 'zone of indifference' to a 'zone of intensity.'

The Thermodynamic Body and Comfort

Michel Serres observes that 'an organism is a system.' The notion of this system changes through history. Homeostasis is one such example which, as we have seen, has had a real and metaphorical impact on our definition of the comfort zone. Yet, in these examples, we see the evocation of another system with the reference to 'equilibrium' and 'stability': a thermodynamic system. After Carnot, Serres argues, whose work predated that of the founding fathers of the laws of thermodynamics, bodies become motors, 'they create movement, they go beyond the simple relation of forces, they create them by energy or power.' ¹⁷⁰ In the first part of this chapter, following the work of Anson Rabinbach, we will see how thermodynamics impacted on the way in which people conceived of their bodies, and how entropy and homeostasis merged together to contribute to a definition of comfort as complacency.

In our age of air conditioning it seems unimaginable to solely rely on clothing, sweating and shivering for thermal comfort. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, technologies surrounding thermal comfort focused on the fireplace within domestic spaces. Both Elizabeth Shove and John Crowley note Benjamin Thompson (also known as Count Rumford, or Graf von Rumford) as a key figure in fireplace technology of the eighteenth century. His famous tall, shallow fireplace of 1796 was characterised by a narrow throat and threw back heat into the

¹⁷⁰ Michel Serres, 'The origin of Language: Biology, Information Theory, & Thermodynamics' in Harari, Josue V and David F. Bell (eds). *Hermes; Literature, Science, Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982)

http://www.apomechanes.com/readings/TheOriginOfLanguageMichelSerres.pdf [accessed 15th April 2013].
room, the result of which some people found too hot.¹⁷¹ The new fireplace improved efficiency and reduced smoke output. Previous designs, including a simple open fire, consumed vast amounts of oxygen, and would suck in cold outside air through cracks of the buildings at the same rate as warm air escaped through the chimney.¹⁷² Count Rumford thus revolutionised domestic thermal comfort, but his ideas were not restricted to the fireplace. His observations had a profound impact on the discovery of the laws of thermodynamics. By observing the motion of a rotating drill, he suggested a connection between heat and motion. He also noted the mass of water once it had frozen, had gained weight despite giving off heat. These observations led him to the conclusion that caloric was invalid (caloric theory stated that heat consisted of a fluid of the same name).¹⁷³ Following these discoveries, three men were credited with the first theory of thermodynamics in the 1840s: Robert Julius Mayer, James Prescott Joule and Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz. Thermodynamics is the science of heat (thérme) and power (dynamis). The first law of thermodynamics states that the total energy in any transformation stays the same; the total energy in the universe remains the same and energy cannot be produced nor destroyed. The second law, also known as entropy, states that energy within a system will always move from high to low. The entire universe can be viewed as such a system, involved in a constant process of cooling over time. Both these theories operate within some kind of boundary, however small or large; the universe being the largest delimited space. The ideas seem to compete, hanging in 'a precarious balance needed for stability and change alike.' On one hand, energy cannot be created or destroyed, but on the other, the universe is hurtling towards a 'heat death.' 174

Here is it necessary to pause and consider two leaps that have already been made. Firstly, how did heat and motion come together under this new term 'energy'? Secondly, how did thermodynamics, a science of closed system mechanics, get involved with the cosmos through the Second Law? Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle

¹⁷⁴ Müller, 2007, preface.

¹⁷¹ Shove, 2003, p. 26.

¹⁷² Herschong, 1979, p.12.

¹⁷³ Ingo Müller, *A History of Thermodynamics: The Doctrine of Energy and Entropy* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2007), p. 11.

Stengers state that rapid growth of the British steam train played a role in the 'mechanical interest of heat,' and that thermodynamics was 'not so much concerned with the *nature* of heat as with heat's *possibilities* for producing "mechanical energy.""¹⁷⁵ Stengers observes two processes that were central to these two questions: conversion and conservation. Conversion between 'forces' - heat and mechanical energy, she argues, stems from aesthetic origins, whereby nature played a crucial role. Its indestructible force or *Kraft* gave nature its unity, and can be traced back to Leibniz's 'live force' (vis viva) and the post-Kantian philosophy of nature.¹⁷⁶ Thus the existing aesthetic idea of Kraft was converted into a scientific idea of energy, which was coined in 1807 by Thomas Young.¹⁷⁷ During this process, the qualitative differences between heat and motion are unimportant as they are rendered equivalent. The quantitative equivalence between heat and work was first identified by Joule in 1843 when he correlated the rise of temperature in water with the rotation of blades. The transformation of mechanical work into heat was thus characterised by a mechanical equivalent of heat: the amount of work required to increase a kilogram of water by one degree. This, Stengers states, is a distortion, privileging mechanical work which becomes the measurement of reference. The second process observed by Stengers is that of conservation. Conservation, according to Stengers and Prigogine, had a particular place in nineteenth-century thought in relation to nature, mirroring its unification or harmony. It was a way of maintaining order of the universe - as Joule stated with reference to all nature, chemical, mechanical or vital 'nothing is deranged, nothing ever lost, but the entire machinery, complicated as it is, works smoothly and harmoniously.¹⁷⁸ With conservation the idea of measurement is then introduced. Mayer (1842) and Helmholtz (1847) were responsible for the

¹⁷⁵ Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp. 103-4.

¹⁷⁶ Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 192. Rabinbach (1990) also makes reference to *Kraft* in the writings of Hegel and Fichte (p. 46).

¹⁷⁷ Crosbie Smith, *The Science of Energy: A Cultural History of Energy Physics in Victorian Britain* (London: The Althone Press, 1998), p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ James Prescott Joule, 'Matter, Living Force and Heat', in *The Scientific Papers of James Prescott Joule, Vol 1* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1884), pp. 265-76, p. 273, cited in Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, pp. 108-9.

principle of conservation of energy.¹⁷⁹ It stipulates that something is quantitatively conserved during its qualitative transformation, such as the conservation of total energy when potential energy is transformed into kinetic energy. It is this equivalent that is defined as energy. Thermodynamics began as a science of closed or isolated systems. An isolated system has no exchanges with its environment and therefore, by definition, its entropy flow is zero. The system's entropy can either increase or remain constant. Clausius's laws, '*Die Energie der Welt ist constant*' [the energy in the world is constant], *Die Entropie der Welt strebt einem Maximum zu* [the entropy in the world tends towards a maximum] therefore assume that the world is an isolated system, transposing the mechanical onto the universal and natural.¹⁸⁰ We can therefore see that the theories of thermodynamics themselves emerged within, as much as they challenged, existing scientific and philosophical thought, where quantity came to occupy a privileged position.

This new association between thermal properties and energy had a widespread social and cultural impact that changed the way in which people conceived of their bodies. 'The Human Motor', the title of Anson Rabinbach's insightful book, is a metaphor relating to work and energy which saw the body subject to the same dynamic laws that shaped industrial machines, and therefore allows for a continuation of the understanding of the body as machine that stems from Descartes and progressed to La Mettrie's L'homme Machine in the eighteenth century. Thermodynamics allowed society to think the limits of work, force or *Kraft* and the body, particularly within the new pathology of fatigue which emerged with these laws.¹⁸¹ How did thermodynamics come to be associated with the human body? Prigogine and Stengers state that Helmholtz, along with Mayer and Liebig were not strictly physicists at the time of their discoveries. They were however, all interested in the physiology of respiration, which was concerned with the processes of oxygen combustion, the release of heat and muscular work. Mayer, for example, worked as a young doctor in Java and concluded from the colour of one of his patient's blood, that the inhabitants of warm, tropical climates needed less oxygen to maintain their

¹⁷⁹ Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p. 111.

¹⁸⁰ Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p.119.

¹⁸¹ Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, fatigue, and the origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

body temperature. Crosbie Smith notes that Helmholtz spent the majority of his working life as a physiologist. It was only aged 50 in 1888 that he took up the post of president in the new Physikalisch-technische Reichsanstalt until his death in 1894. He writes, 'Physiology, rather than physics, thus stood at the core of his professional career until the 1870s.¹⁸² Helmholtz came from a cultured family who were not particularly well off, and therefore he needed funding to secure a place at university. The Royal Friedrich-Wilhelm Institute of Medicine and Surgery offered him a place in return for 8 years' service as an army surgeon. He was posted in nearby Potsdam where he was inspired by the physiological lectures of Johannes Müller and the philosophy of Kant. He worked on opposing Müller's views on Lebenskraft which stated that it was an expression of purposive organisation. Instead, Helmholtz argued that processes that occurred within a living organism could also take place outside of an organic body, which he investigated observing the muscle activity of frogs. He observed that body heat was generated by chemical processes (pp. 129-30). Helmholtz's work shifted the focus of the link between Geist, Lenbenskraft and natural processes to one between Lebenskraft and mechanical processes (p. 132). This cross-over in experiments is labelled distinctly Kantian by Prigogine and Stengers, whereby science has a general *a priori* requirement, upon which all of nature is based. Changes in nature were thought by Helmholtz, who is given as a prime example of a Kantian scientist, to come about due to general rules. This worldview then led to the 'ultimate generalisation of mechanics' whereby the laws of thermodynamics described processes not only of the mechanical system but of the entire cosmos, including the human body.¹⁸³ Thus, Rabinbach states:

For the physiologists armed with the principles of thermodynamics, the energy of the body was not merely analogous to other natural physical forces, it became one among them. The purpose of nature was to yield "work," and as part of that equation, the body yielded the work of the nerves, the muscles, and the organs, which were subject to the same laws of nature as any other machine. Especially striking in this reconceptualization of the body as a thermodynamic machine is that work became a universal concept, the conversion of energy into use.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Smith, 1998, p. 128.

¹⁸³ Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p.109-116.

¹⁸⁴ Rabinbach, 1990, p. 46.

Paired with the science of thermodynamics in the nineteenth century was the idea of fatigue and a desire to overcome it. Fatigue has its own history, stemming from the monastic *Acedia*, an idleness that was characterised by weariness or drowsiness, especially during prayer. By the thirteenth century, it had taken on an increasingly physical dimension, characterised by weariness, a lack of time sense, and laziness. *Acedia* had become a largely secular concept, paired with the necessity of maintaining a regular sense of time and labour discipline (p. 26). Referring to E. P. Thompson's *Time Work Discipline and Industrial Capital* (1967), Rabinbach recognises the importance of the clock in the discipline of the working population (p. 29). Idleness became a sin against industry. Although there was no concrete transition from idleness to the new pathology of fatigue, Max Weber argues that monastic asceticism is translated into nineteenth-century machine production. Drawing on the writings of Richard Baxter, a writer on puritan ethics and Presbyterianism, Weber writes:

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six as to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation.¹⁸⁵

Concern over the 'correct' amount of work and rest can be seen in the proliferation of nineteenth century hygiene studies. Factory documents were concerned with a balance between working and resting, where work was a necessary 'expenditure of energy,' but the worker required a recuperation of energy through 'adequate nutrition, rest, and sleep.'¹⁸⁶ This idea is based on the 1862 writings of Apollinaire Bourchardat, professor of Hygiene at the University of Paris. Rabinbach notes 'Regular work established a norm of health and well-being, which was threatened by

¹⁸⁵ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, by Richard Swedberg, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009), p. 85.

¹⁸⁶ Rabinbach, 1990, p. 36.

the shock of overwork.' Risks associated with the excessive deployment of the 'vital forces' included stomach cancer, senility and 'various forms of mental alienation' (p. 36).

The idea of fatigue points to balance as a crucial idea in nineteenth-century health, featuring traces of humoral medicine and adhering to a universal philosophy of nature. The thermodynamic body must function within its limits in a state of stability, returning to its original state aided by rest at the end of the day. We can start to see how a comfort zone relating to balance could point towards a state of productivity. However, the hygiene studies of the nineteenth century were characterised by two paradoxical narratives, the tendency towards balance and stability existed alongside the desire to transgress boundaries. The conservation of energy in the thermodynamic machine was given a direct corporeal significance by Hermann von Helmholtz himself. On 7th February, 1854, he delivered his lecture Über die Weschelwirkung der Naturkräfte (On the Interaction of Natural Forces), which began with a memorable description of mechanical toys or automata, including Vaucanson's duck, which featured an operating digestive tract, and flute player, both products of the eighteenth century. The duck (figure 2.1) appeared to eat food out of the exhibitor's hand, swallow, digest and excrete it. The 'shitting duck' was said to be inspired by Vaucanson's own digestive problems, whereby his illness had prevented him from eating.¹⁸⁷ Thus, Gaby Wood writes, 'parts audiences may have preferred to imagine for themselves [the bowels, anus and sphincter of the duck] – might be seen as a reflection of his own personal preoccupation' (p. 28). The flute player, a breathing automaton, could mimic the flautist with the ability to control the amount of air to produce the correct notes, and even had a metal tongue. It was said to have drawn such huge crowds due to its accuracy – its perfection lying in the imperfection of the human machine. A pipe and drum player exhibited the following year did not prove so popular, as he played faster than the capability of any human being would allow (p. 23). Helmholtz was in awe of the duck and flautist, which never tired of work, and is reported to have said, 'still there were many who would be willing to dispense with the moral qualities of their servants, if at the same time their moral qualities could also be eliminated, and to achieve

¹⁸⁷ Gaby Wood, Living Dolls: A Magical History of The Quest For Mechanical Life (London: Faber, 2002), p. 22.

instead of the mutability of flesh and bones, the regularity of a machine and the durability of brass and steel.¹⁸⁸ This passage illuminates a changing relationship between morality, work and the body. The desire for an eternally active body takes the place of the desire for an immortal soul. The body's fatigue, according to Helmholtz, was a particular instance of entropy. Fatigue emerged as the 'threshold of the body's economy of energies; with its own internal laws of energy and motion, it was the corporal horizon of a mechanical universe.¹⁸⁹ Fatigue thus became the antithesis of *Kraft*, or energy. The ideal of transcending fatigue, of denying an increase of entropy became a utopian ideal of capitalist production, but one that Karl Marx warned against:



Figure 2.1: Vaucanson's duck.

But in its blind and measureless drive, its insatiable appetite for surplus-labour, capital oversteps not only the moral but even the merely physical maximum limits the working-day. It usurps the time for growth, development, and

¹⁸⁹ Rabinbach, 1990, p. 48.

¹⁸⁸ Helmholtz, *Über die Weschelwirkung der Naturkräfte*, trans. Anson Rabinbach, cited in Rabinbach, 1990, p. 58.

healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight. It haggles over the meal-times, where possible incorporating them into the production process itself, so that food is added to the worker as to a mere means of production, as coal is supplied to the boiler, to grease and oil to the machinery. It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, renewal and refreshment of the vital forces to the exact amount of torpor essential to the revival of an absolutely exhausted organism.¹⁹⁰

As Rabinbach acknowledges, Marx is knowledgeable about the vision of the body as thermodynamic machine, although he does not share Helmholtz's desire to transgress the body's limits (p. 76). However, medical practioners of the time were less critical of such a mode of production, and as a result, there is evidence to suggest that fatigue starts to become redefined, shifting from a dangerous condition at the limit of well-being, to a more desirable physical condition, such as in this example from the *Journal des Goncourt* (1887):

Excessive work produces a not unpleasant dullness, a feeling in the head which prevents one from thinking of anything disagreeable, an incredible indifference to the pinpricks of life, a detachment from reality, a want of interest in the most important matters.¹⁹¹

Reaching the limit of fatigue, rather than leading to a state of ill health, acts as a kind of stimulus shield protecting one from minor shocks. Fatigue defines the body as a zone of indifference, desensitising it to the influence of the external world. Fatigue thus almost becomes a state of comfort. This changing pathology of fatigue bears much relevance to Zygmunt Bauman's tracing of the concept of health and 'solid' industrial modernity to fitness in our 'liquid' post-industrial, consumer society. Health is seen as the ideal of the producer society:

Health is normative, drawing a boundary between "norm" and "abnormality." Health is a desirable state of both the spirit and body. To be healthy means to be "employable": to be able to perform properly on the factory floor, to "carry

¹⁹⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 375-6.

¹⁹¹ Jules and Edmund Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt–Memoires de la vie litteraire, vol 1* (Paris: 1887), pp. 219-220, cited in Rabinbach, 1990, p. 39.

the load" with which work may routinely burden the employee's physical and psychical endurance.¹⁹²

Health denotes a kind of productivity that correlates to the thermodynamic body of an isolated system. It inevitably leads to fatigue which can be overcome by sufficient rest in order to start the process again. However, today's 'liquid' post-industrial ideal is fitness rather than health:

Its [fitness's] real test lies for ever in the future: "being fit" means to have a flexible, absorptive, and adjustable body, ready to live through sensations not yet tried and impossible to specify in advance. If health is a "no more and no less" type of condition, fitness stays permanently open on the side of "more": it does not refer to any particular standard of bodily capacity, but to its (preferably unlimited) potential of expansion (pp. 77-8).

Unlike health, fitness has no limit. Its pursuit is therefore riddled with 'self scrutiny' and 'self deprecation, and so also of continuous anxiety' (p. 78). Fatigue therefore has no place in the fitness of late capitalism, which seeks news ways to transcend it, to keep going in spite of it. This transition from health to fitness relates to White's definition of the comfort zone which, as noted is 'anxiety neutral.' To be productive, we must be thrown out of the comfort zone into the anxious and open. For Heidegger, anxiety represented an outside, spatially characterised as being 'nowhere' and 'nothing.' In a state of anxiety the familiarity of the world-home becomes unfamiliar, being at home becomes not at home: 'In anxiety one feels "uncannny" [unheimlich].¹⁹³ Heidegger's observations about anxiety allude to a boundaryless state characterised by the loss of safety. Moreover, anxiety is a pertinent choice as a hypercapitalist or post-industrial mode of discomfort, seen by Renata Salecl as a characteristic feature of our time. Although she does not deny that past generations were plagued by their own anxieties, the specific anxiety of today relates again to the idea of limits or boundaries. With reference to consumer culture, Salecl observes that images of freedom to create the autonomous individual, exemplified by mottos such

¹⁹² Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 77.

¹⁹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), p. 233.

as Nike's 'Just Do It' actually produce a sense of anxiety based on an endless number of options, permutations and combinations. ¹⁹⁴ To be outside the comfort zone could thus be seem as a form of fitness in these terms. This is why being in the comfort zone is not a desirable position in our contemporary work culture. Remaining inside the comfort zone implies a form of entropy, a return to the state of equilibrium, stability and order which do not reflect our current day desire for fitness in an age of anxiety.

Freud, Thermodynamics and Comfort

How, then, did these ideas surrounding the thermodynamic body become conflated with both homeostasis and psychoanalysis? Rabinbach states, 'This collision between a stable order of work and life, and a world condemned to the forces of disorder and dissipation would later be recast and given expression by Freud [...].¹⁹⁵ Rabinbach further states, 'Freud introduced the idea that the human organism resists the excess expenditure of energy and strives toward the elimination of tension, not unlike the principle of inertia' (p. 63). The idea of inertia was used in Freud's theory of constancy in his 1895 essay, Project for a Scientific Psychology, where the influence of physics is explicit. This is not without reason. As John Bowlby writes, it is important to realise that Freud's early ideas came not from clinical observations of patients, but from ideas learnt from his teachers: Ernst Brücke, psychiatrist Meynert, and the physician Breuer, who had taken up ideas from Fechner (1801-1887) and Helmholtz (1821-1894), and before them from Herbart (1776-1841). Freud's trajectory of thought can therefore not be considered outside the tradition of thermodynamics, or at least separate from the physical sciences. And, as noted above, thermodynamics has a distinct physiological background. According to Frank Sulloway, Freud's biological references contain the roots to understanding his theories.¹⁹⁶ Freud started his scientific career as a biologist and was inspired by Darwin (p. 13). He began his medical studies at the University of Vienna and in his

¹⁹⁴ Renata Salecl, On Anxiety, (London, Routledge, 2004), p.50.

¹⁹⁵ Rabinbach, 1990, p. 63.

¹⁹⁶ Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 3-4.

final year, studied with Ernst Brücke, who amongst other topics, specialised in cell biology, linguistics and the nervous system. Although he decided not to pursue a career in biology, Freud continued to publish papers on the nervous system after his time at university (p. 15). Freud's 'physical energy model' is thus taken from ideas which would have been widely accepted, at least in educated circles at the time in which he was writing.¹⁹⁷ Paul Ricoeur writes:

In Vienna, as in Berlin, *Naturphilosophie* and its scientific counterpart, vitalism, gave way in biology to a physico-physiological theory based on force, attraction and repulsion, all three being governed by the principle of the conservation of energy (discovered by Robert Mayer in 1842 and made prominent by Helmholtz). According to that principle the sum of forces (motor and potential) remains constant in an isolated system.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, as well as the biological influencing thermodynamics via Helmholtz, physics made an important contribution to the new field of psychoanalysis. Brücke, Müller, Helmholtz and Freud essentially came from the same school of thought. In the opening of the *Project*, Freud writes:

The intention of this project is to furnish us with a psychology which shall be a natural science: its aim, that is, is to represent psychical processes as qualitatively determined states of specifiable material particles and is to make them plain and void of contradiction. The project involves two principle ideas:-

- 1. That what distinguishes activity from rest is to be regarded as a quantity (Q) subject to the general laws of motion.
- 2. That it is to be assumed that the material particles in question are the neurones.¹⁹⁹

Freud proposes the principle of 'neuronic inertia,' 'which asserts that neurones tend to divest themselves of quantity (Q)' (p. 356). This is facilitated via the process of 'discharge', the process whereby an organism 'keeps itself free of stimulus' (p. 357).

¹⁹⁷ John Bowlby, Attachment (New York: basic Books, 1969), pp. 14-15.

¹⁹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: an Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 72.

¹⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', in *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1954), pp. 355-445, p. 355.

Freud writes, 'A balance is observed here between the quantity of the excitation and the effort required for flight from that stimulus; so that the principle of inertia is not disturbed in this case' (p. 357). The organism is therefore required to expend an equal amount of energy fighting off stimuli as is exerted upon it. However, Freud grapples with the difference between internal and external stimuli, stating that internal stimuli, such as hunger, respiration and sexuality cannot be warded off through this process of discharge. Instead, they need to be satisfied by the interaction of the organism with the external world. This goes against the principle of inertia, 'towards a reduction of its level of tension to zero' (p. 258). Here, Freud seems to battle with his thermodynamic theory, appreciating that in the satisfaction of these internal stimuli, the organism must be to some extent open. 'A screen against quantity' seems to be unnecessary for internal stimuli (p. 367). The term 'quantity' appears as an ambiguous term in Freud's essay. Ricoeur states that the origin of quantity 'serves to unify under a single concept anything that produces energy' and can refer to internal and external stimuli. It is defined as a summation of excitation homologous to physical energy: it is a current which flows, which "stores," "fills," or "empties," and "charges" neurones [...].²⁰⁰ Quantity can then be seen as Freud's interpretation of the conservation of energy which, as we saw earlier in this chapter, was essential in viewing all forms of energy as equivalent. In Freud's Project we see the connection to *Beyond the pleasure Principle* in terms of the avoidance of stimuli. Freud writes:

Since we have certain knowledge of a trend in physical life towards *avoiding unpleasure*, we are tempted to identify that trend with the primary trend towards inertia, In that case *unpleasure* would coincide with a rise in quantity or with a quantitative increase of pressure [...] (p.373).

Freud questions the idea of quantity through its relationship with unpleasure, asking first if pain is caused due to stimuli greater in quantity than the system is usually exposed to (p. 368). Dissatisfied by this explanation, he makes a distinction between quantity and quality, whereby the latter requires the involvement of consciousness and qualities are felt as 'sensations' which show 'differences' which are a result of contact with the external world (p. 369). But they do not originate in the external world, nor do they in the system of the organism. Freud then feels the need to invent

²⁰⁰ Ricoeur, 1970, p. 74.

another system of neurones, 'perceptual neurones,' which translate quantity into quality (p. 370). Again, we see an example of how qualitative difference comes secondary to quantity, which, as Stengers noted was a central factor in the laws of thermodynamics. In a state between pleasure and unpleasure, namely that of constancy, Freud notes that 'the capacity disappears for perceiving sensory qualities which lie, so to speak, in the *indifferent zone* between pleasure and unpleasure.'²⁰¹ It is this zone of indifference, inherited from the concept of inertia, which shares a sensory realm with the fatigued body explored in the above section: it is desensitised, unresponsive, and disinterested. Yet, it marks, for Freud and the nineteenth century hygienists, psychologically and physically an ideal state for the survival of the psyche and the body. It is this zone of indifference that has become culturally recast as the comfort zone, where comfort is equated with the avoidance of stimuli.

As we saw in the aforementioned self-help examples, comfort as a zone of indifference has also been equated metaphorically with homeostasis. This cannot be seen as a direct Freudian influence, as the term was first used in Walter B. Cannon's 1929 article²⁰² and expanded upon in his 1932 book, *The Wisdom of the Body*, after both Freud's *Project* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* were written. However, Claude Bernard's *Milieu intérieur* was published in 1865 and his idea of the body as an inside that needed to be defended could not have escaped Freud's attention. *Milieu* refers to a 'between-ness' which, prior to Bernard's definition related to the environment in which organisms lived. Forming part of theories of eighteenth century medicine, health was based on a balance which required an organism to live in balance with its *milieu* or surrounding.²⁰³ However, by basing his theory on an internalisation of *milieu*, Bernard radically interiorised the old *milieu cosmique extérieur* leading to a new, individualistic conception of health and the body whereby death is the concern of the individual body which must master and conquer its vital functions (p. 193). In opposition to Hippocratic medicine, *milieu intérieur*

²⁰¹ Freud, 1954, pp. 373-4, emphasis added.

²⁰² Walter B. Cannon, 'Organisation for physiological homeostasis', in *Physiological Reviews*, 9 (1929), 399-431.

²⁰³ Ed Cohen, A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 188.

cuts off the organism from its environment and renders the body as autonomous, defining the organism's 'internal defence against an actively and relentlessly hostile external world' (p. 130). Freud's notion of the pleasure principle supports this notion, and has often also been described as homeostatic in nature. Claire Colebrook, for example, writes of the modern body so heavily influenced by Freud to predominantly consist of 'equilibrium, homeostasis and autopoeisis.²⁰⁴ Nigel Walker's paper, Freud and Homeostasis (1956), argues that Freud's insistence on avoiding stimuli could be read as homeostasis, recognising that the term was not invented for another twenty years.²⁰⁵ Although Bowlby asks whether it is legitimate to regard Freud's principle of inertia as a special case of the principle of homeostasis.²⁰⁶ we have to also appreciate, as we have with the notion of the thermodynamic body, that the metaphor serves as powerful tool to shape the cultural imagination. Freud himself struggles in the Project to reconcile the constancy that he inherits form the principle of inertia and the requirement of the organism, or system, to go outside itself to satisfy its 'internal' needs. He struggles to move Beyond the *Pleasure Principle*, according to Colebook, precisely because he cannot move away from the centrality of trauma that is founded upon the image of a bounded body, an enclosed psyche and organism: 'A genuine *beyond* of pleasure and a genuine beyond of the organism and its closed world of meaning would also be beyond trauma, for it could not be regarded as an infraction of the body from outside.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Colebrook, 2014, p. 128.

²⁰⁵ Nigel Walker, 'Freud and Homeostasis', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 7. 25, (1956), 61-72, (p. 61).

²⁰⁶ Bowlby, 1969, p. 23.

²⁰⁷ Colebrook, 2014, p. 128 (emphasis as per original).



Figure 2.2: The Comfort Zone Model

As well as being used in business, getting out of the comfort zone is a theme which has also been taken up by education, in particular adventure education (a particular form of outdoor education which has 'developed with a primary focus on developing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships').²⁰⁸ The comfort zone model (pictured above, figure 2.2) focuses on allowing people to achieve personal growth by overcoming their fears. Mike Brown, author of the article 'Comfort Zone: Model or Metaphor' writes 'students are encouraged to think about 'stretching themselves' by moving out of the comfort zone, to expand their preconceived limits and by inference learn (and become better people)' (p. 3). When students were asked to describe how they felt outside the comfort zone, the answers referred to physiological responses, such as sweating and an increased heart rate, and psychological responses, such as feeling panic and fear. In this example, being outside the comfort zone is based on 'disequilibrium,' which is said to put the person

²⁰⁸ Mike Brown, 'Comfort Zone: Model or Metaphor?', *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 12.1 (2008), 3-12, (p. 3).

in a stressful situation (p. 4). There are, as shown in the diagram, two levels of outside the comfort zone: a growth/learning zone, and a panic zone. Go too far outside, and fear and panic will inhibit the learning process. However, Brown was against a stimulus-response relationship where disequilibrium was equated with stress and in turn stress needed for learning. He writes, 'a stimulus repose approach assumes that a person is a passive recipient who develops response capabilities by accumulating habits' (p. 7). This example therefore hints at a definition of comfort that is not dependent on the avoidance of stimuli or state of equilibrium.

Similar ideas have been expressed in biology, for example, in Peter Gluckman and Mark Hanson's *Mismatch: The Lifestyle Diseases Timebomb* (2006). The comfort zone is defined here as 'the environmental range over which the organism can adapt and still be reproductively fit' (fitness here is seen these specifically biological terms).²⁰⁹ The authors go on to state:

This zone does not have sharp boundaries – the more the organism moves from its optimal environment, the greater the cost it is likely to incur. The organism thrives best within the optimal part of the zone but may still be able to cope, albeit not thriving so well, at the boundaries. Indeed, many animals including humans move to the extremes of their comfort zone, or even beyond it transiently (p. 33).

Both the above examples move away from a sharply demarcated zone by a definite border or boundary and an enclosed inside that opens abruptly into an absolute outside. There is a space between the organism and an absolute outside that the organism (or psyche) must inhabit to grow and develop. Interestingly, Walter Cannon's 1932 definition of homeostasis never implied a fixed border or boundary, describing the organism as 'engaging in free exchange with the outer world.'²¹⁰ The following passages from *The Wisdom of the Body* make this startlingly clear:

Here, then, is a striking phenomenon. Organisms, composed of material which is characterised by the utmost inconsistency and unsteadiness, have somehow learned the methods of maintaining constancy and keeping steady in the

²⁰⁹ Peter Gluckman and Mark Hanson, *Mismatch: The Lifestyle Disease Timebomb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 33.

²¹⁰ Walter B. Cannon, *The Wisdom of the Body* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO., Ltd, 1932), p. 20.

presence of conditions that might reasonably be expected to prove profoundly disturbing (p. 22).

[...] I have suggested a special designation for these states, *homeostasis*. This word does not imply something set and immobile, a stagnation. It means a condition - a condition which may vary, but which is relatively constant (p. 24).

Returning to this original definition of homeostasis, free from associations of closed systems thermodynamics, acknowledges that organisms are open systems, requiring contact with the exterior in their self-maintenance. Together with seeing the boundary as a space of exchange rather than a fixed limit, open systems will prove useful in theorising the comfort zone in terms of active life rather than passive and stagnant existence.

Thermal Comfort, Intensities and Gradients

Before moving to open systems, I want to return briefly to the idea of thermal comfort to explore work that has already been carried out in defining active thermal comfort. There has been much scholarship in this area to challenge comfort as a passive state. In engineering, a passive definition of comfort, according to Elizabeth Shove, can be found in the 'heat neutrality' model, whereby 'the heat generated by the body is equal to the heat transferred away.²¹¹ In this definition, comfort is found in an environment of constant temperature, thought to (albeit, as we will see, incorrectly) replace the body's own thermo-regulation. In this 'synthesised homeostasis' we expend less energy on mere survival, and, as the opening example of the chapter stated, devote our energy to more productive tasks. In our age of air conditioning, the idea of heat neutrality is often presented as a constant 22 °C, which has become a universal measure of comfort. The idea of measurability, for Shove, has transformed comfort from a 'subject-bound' idea to an 'object-bound' one (p. 24). Avoiding 'thermal stress' again posits comfort in a zone of indifference, assumed to be a state devoid of affect. The critical difference between the fireplace and the air conditioning system for Shove is the idea of adaptation. Whereas air conditioning imposes total control of the indoor climate, standardising temperature

²¹¹ Shove, 2003, p. 29.

and humidity and rendering the subject as passive, the fireplace and the window do not; we can actively control our position in relation to them. Physical comfort is therefore sought through a variety of practices - it is a possibility, a 'dynamic enterprise' which can be 'understood as a creative process of trading, juggling and manipulation whether of clothes, activity and daily routine, or of building technologies like windows and heating systems' (p. 36). Although our thermal comfort requirements are based on the need for our bodies to maintain a constant temperature, we constantly adapt to our surroundings. In the opening chapter of her 1979 book Thermal Delight in Architecture, Lisa Herschong also reflects on the idea of adaptation. Each organism requires a 'thermal strategy' to cope with extremes, which varies from organism to organism. For example, migration is a feature of human life as well as bird life. People have used the hill stations of India and summer houses in a variety of countries to escape the intense heat of the city. The aspect of a slope can be exploited for sun and shade. The deciduous tree sheds its leaves, whereas the cold blooded lizard warms up doing 'push ups' on his rock, and retreats to the shade when he has overheated. Warm blooded creatures such as ourselves have the greatest number of available strategies, including shivering and sweating.

Comfort, then, is not to be understood as a constant state, but a process: we make ourselves comfortable. As a response, Shove advocates an 'adaptive model' of comfort, which defines the environment as one that 'offers sufficient possibilities for adjustment and adaptation' (p. 36). This definition situates comfort as an achievement rather than an attribute which cannot intrinsically exist inside a space or a thing. However, the adaptive principle of comfort continues to enforce an element of stability into comfort:

If a change occurs to produce discomfort, people respond in ways which tend to restore their comfort.²¹²

An adaptive model of comfort allows for making oneself comfortable. However, setting up a dichotomous relationship between comfort and discomfort, it is tied to limitations which return us to a definition of comfort where comfort can only be

²¹² Fergus Nicol, Michael Humphreys and Susan Roaf, *Adaptive Thermal Comfort: principles and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 8.

defined negatively against discomfort. In this adaptive model, we can only move dialectically between the states of comfort and discomfort, which continue to define themselves in terms of negative difference. It continues to enforce the problem of an internal comfort zone and an exterior discomfort.

An important factor that Herschong uses to argue against the idea of thermal neutrality is the nature of thermal sense. Not a distinct sense in itself, thermal sensory experience is unique due to its effect on the body. Holding a cold object makes us colder, whereas holding a warm cup of coffee makes us feel warmer. Thus:

Thermal information is never neutral; it always reflects what is directly happening to the body. This is because the thermal nerve endings are heat-flow sensors, not temperature sensors. They can't directly tell what the temperature of something is; rather, they monitor how quickly our bodies are losing or gaining heat.²¹³

Therefore, if one is sat under cool air conditioning over time, one will feel colder, and when one is exposed to direct sunlight, one will feel warmer over time. In Herschong's opinion, to relate thermal comfort to an objectively comfortable, standard and unchanging temperature would be as ludicrous as saying that comfort through food could be replaced by a pill, injection, or 'a few tubes of an astronaut's nutritious goop' (p. 17). For Herschong, it is the temperature gradients or differences that are essential to comfort, and these must manifest themselves in an affective way. Supporting this idea, a survey by Alison G. Kwok investigated the idea of 'thermal boredom' as a condition of discomfort in response to the 'widespread acceptance of conditioned buildings.' Respondents gave examples of desirable thermal experiences such as 'roasting your backside in front of the fire (dramatic radiant asymmetry),' and 'having a bedroom cold enough that you really want to cuddle next to your sleeping partner.' These examples refute the idea of 'thermal beige' – the colour equivalent of thermal boredom.²¹⁴ There is much to suggest that comfort, when it comes to thermal comfort, is about felt difference and intensive gradients rather than

²¹³ Herschong, 1979, p. 19.

²¹⁴ Alison G. Kwok, 'Thermal Boredom,' *Proceedings from the 17th International Conference on Passive and Low Energy Architecture*, Cambridge, UK, July 2–5, 2000, 640–641. http://pages.uoregon.edu/akwok/pdfs/Boredom.pdf> [accessed 12 June 2013].

thermal neutrality (or thermal beige), which, due to our nerve endings is an impossible condition.

Picking up on the ideas of gradients and intensities seen in these examples from thermal comfort, the following section looks at the importance of these terms in Deleuze's notion of asymmetrical synthesis and in nonequilibrium thermodynamic systems. This body of work suggests a reason as to why gradients and intensities are vital for comfort and survival. If we think of the comfort zone as a transformative space, the threshold between an organism and its environment rather than a homogenous middle space, the comfort zone can be rethought of as an active and affective space.

Open Thermodynamic Systems

The concept of nonequilibrium thermodynamics was introduced by Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) at Trinity College Dublin, 1943. Schrödinger looked for ways in which thermodynamics could be applied to biological processes and in his third and final lecture asked the question 'how does order emerge from disorder?'²¹⁵ The problem with classical thermodynamics, according to Eric D. Schneider and Dorion Sagan, is that it is a science aimed at building better machines, which studies systems not as they appear in nature but under the following conditions: they are isolated, the end point is one of equilibrium, meaning that no further change can result, the temperature must be kept constant at all times, and the heat must be added slowly and consistently, causing as little turbulence as possible. Schneider and Sagan state '[t]he isolated system has no contact with events outside its sealed walls.²¹⁶ This idealised world is not representative of most systems such as organisms, which 'trade both matter and energy across their boundaries' (p. 26). Almost all systems, from stars to computer programs to destructive systems such as armies and exploding supernovas are open. All organisms are open systems, taking energy and materials from the environment although they are separated from it by membranes: skin, bark and shell. They are therefore nonequilibrium systems (p. 82).

²¹⁵ Eric D. Schneider and Dorion Sagan, *Into The Cool: Energy Flow, Thermodynamics and Life* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 16.

²¹⁶ Schneider and Sagan, 2005, p. 26.

Nonequilibrium systems have been written about extensively by Nobel Prize winning Russian born Scientist Ilya Prigogine, independently, and jointly with philosopher Isabelle Stengers. In their joint venture, *Order out of Chaos* (1984), originally published in French as *La Nouvelle Alliance* (1978), they state that equilibrium structures have sense of immortality about them. Once they are formed, they remain isolated. By contrast,

When we examine a biological cell or a city, however, the situation is quite different: not only are these systems open, but also they exist only because they are open. They feed on the flux of matter and energy coming to them from the outside world. We can isolate a crystal, but cities and cells die when cut off from their environment. They form an integral part of the world from which they draw sustenance, and they cannot be separated from the fluxes that they incessantly transform.²¹⁷

What is particular exciting about their work is the connection between science and philosophy, in particular the thinking of Gilles Deleuze. In the case of nonequilibrium thermodynamics, there is a marked connection between Deleuze's theory of intensive difference and nonequilibrium structures. Clayton crocket remarks that Deleuze's theory of intensive difference:

[...] appeals to the relatively new results of nonequilibrium thermodynamics, but the theoretical understanding of nonequilibrium thermodynamics was sketched out by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* [...]. The point is that the nineteenth century left us with twin legacies, evolution and thermodynamics, that appear to be completely opposed to one another. But recent scientific work on the complexity of nonequilibrium thermodynamics suggests that these are actually two sides of one process of entropy or gradient reduction, which produces intricate order in situations that do not occur in equilibrium. Equilibrium is what Deleuze calls extensity, where differences are cancelled out and disappear. But entropy is the active intensity of gradient reduction, what Deleuze calls an "asymmetrical synthesis" that produces more order by preserving intensive difference even as it reduces extensive differences.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 127.

²¹⁸ Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Religion, Politics and the Earth: The New Materialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), pp. 147-8.

At first glance, this connection may look like coincidence. However, upon closer inspection, the synergies between Deleuze's asymmetrical synthesis and nonequilibrium thermodynamics become apparent. It is known that Deleuze was an avid reader of microbiologist Lynn Margulis, the mother of Dorion Sagan.²¹⁹ Margulis and Sagan co-authored books such as *Microcosms* (1997) and *What is Sex?* (1995). Deleuze would not have read the aforementioned *Into the Cool* as it was published ten years after his death. However, he was introduced to Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers by Guattari's colleague Mony Elkaïm. The four came together in the founding of the International College of Philosophy in 1983.²²⁰ Stengers completed her philosophy training in 1973 and was greatly inspired by *Difference and Repetition* and its bringing together of philosophy and science (p. 512). Their works show a mutual influence, for example, Guattri's use of terms such as 'singularity,' 'bifurcation' and 'strange attractors' can be attributed to his reading of Prigogine and Stengers.²²¹

In Deleuze's single-authored *Difference and Repetition* (1968) we see an explicit critique of thermodynamics, or more precisely, classical, closed system thermodynamics. Central to Deleuze's critique are the concepts of 'intensity' and 'extensity.' This is how energetics defines energy, for example, force and distance for linear energy, surface tension and surface energy for volume energy. What classical thermodynamics does is focus on the final, extensive state, of which entropy is an example. This mode of thinking, according to Deleuze, is Kantian in nature, representing good sense, where partial truth is joined to an absolute. It correlates to middle class thought of an eighteenth-century political economy in which the middle classes, as we know, used the term comfort to justify their middling position between the extremes of poverty and wealth. In scientific terms,

²¹⁹Scott Wilson, *The Order of Joy: Beyond the Cultural Politics of Enjoyment* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), p. 173.

²²⁰ François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 385.

²²¹ The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary, ed. Eugene B. Young, Gary Genosko and Janell Watson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 296.

²²² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 282-3.

Deleuze proposes that good sense shares something with the linear progression of time that was affirmed by the second law of thermodynamics: it is an illusion. Deleuze mentions Ludwig Boltzmann, who challenged entropy as the inevitable conclusion to a system. Boltzmann introduced the idea of probability into thermodynamics. His results signified that 'irreversible thermodynamic change is a change toward states of increasing probability.'²²³ Boltzmann came to see linear time as an illusion. 'If the transition between states is truly based on probability, a decrease in entropy is as likely as an increase' (p. 56). There could be no global direction of time: the universe was in 'a very improbable state.'²²⁴ The average man is therefore merely a product of chance within a population.²²⁵

The arrow of time implied by the second law of thermodynamics and the final state of entropy, a state of extension, create the illusion of a homogenous outcome in which the process of genesis is rendered invisible. Lost in the process are the intensive states and thus, 'identity is posited in the final undifferentiated states as opposed to the differentiation of the initial state.²²⁶ Extensities allow for the perceived division of intensities, cancelling out difference, and the focus is on the final, extensive form. For Deleuze, acknowledging these intensive states is key to recognising difference, which transforms a state of being into a process of becoming. Extensive differences are often thought of as divisible, and include length, area and volume. Intensive differences can by contrast be thought of as qualitative and indivisible, such as pressure and temperature. Manuel DeLanda explains how thermodynamics allows for this phenomenon. The example of a container divided into two parts is used. If one part is filled with cold air, and the other with hot air, the intensity of temperature exists. If a passage between the parts of the containers is opened, the air will move and the laws of thermodynamics will ensure that an even, homogenous temperature of the total air mass will result. Thus the intensive

²²³ Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p. 124.

²²⁴ Schneider and Sagan, 2005, p. 56.

²²⁵ James Clerk Maxwell, whose famous Maxwell demon, a thought experiment which allows for a decrease in entropy was later generalised by Boltzmann. He is thought to have been influenced by Quetelet, the inventor of the 'average' man in sociology. This average was statistical, and thought to have inspired Boltzmann's theories. See Prigogine and Stengers, 1984, p. 123.

²²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 43.

differences of the air masses are cancelled out by the extensive volume of the container. Rather than being seen as two heterogeneous systems, the air mass is seen a one homogenous entity, concealing the temperature difference.²²⁷ This is another example of how classical thermodynamics privileges quantity. However, divisibility is not the real distinction between the intensive and extensive. Neither can we assume that the qualitative is intensive. Take the example of colour, which is extensive and indivisible. More important is that intensive properties cannot be divided without involving a change of state.²²⁸ A division of intensive properties changes 'the system in kind' and can '*drive fluxes* of matter and energy' (p. 70). DeLanda states:

Moreover if these differences are made intense enough a critical threshold may be reached and the physical system will undergo a phase transition, its extensive properties suffering a radical change in nature. Thus, rather than indivisibility, the key concept in the definition of the intensive is *productive difference*, as well as the related concepts of endogenous stable state (such as a thermodynamic equilibrium state) and of critical transitions between states (p. 70).

In fact, intensity is difference for Deleuze. He writes:

The expression "difference of intensity" is a tautology. Intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is a differential, by itself a difference.²²⁹

The genesis of bodies, according to Deleuze, constituted in the principle of intensity, is individuated as 'supple' and 'mobile.' Bodies are not devoid of boundaries, as they are endowed with 'fringes' and 'margins.' Intensities are enveloped and envelope other intensities, producing a subject which is 'infinitely divisible' (p. 320). Deleuze terms this synthesis as asymmetric. DeLanda explains how this relates to the affective, stating '[a]n individual may be characterised by a fixed number of definite

²²⁷ Manuel DeLanda, *Deleuze and The Open Ended Becoming of The World* http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/delanda/pages/becoming.htm> [accessed 24th May 2013].

²²⁸ Manuel DeLanda, Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 25.

²²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 2010, p. 281.

properties (extensive and qualitative) and possess an indefinite number of capacities to affect and be affected by other individuals.²³⁰ It is this capacity to affect and be affected that remains crucial in producing intensive difference. In coming into contact with another body, or in forming an 'assemblage', something is produced. Closed system thermodynamics does not allow for this process, which at its start conflates heat and motion. As Stengers writes:

In other words, quantitative equivalence cannot be used to contradict qualitative transformation, to reduce it to an underlying identity, because it is associated with a condition – *there must be two*, an interaction must take place – about which it [classical thermodynamics] remains silent.²³¹

The capacity to affect and be affected can therefore relate to open system thermodynamics through the idea of intensity. DeLanda relates these capacities to James Gibson's theory of affordance, whereby a distinction is made between a thing's intrinsic properties and their affordances, which manifest themselves in a relational sense. For example, a piece of ground may have intrinsic properties, such as being horizontal, flat, concave or convex. But how capable it is to support an animal walking over it is an affordance and is only realised as a capacity when the animal is walking over it. This idea, explains, DeLanda, is useful when expanding the meaning of the intensive because it allows heterogeneous individuals to join together without the need for homogenisation, instead, creating an assemblage which produces difference rather than cancelling it out.²³² This process is always at work in an open system where an organism encounters its environment.

Delanda is explicit in suggesting the field of nonequilibrium thermodynamics as a scientific model of a system of intensity in Deleuzian terms. According to Schneider and Sagan, nonequilibrium systems can be classified in three ways: systems that are slightly away from equilibrium, that will return to equilibrium if allowed, such as two flasks connected with a stopcock; near-equilibrium systems, which have moved away from equilibrium are remain that way because they are fed

²³⁰ DeLanda, 2005, p. 71.

²³¹ Stengers, 2010, p. 194.

²³² DeLanda, 2005, pp. 74-5.

from the outside by a constant gradient; and far from equilibrium systems, whose behaviour it is difficult to predict.²³³ Drawing on the work of Prigogine, Delanda explains that even linear systems have multiple outcomes, but these are disguised when the system is near to equilibrium. Linear systems can only reveal their potentialities at far from equilibrium states, one which designates a large gradient, or intensity.²³⁴ This is because nonequilibrium systems have multiple attractors. An attractor is a set of physical properties to which a system tends towards, such as entropy in an equilibrium system. However, where there are multiple attractors, the system has many alternative states. It is in this far from equilibrium model, Delanda argues, that we are able to obviously connect Deleuze's concept of intensity and the virtual. Even if a final state is reached, the alternatives 'coexist' with the actualised state. This is why, for Deluze, the actual and the virtual both belong to the real. However, in a closed system with one attractor, we find it harder to conceive of the virtual because we only see the end state:

A system with multiple attractors, in short, has a greater capacity to express or reveal the virtual. But this expressive capacity will depend, in turn, on the thermodynamic "zone of intensity" in which the system operates.²³⁵

Brian Massumi also makes the connection between Deleuzian intensity, open systems and the virtual. He uses the example of warm water. A liquid at a constant temperature has hot water added to it, upsetting its equilibrium. It seeks to return to equilibrium – 'the highest degree of stability and homogeneity it can achieve given existing conditions.'²³⁶ On its way towards entropy pockets of difference are created, the water is no longer stable nor homogenous. 'Structural stability has been achieved under conditions of extreme instability' (p. 59). When the water was acting under the laws of both gravity and thermodiffusion, it becomes 'stable *and* active' (p. 60), even though the laws stipulate that it should be stable and inactive at equilibrium, and unstable and active when equilibrium is disturbed. Thus 'stability no longer meant

²³³ Schneider and Sagan, 2005, p. 26.

²³⁴ DeLanda, 2005, pp. 75-6.

²³⁵ DeLanda, 2005, p. 76.

²³⁶ Brian Massumi, A user's guide to capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari (London: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 58.

maximum systemic homogeneity, but order – sustained patterning, differentiation. Activity no longer meant increased molecular chaos, but the ability to change patterning by responding systematically to further disturbance' (p. 60). Again, Massumi is drawing on the principle of multiple attractors, and in his example there are two: thermal and kinetic equilibrium. He states 'Order, the turbulent order of a dissipative structure, is a tangential passage between two thresholds' (p. 61).

Open systems thermodynamics shows us that that nonequilibrium and stability can occur simultaneously. It also shows us that what may appear as a stable system may be far from equilibrium, feeding off a gradient for its survival. As Schneider and Sagan point out, all living beings are open systems which 'enjoy energy and material influx and outflow across their boundaries.'²³⁷ In fact, organisms are far from equilibrium systems that feed of the destruction of gradients or intensities to create their stability. Rather than survival and comfort being dependent on a zone of indifference – a Freudian model which requires the maintenance of equilibrium, they are dependent on a zone of intensity.

From a Comfort of Being to a Comfort of Becoming

Moving from the nineteenth the twentieth century, we have observed a change in scientific thought from closed system thermodynamics to nonequilibrium, open system thermodynamics. During the same time period, we can also trace a desire to be within the comfort zone changing to a desire to be outside of it. Yet, if we understand the comfort zone through focusing on the organism as a nonequilibrium system, it can be understood as a zone of intensity rather than a zone of indifference. Deleuze therefore allows us to challenge the Freudian model which associates comfort with the avoidance of stimuli. Intensity reverses the privileging of quantity that was so important to Freud and nineteenth century thermodynamics which saw all forms of energy as equivalent. As a result, we begin to see that the idea of intensity brings into question the model of the bounded body. Contrasting the formation of an organism to that of a crystal, Deleuze writes 'An organism does not cease to contract in an interior space and to expand in an exterior space.' ²³⁸ The

²³⁷ Schneider and Sagan, 2005, p. 70.

²³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, trans. by Mark Lester and Charles Stivale. (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 119.

skin, or membrane, brings the internal and external into contact. A process of genesis is not about surface effects. To illustrate his point, Deleuze quotes philosopher of science Gilbert Simondon, whose work is worth quoting again here:

The living lives at the limit of itself, on its limit... The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane; it is here that life exists in an essential manner, as an aspect of a dynamic topology which itself maintains the metastability by which it exists... The entire content of internal space is topologically in contact with the content of external space at the limits of the living; there is, in fact, no distance in topology; the entire mass of living matter contained in the internal space is actively present to the external world at the limit of the living... *To belong to interiority does not mean only to "be inside," but to be on the "in-side" of the limit*... At the level of the polarized membrane, internal past and external future face one another [...].²³⁹

Survival of the organism is thus always on the edge of its comfort zone, at its limits. The edge, boundary, or skin needs to be considered as a site of intensity. In addition, to step out of the comfort zone is not to access an absolute outside. Comfort, again, is posited on a threshold or in-between space. According to Michel Foucault, transgression is not a simple crossing of a line. He writes:

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is like that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus is made to return once more to the horizon of the uncrossable.²⁴⁰

In fact, for Foucault, a boundary could not exist if were 'absolutely uncrossable' (p. 27). Transgression is not to be understood as a violent act, exposing the being to the infinite space that lies beyond it. It does not serve to oppose, but 'affirms limited beings – affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time' (pp. 28-9). Deleuze's asymmetrical theory of genesis and theories of nonequilibrium thermodynamics address the border as a zone in its own

²³⁹ Gilbert Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse psycho-biologique* (Paris: P.U.F., 1964), pp. 260-4, cited in Deleuze, 2001, p. 119.

²⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', in *Bataille: A Critical Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 24-40, p. 27.

right as a space of exchange, creation, and intensity. Open system thermodynamics is dependent on the boundary for a gradient to exist. Comfort is not inside the zone but at its limits, a space of flux or becoming. In the previous chapter comfort was theorised through the work of Peter Sloterdijk and Buckminster Fuller to show that comfort relied on a threshold or between-space – but that space remained a space of equilibrium, a balance of forces under tensions and compression. By looking at this in-between space through Deleuzian intensities and nonequilibrium thermodynamics, constant exchange and instability – or maetastability is introduced that moves comfort from a state of being to a state of becoming. Comfort, if we keep in mind its connection with survival, is a continuous process, always remaining in the virtual. It must be a process of continuous movement because, as Herschong observed, sensory information is not neutral.

Conceptualising the comfort zone as an intensive zone of difference helps to overcome the passive and complacent connotations it displays when defined as a zone of indifference. The body, in Brian Massumi's words, is a 'lived-in intensity,' which, rather than withdrawing from the world is open to it and part of it. Affect has the potential to serve as a micropolitics of microperceptions, as there is 'no sameness in affect.²⁴¹ This has the potential to disassociate life from mere survival and even adaptation and view it as that which is generated in intensity. However, openness and even intensities are not immune to co-option by capital. As the phrase 'outside the comfort zone' shows, capitalism appropriates biological processes in a society where growth is connected to risk. As Simon O'Sullivan observes, 'contemporary capitalism includes a certain intensive register alongside the extensive: hence the currency of terms such as "affective labour," "cognitive capitalism," and the like."²⁴² However, for O'Sullivan, affect in capitalism is passive because the subject is not the 'author' of the affect. How, then, are we to align business management's attempts to push us out of the comfort zone with affect and intensity? We must be cautious in making a direct link between the openness of a body or system and a Deleuzian intensity, and recognise that tending towards seeing the body as an open system

²⁴¹ Brian Massumi, 'Of Microperception and Micropolitics: An Interview with Brian Massumi', 15 August 2008, *Micropolitics: Exploring Ethico-Aesthetics. Inflexions: A Journal for Research-Creation*, 3 (2009), 1-20, (pp. 5-6).

²⁴² Simon O'Sullivan, On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 22-3.

makes it vulnerable to neoliberal values at the same time as offering us a micropolitics by which to challenge these values.

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3. Comfortably Numb: Anaesthesia and the Utopian Body

There is no pain you are receding A distant ship, smoke on the horizon. You are only coming through in waves. Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying. When I was a child I had a fever My hands felt just like two balloons. Now I've got that feeling once again I can't explain you would not understand This is not how I am. I have become comfortably numb.

- David John Gilmour and Roger Waters.²⁴³

In 1966, Michel Foucault gave a captivating radio broadcast, *Le Corps Utopique* (*The Utopian Body*), whereby he firstly considered the body as 'the opposite of utopia.' The body is an 'absolute place' of embodiment, from which I can never escape. I cannot move without it, I cannot hide from it. The body is far from a noplace, it is a 'cage' which forces me to 'reveal myself and walk around.' To overcome the burden of its materiality, that is to say, in becoming utopian, the body must transcend itself:

...to what does utopia owe its beauty, its marvel? Utopia is a place outside all places, but it is a place where I will have a body without a body, a body that will be beautiful, limpid, transparent, luminous, speedy, colossal in its power, infinite in its duration. Untethered, invisible, protected – always transfigured. It may very well be that the first utopia, the one most deeply rooted in the hearts of men, is precisely the utopia of an incorporeal body.²⁴⁴

A body free from pain is a fitting example of a utopian, incorporeal body, or 'body without a body.' As Foucault himself states in the same radio broadcast:

²⁴³ Lyrics from Pink Floyd, 'Comfortably Numb', *The Wall*, EMI, 1979 [on CD].

²⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, 'The Utopian Body', in Caroline A. Jones (ed). Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art trans. Lucia Allais et. al. (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2006), pp. 229-234, p. 231, from Michel Foucault, Utopies and Herterotopies, a CD release of two 1966 radio broadcasts published by the Institut National d'Audiovisuel, Paris, 2004.

Nothing is less *thing* than my body; it runs, it acts, it lives, it desires. It lets itself be traversed, with no resistance, by all my intentions. Sure. But until the day when I hurt, when a pit is hollowed out in my belly, when my chest and throat choke up, block up, fill up with coughs. Until the day when a toothache crazes in the back of my mouth. And then, I cease to be light, imponderable, et cetera. I become thing...(p. 231).

The thing-ness or materiality of the body, in this example the body in pain, is that which is overcome by Foucault's utopian body. The themes of the utopian body as weightless and immaterial correspond strongly to Harvie Ferguson's definition of comfort. Ferguson refers to the body as a 'third place,' a space of mediation between sickness and health, or in Ferguson's terms, between its presence as 'shadow' and 'image.' A body is always more than itself, but paradoxically we 'remain inseparably enfolded in our bodies.'²⁴⁵ In Foucault's terms, this would be the non-utopian, dense, absolute space of embodiment. By contrast, Ferguson defines comfort as a type of lightness or 'weightlessness' which opposes the shadow of illness:

Perhaps, for advanced societies, the most general recognition of this presence [the body as shadow] is manifest in the determined pursuit of physical comfort that has become the real aim, certainly for domestic life, if not the guiding purpose of social policy. Contemporary life seems preoccupied with the elimination of discomfort. Modern domestic machinery and the modern products of industrial machinery have the common aim of promoting human bodily comfort. Comfort is the manifest goal of contemporary social life and consists simply in becoming unaware of our corporeal nature. It is as if our bodies had become intolerable to us, not the fluid, self-transforming body images in constant superficial interaction but the body shadow that in its lethargic heaviness offers a certain resistance to the freedom and mobility of such images (p. 73).

A utopian body, in the name of comfort, could thus be defined as a body that seeks to transcend the limitations of its materiality.

Utopia, Thomas More's 1516 text, takes its name from two Greek words: *outopos*, a no-place, and *eutopos*, a good or happy place. More's Utopia is an island, a crescent shape which lets the sea in, forming a lake or harbour. Previously a peninsula, Utopia was made into an island by cutting off the mainland with a channel.²⁴⁶ Utopia, then, is another example of a closed system, a society delimited

²⁴⁵ Harvie Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 28.

²⁴⁶ Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 50.

by a boundary. More goes on to describe the perfect society: a six-hour working day, ample time for education and rest with 8 hours' sleep; no excess, laziness, war or ostentatious displays of wealth. All the rules are laid out. Hence, utopias are often described as 'blueprints' for a better society, where everything is predetermined and nothing left to chance. Utopia, as observed by Ruth Levitas, is a society both impossible and unattainable, an 'idle dream' which can become a 'dangerous illusion' when it slips into its opposite, dystopia.²⁴⁷ This observation is shared by novelist Ursula K. le Guin, who states that utopia is 'uninhabitable.' 'As soon as we reach it, it ceases to be utopia.²⁴⁸ Drawing on the work of Zygmunt Bauman, Levitas affirms the connection between utopia and 'solid' modernity (p. 3) whereby Bauman defines utopia as a modern idea linked to a belief in progress. But, as late modernity for Bauman is defined by the 'liquid,' marking a difference from the 'solid' times of industrial modernity, the stasis and boundedness implied by the blueprint is no longer a meaningful definition of what utopia has become. Utopia, for Bauman, from industrial modernity onwards, is instead a 'living-towards-utopia,' where progress 'was a continuous effort to run away from the utopias that failed.'²⁴⁹ Utopia stems from a feeling that the world is not good enough, and that human beings, rather than God, have the power to make their world. In tracing a shift from the early modern to the late modern, Bauman devises three figures that represent the changing nature of utopias: The gamekeeper, the gardener and the hunter. The gamekeeper, associated with the pre-modern, defends and preserves the natural order of things, concentrating on the harmony of God's design (p. 99). The gardener represents the utopias of modernity, where man's belief in his power to change the world becomes a central feature of utopian thinking. Order comes about by careful implementation of the design or blueprint, and disorder can be weeded out. This type of utopia, which we see in Thomas More's work, is not so relevant to contemporary thought, in which blueprints and grand designs for society since the end of the Cold War have lost meaning. How are we to re-imagine utopia in our 'liquid' times?

²⁴⁷ Ruth Levitas, 'The Elusive Idea of Utopia', *History of the Human Sciences* 16.1 (2003), 1-10, (p. 3).

²⁴⁸ Ursula K. le Guin, 'A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be' (1982), in *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (New York, Grove, 1989), pp. 80-100, p. 82.
²⁴⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Utopia in the Age of Uncertainty', in *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of*

Uncertainty (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 94-110, p. 96.

Bauman's solution comes in the form of the hunter, who embodies a new kind of individualistic utopia that has no regard for harmony of the total system. Instead, the hunter is engaged in his or her gain with no bigger picture in mind – no care for the total resources needed to create a perfect society. The hunter is concerned with individual escape and survival. Therefore, closely related to late modern utopias are projects concerning the perfection of the body, self-invention and refusing to 'accept all limits' (pp. 100-3). Illustrating his idea with a Google search of the word 'utopia,' Bauman notices that aside from sites relating to More, the literary form and a computer game of the same name, 'utopia' in many cases is appropriated by 'holiday, interior design and cosmetic companies as well as by fashion houses. All of them offer individual services to individuals seeking individual satisfactions and individual escapes from individually suffered discomforts' (pp. 102-3). Utopia has become a search for comfort not based on the perfection of the enclosed, social body but based on limitless possibilities relating to the individual. It is utopia without final form and without end. Still remaining unattainable, Bauman sees the key shift in the idea from a faraway place of the future to a 'here and now' (p. 109). In the words of Ruth Levitas, utopia 'is sought not as a public state but as private good, and as a series of moments rather than a steady state. Place becomes not the fixed site of future transformation, but the temporary site of fleeting moments of happiness.²⁵⁰ Utopia, in our 'liquid' times, is a case of multiple microcosmic temporary moments rather than a grand, macrocosmic plan.

In tracing a shift in the concept of utopia from the premodern to the modern to the post- or late-modern, Bauman has again, as he did with the changing categories of health and fitness, seen in the previous chapter, mapped a phenomenon that changes from thinking around closed systems to open systems. No longer a blueprint with a final form, nor a self-sufficient island, utopia has become a lived phenomenon without end, a constant striving towards, a process rather than a state. Bauman's examples from his Google search serve as pertinent reminders that this limitless, open vision of utopia is far from free from the constraints of capital; instead, the very openness of systems is a defining characteristic of the times we live in. Thus, a utopian body, one which seeks to transcend the limitations of its material presence in our current times, perfectly encapsulates the twofold position of the body

²⁵⁰ Levitas, 2003, p. 6.

as open system. On one hand, as explored in the previous chapter, it gives the opportunity to view the body as a process, a becoming-comfortable of bodies rather than a static being comfortable. On the other, it shows that open systems are not synonymous with intensities of difference, and that becomings can also relate to normative processes.

In addressing these issues, this chapter recognises the thermodynamic body discussed in the previous chapter as an example of a utopian body, seeking to transcend its limits. However, this chapter focuses specifically on the idea of anaesthesia and the utopian body, interrogating the way in which anaesthetics, in particular over-the-counter painkillers, have contributed to the shaping of the utopian body in Bauman's 'liquid' or late-capitalist sense. This utopian body is not disconnected from the thermodynamic body and again is concerned with work and capitalist production, tracing Bauman's shift from modern health to postmodern fitness. What sort of utopia does the painkiller advocate? And what has becoming 'comfortably numb' meant from the late nineteenth century to the present day? Finally, I ask how useful the idea of utopia is in defining comfort as an active, intensive, affective experience.

Anaesthesia and Modernity

Our ability to eradicate or 'kill' pain with a range of synthetic drugs from anaesthetics to analgesics to anti-depressants is a distinctly modern phenomenon. The 'medicalization of pain' began with the discovery of nitrous oxides in 1842. According to Susan Buck-Morss, the date of this discovery was no accident, coinciding with a time of increasing recreational drug experimentation. Nitrous oxide was used in 'ether frolics,' where party-goers would inhale the gas to produce new, exciting sensations. Surgeon Crawford W. Long observed that those who were bruised during their experimentations did not feel pain, which led him to trial nitrous oxide gas as an anaesthetic in surgery in 1842. In 1846, it was used in Massachusetts General Hospital, before its introduction to Europe, which led to surgical anaesthesia becoming a widespread practice.²⁵¹ The discovery of surgical anaesthesia was

²⁵¹ Susan Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered', *October*, 62 (1992), 3-41, (p. 21).

followed approximately half a century later by the synthesis of aspirin in 1899. David B. Morris goes as far as to say that 1899 signified the 'advent of modernism,' marking a threshold between the 'preanaesthetic' and 'anaesthetic' modern world, a transition that altered human experience.²⁵² Although surgical anaesthesia marked an important turning point in human experience, aspirin democratised the idea of killing pain. Morris writes

Probably no other drug – not even such modern favourites as Valium or cocaine – has established itself so firmly in our culture as aspirin. Yet aspirin is far more than our most common over-the-counter analgesic. It is an emblem of our immense faith in chemical assaults on pain.²⁵³

Our belief in 'chemical assaults on pain' re-enacts itself each time we reach for a box of our preferred over-the-counter painkiller, whether that is aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen. The ritual of their consumption often fades into the background of everyday life. We tend to take these medicines for granted, but it is almost impossible to imagine life without them. The box of 'Nurofen' (a brand of ibuprofen, the most recent of the three painkillers mentioned above), lists that it offers 'rapid relief from: headache, migraine, backache, period pain, dental pain, neuralgia, rheumatic pain, muscular pain, feverishness, and cold and flu symptoms'.²⁵⁴ It is therefore classed as an analgesic, a substance that relieves 'physical' pain, and an antipyretic, with the ability to reduce fever. Ibuprofen belongs to a group of medicines known as NSAIDs (non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs), of which aspirin was the first commercially successful.

Although the development of aspirin as a commercial product is bound up with modernity, its active chemical, salicylic acid, has been in existence for thousands of years. Salicylic acid naturally occurs in the bark of specific trees including the willow. It was said to be recommended as a painkiller during childbirth and as a fever reducer by Hippocrates, and by the Roman physician Celcus to reduce

²⁵² David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 60.

²⁵³ Morris, 1991, p. 61.

²⁵⁴ Nurofen 200g Liquid Capsules, purchased March 2012, manufactured by Reckitt Benckiser Helathcare (UK), Ltd, Slough.
swelling. It was also known to be used by the ancient Egyptians.²⁵⁵ However, salicylic acid was under-recognised in medicine until the nineteenth century. This was despite an important discovery about the connection of willow bark and fever made by Reverend Edward Stone of Chipping Norton in 1753, which was dismissed by the medical establishment. Stone came across the bitter taste of willow bark, which was said to have reminded him of Peruvian bark (also known as the cinchona tree), which he knew had the power to reduce fever. At that time, malaria (known as the agues) was prevalent in parts of England and Continental Europe. Conducting his own experiments, Stone found that the willow was able to reduce the fever of the ague patients and wrote of his findings to the Royal Society. Although he claimed to have found a cure for the ague, (which was not scientifically true; its cause by mosquitoes was unknown at the time), the importance of salicylic acid in reducing fever was not recognised (pp. 17-34).

Synthetic drugs for the relief of pain were discovered by accident through their use as antipyretics or fever reducing substances. Salicylic acid was first synthesised in 1874 by Hermann Kolbe, professor of Chemistry at Leipzig University. Kolbe created salicylic acid from phenol (the drug naturally occurs in willow trees such as Salix alba).²⁵⁶ It lowered temperatures and reduced swelling and inflammation, but had terrible side effects on the stomach in its salt form, sodium salicylate (p. 70). Thus by the 1880s it had lost its popularity. In 1882, Otto Fischer synthesised a drug which he called kairin – which was manufactured by the German firm Hoechst. This foreshadowed the important synthetic antipyretics that were used before the invention of aspirin – antipyrine, antifebrin and phenacetin, which were all invented between 1884 and 1887, with the intention of alleviating fever (p. 72).

Aspirin was finally produced in 1899 by three young scientists, Felix Hoffman, Heinrich Dreser and Arthur Eichengrün, working at *Farbenfabriken vormals Friedrich Bayer*, (the manufacturing company formally known as Bayer, which will hereafter be referred to as 'Bayer'), which started life as a dyemanufacturer in Elberfeld, North-West Germany. The drug was initially marketed as a fever reducer and anti-inflammatory which 'showed some promise as an

²⁵⁵ Diarmuid Jeffreys, *Aspirin: The Remarkable Story of a Wonder Drug* (Bloomsbury: London, 2005), pp. 13-15.

²⁵⁶ Jan R. McTavish, Pain and Profits: *The History of the Headache and Its Remedies in America*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 69.

analgesic.²⁵⁷ After initial success. Bayer realised that it could exploit sales by patenting the drug. Although unsuccessful in Britain, as the patent was for the manufacturing of the chemical, acetylsalicylic acid, Bayer secured success in America and hence began an aggressive marketing campaign to the medical trade (pp. 126-7). Bayer pushed the brand name 'aspirin,' chosen for its simplicity so that doctors would remember it and prescribe their brand over the generic chemical substance. As a result, aspirin became hugely profitable for Bayer and enabled its development from a middle-sized company to one of Germany's largest (p. 177). Aspirin then started to be marketed to the public, appearing in newspaper advertisements in publications such as The New York Times from July 1916 and The Manchester Guardian from 1910.²⁵⁸ The period mainly spanning the two World Wars has been referred to as 'the aspirin age,' and it is during this time that aspirin became globally popular.²⁵⁹ Its value was greatly appreciated by many during The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19. Although it does not target the 'flu virus, its ability to reduce fever saved thousands of lives. It is not known exactly how this process works, but thought that by regulating body temperature the body is given a sort of hope or strength to combat the illness. Aspirin's success can also be attributed to both its low manufacturing cost and high mark-up – even with this the selling price was always affordable, meaning its market captured people from all backgrounds. Following World War I, Bayer lost its US assets and the aspirin trademark, seeing a further democratisation of the drug. This freedom led many companies into increased competition, and new ranges of analgesic products came onto the market. These included Dispirin, a soluble aspirin, a British product introduced in 1948. In addition, other analgesics such as Panadol, a brand of paracetamol, introduced in 1956,²⁶⁰ also grew in popularity.

²⁵⁷ Jeffreys, 2005, pp. 73-77. There is discussion as to whether the invention is attributable to all three Scientists or Dreser alone. Jeffreys argues that Dreser omitted Eichengrün and Hoffman from his prelaunch paper, 'Pharmacological facts about Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid)', but all three were involved in the synthesis of aspirin.

²⁵⁸ McTavish, 2004, p. 139.

²⁵⁹ Isabelle Leighton, (ed.), *The Aspirin Age 1919-1941: The Essential Events in American Life in the Chaotic Years between the Two World Wars by Twenty-Two Outstanding Writers* (New York: Touchtone Books, 1949), p. 1.

²⁶⁰ Jeffreys, 2004, pp. 124-208.

As a cultural object, we may want to think if aspirin as a product of the medical industry, which of course it is. However, it is more than that. This chapter treats aspirin also as a product of mass culture - widely available, affordable and produced in vast quantities. Moreover, it was advertised to the general public through a range of methods, most prominently in magazines and newspapers, advertising billboards, and more recently in television advertising campaigns. Therefore, beliefs surrounding what it can do for us and how it can transform our lives have been constructed by these campaigns, influencing the way in which it has been consumed. Aspirin is therefore not only a matter of healthcare; it is also one of capital. And mass cultural forms, as Fredric Jameson argues, occupy a particular position in relation to utopia: they contain messages about the discontents of the present day but also engage our investment in utopian images.²⁶¹ Although Jameson develops his argument with reference to popular film, using the examples of Jaws and *The Godfather*, the utopian nature of advertising serves perhaps an even more overt function in selling the transcendence of these particular discontents via whichever product is being marketed. Elsewhere, I have argued that these advertisements have had a particular role in selling aspirin to the female consumer and in the construction of female pain, depicting myriad symptoms that related to beliefs surrounding hysteria and nervous disease that were typical of the nineteenth century.²⁶² Aspirin, following popular nostrums of the time, was sold as a cure-all throughout the twentieth century, targeting symptoms from headaches to insomnia to despondency. For example, a genaspirin advertisement from 1919, featuring a female consumer, promised to 'calm the throbbing nerves – and so predispose you to healthy natural sleep.²⁶³ Not only demonstrating the marketing of the product as a cure-all and enforcing views surrounding pain and nervousness, this example illustrates David B. Morris's argument that the separation of 'physical' and 'emotional pain' is a very recent phenomenon.²⁶⁴ The pain that aspirin and related products have targeted up until the late twentieth century is not limited to what we

²⁶¹ Fredric Jameson, 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture', *Social Text*, 1 (1979), 130-148.

²⁶² Sheena Culley, 'Killing Pain? Aspirin, Emotion and Subjectivity', in *Pain and Emotion in Modern History*, ed. Robert Boddice (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 130-147.

²⁶³ Manchester Guardian, 23rd May, 1919.

²⁶⁴ Morris, 1991, p. 9.

might describe as 'physical' symptoms and relates to the wider discontents of the historical period. In the following example relating to the compound analgesics and their marketing to and consumption by women, I relate the idea of the painkiller to the utopian body, claiming that our belief in the painkiller has extended far beyond killing physical pain. It has also promised us limitless labour power, a solution to 'emotional' problems, attractive looks and even happiness.

The Utopian Body and Compound Analgesics

A utopian body based on over-the-counter analgesics can perhaps be seen most strikingly in the use of compound analgesics which were first introduced in the 1930s in Britain, North America and Australia. Compound analgesics, such as Anadin (branded Anacin in the USA), typically feature one or more analgesic substance combined with caffeine. A 1959 Anadin advertisement sold the drug on the premise that it relieved pain, 'calmed jangled nerves' and would 'combat depression,' all in all leaving the user 'cheerful and relaxed.'²⁶⁵ The consumption of APCs – a particular type of compound analgesic containing aspirin, phenacetin and caffeine - took these ideas further, deliberately advertised to women as an aid to modern life where keeping going was central to cultural expectations. Two brands, Bex and Vincents, were particularly popular in Queensland, Australia, during the 1950s and 60s. Eileen Hennessey investigates this phenomenon in her book, A Cup of Tea, a Bex and a Good Lie Down, which takes its name from a 1964 theatre revue by John McKellar. The phrase entered the Australian vernacular, targeted at 'neurotic' women who needed to calm down. Hennessey's interest in the drugs comes from Bex and Vincents being taken off the market, as many fatalities were occurring from their use. It took many years until the connection was made between the caffeine in the drugs, the addictive component, which combined with the hot Queensland climate, led to dehydration and eventually kidney failure and death for many who were addicted. Reasons for taking Bex and Vincents were given by the surviving consumers as 'ill health, colds, headaches, frustrations [and] depression.' Hennessey states, 'clearly, these women were ingesting APCs as a stimulant, often in

²⁶⁵ Observer, 24th May, 1959.

conjunction with other sources of caffeine such as Coca-Cola or coffee,²⁶⁶ exacerbating their diuretic effects. The expectations that the advertisements for these drugs raised, according to Hennessey, were directly related to the social pressures on women in Australia following World War II. Whereas during the war, many women worked, the expectation of them to return to domestic roles and 'repopulate' the country afterwards led to a different form of work pressure. For example, all manner of household appliances, particularly the washing machine, were aggressively advertised as selling leisure time to women, when in fact they raised hygiene expectations. Women therefore devoted more time to household chores than they previously would have. To add to the pressure, much childcare literature of the 1950s placed a disproportionate emphasis on mothers being responsible for the development of their children. As a result, women were under pressure to keep a perfect household but partake in an active social life, giving the impression that they were carefree. Advertising from another brand of APC, Zans, promises to alleviate these pressures: 'Housework was such a drudge... but now $-a \operatorname{cup} of \text{ tea with } 2$ 'ZANS' TABLETS and I feel ready to fly through the work!'²⁶⁷ Another example comes not from an APC but from the Nicolas brand of Aspirin (who also owned Bex), ASPRO:

Headache and pain need not rob you of a happy life. Go out when you feel like it! Enjoy your evenings and weekends without interference from nagging headache and pain. Look your loveliest at all times. Enjoy the admiration that comes from a happy, laughing expression unclouded by nerves and pain. You have to be well to be wanted. It's amazing what 'ASPRO', the genteel but powerful modern medicine, can do to keep you attractive. With 'ASPRO' there are no harmful after-effects, no 'let-down', 'ASPRO' brings swift relief from the dull nag of headache, a blessed relief that wipes away the disfiguring lines of pain.²⁶⁸

This example does not attempt to subtly pinpoint the reader's discomforts, making an explicit link between the experience of pain and its detriment to the perceived

²⁶⁶ Eileen Hennessey, *A Cup of Tea, a Bex and a Good Lie Down*, (Queensland: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1993), p. 77.

²⁶⁷ Hennessey, 1993, p. 70. Emphasis as original.

²⁶⁸ Advert for ASPRO from *Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 Mar, 1957, 59, cited in Hennessey, 1993, p. 82.

attractiveness of a woman. The case of Vincents and Bex, along with these advertisements from ASPRO and ZANS in post-war Australia point to a utopian female body. This is a body that transcends the limitations of work in the much ignored domestic sphere, reminding us of some of comfort's gender-specific issues. Whereas the home is traditionally seen as the ultimate space of comfort, the concealed, female labour that has traditionally been responsible for the creation of conditions of comfort is brought to light in this example. Historian John Gloag states that comfort, since Victorian times has related very much to tidiness, for example the habit of bed making. It was women who were expected to have these tidy habits.²⁶⁹ These examples show the persistence of these gender implications, teamed with the expectation to enjoy leisure time, and how these aspects contributed to the 'physical' and 'emotional' discontents experienced by women. The painkillers promised to mask any detrimental effects of work on the body, as well as visible signs of pain, presenting a normative vision of comfort; happy, care-free, beautiful women. It is, in a sense, the utopia of Bauman's hunter, promising temporary lived results rather than a utopia posited in the future, a utopia that is 'an ultimate and radical solution to human problems past, present and future, and an ultimate and radical cure for the sorrows and pains of the human condition.²⁷⁰ This kind of utopia, as Bauman writes, offers no answers to the questions about the meaning of life, instead reshaping life into 'an unending series of self-focused pursuits' (p. 109). These drugs offered short term relief and strength to those who consumed them, rather than providing conditions for change in terms of women's roles in society. This is not to deny the important, felt effects of pain killers on those who take them, for that is not the question at stake. What is important is to consider what sort of comfort is offered by the consumption of these drugs. Not only promising to relieve pain of the individual, they are offering us the chance to participate in activities that we previously may not have done under the effects of pain and discomfort. They have thus played a role in demonstrating the normalising function of comfort, where comfort, again, becomes inseparable from the notion of work, labour, or to use

²⁶⁹ John Gloag, *Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design from 1830-1900* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), pp. 40-1.

²⁷⁰ Bauman, 2007, p. 108.

Bauman's expression, toil. The utopian body made through the painkiller demonstrates a link between the open body, comfort and capital.

In addition, the utopian body sold to us via the advertising of aspirin, compound analgesics and related products is one which seeks to invest in the belief of a trivialisation of pain. This idea is already implied in the way in which we refer to the headache, which has come to resemble a phenomenon akin to 'a pain in the neck.' In the times of humoral medicine and well into the twentieth century, the headache, as observed by Jan McTavish, was associated with the idea of imbalance, seen as a symptom trying to inform the sufferer of an underlying problem, rather than as a disease in itself. Headaches could be brought about by various causes from the weather to diet to emotions.²⁷¹ Although it would be an oversimplification to say that these implications have completely disappeared from the headache today, we tend to trivialise its impact on our everyday lives due to our ability to pop a couple of aspirins in the hope that it will disappear. It creates an expectation that our lives should no longer be affected by pain because pain is capable of being killed by a readily available, affordable pill. This attitude is captured perfectly in Nurofen's recent strapline, 'for lives bigger than pain.' However, as David B. Morris has also observed, the invention of modern anaesthesia did not lead to our ability to 'kill' pain. Challenging the distinction between 'physical' and 'emotional' pain, Morris uses the recent epidemic of chronic pain as an example of pain's persistence, whose symptoms mystify the medical profession because of its unresponsiveness to analgesics. The expectation is that physical pain will be lessened by such drugs, but chronic pain does not, in many cases, respond in this way. This example, combined with the rise of depression in the Western world, leads to Morris's pronouncement: 'The pills in a sense just make things worse.'272 Our discomforts cannot be eliminated, instead being displaced or concealed, only to resurface again in another form. Killing pain, even in our modern, anaesthetic age of painkillers and antidepressants remains a utopian comfort, a no-place, a state that is impossible to attain.

²⁷¹ McTavish, 2004, p. 17.

²⁷² David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 65.

Ernst Bloch and Utopian Hope

For Ruth Levitas, Bauman's work on utopia expresses a 'perhaps universal need for transcendence. We always live beyond ourselves, in a quest for something better.²⁷³ This element of utopia, as Levitas notes, was central to the work of Marxist Philosopher Ernst Bloch, whose magnum opus, *The Principle of Hope* was published in 1959, 60 years after the invention of aspirin. Although similarities between Thomas More's *Utopia* and Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* have been noted,²⁷⁴ Bloch's unorthodox Marxist notion of utopian hope marks a point of departure from utopia as a planned society. Predating Bauman's notion of utopia as a 'living towards', Bloch's work was pivotal in characterising utopia as a process rather than a form or blueprint for an ideal society. Of his approach, Levitas writes:

With no other writer is the rejection of form as a defining characteristic of utopia more consistent and explicit as it is with Bloch. The reason for this rejection is simultaneously political and theoretical: Bloch's Marxism, unorthodox though it may be, means that his central preoccupation is change. The assumption that dreams of a better life may play a part in this leads Bloch to define utopia in analytic terms, as an element in this process, rather than in descriptive terms; hence the overt emphasis on function rather than form or content. Since the function of expressing, anticipating and effecting the future can be identified in a vast range of cultural forms, the subject of utopia is identified in terms of the common characteristics of the intention towards a better life.²⁷⁵

Bloch's utopian impulse is this intention towards a better life, and stems from, in the words of Fredric Jameson, 'everything future-orientated in life and culture; and encompassing everything from games to patent medicines, from myths to mass entertainment, from iconography to technology, from architecture to Eros, to tourism

²⁷³ Levitas, 2003, p. 4.

²⁷⁴ Marx and Engels' 'utopian socialism' focuses on themes such as length of the working day, the abolition of private property and free education which it has in common with More's *Utopia*. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Penguin, 2002).

²⁷⁵ Ruth Levitas, 'Utopian Hope: Ernst Bloch and Reclaiming the Future', in *The Concept of Utopia* (London: Syracuse University Press, 1990), p. 100.

to jokes and the unconscious.²⁷⁶ Thus, Bloch's Marxism, like his friend Walter Benjamin, is non-traditional in that it departs from the view that the commodity object only contains reified labour power. Commodity objects also express dreams of a better world. Bloch states that what is utopian is not directed toward the abstract or 'unworldly,' but is rather 'turned towards the world.²⁷⁷ The material implications of Bloch's work are commented on by Fredric Jameson, who writes

Materialism is already omnipresent in an attention to the body which seeks to correct any idealism or spiritualism lingering in this system. Utopian corporeality is however also a haunting, which invests even the subordinate and shamefaced products of everyday life, such as aspirins, laxatives, and deodorants, organ transplants and plastic surgery, all harbouring muted promises of a transfigured body.²⁷⁸

Of prime importance to Bloch is therefore to evaluate which dreams of a better life are capable of leading to real change (which he calls concrete utopia), and those which abstract historical time and are thus not capable of changing social conditions (abstract utopias). Medical utopias enter Bloch's thinking on utopian hope, and he even mentions aspirin. Although only touched on briefly by Bloch, viewing the use of aspirin from Bloch's Marxist perspective provides an alternative configuration of a utopian body that does not seek to transcend its materiality.

In part four of *The Principle of Hope*, 'Outlines for a Better World,' Bloch turns his attention to medical utopias, which make up a small component of the work. Here, he is critical of modern medicine, expressing a preference for humoral medicine, stating, 'In capitalist society health is the capability to earn, among the Greeks it was the capability to enjoy, and in the Middle Ages the capacity to believe.'²⁷⁹ Sceptical of the association of health with the ability to participate in capitalist society, Bloch writes 'The role of the doctor is to 'build up that sate of normality again which is socially in vogue at the time...' (p. 466). In the nineteenth

²⁷⁶ Fredric Jameson, Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions (London: Verso, 2005), p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 12.

²⁷⁸ Jameson, 2005, p. 6.

²⁷⁹ Bloch, 1995, p. 465.

and twentieth centuries, normality is the capacity to work and earn a wage, as encountered in Zygmunt Bauman's definition of 'solid' health in relation to modernity, explored in the previous chapter. The return to normality is based on a view of sickness and pain which are paradoxically beyond the body but also felt as lack– and thus discomfort had an excessive quality:

So the sick man has the feeling not that he lacks something but that he has too much of something. His discomfort, as something which is hanging around him as superfluous, has to go; pain is proud flesh. He dreams of the body which knows how to keep comfortably quiet again.²⁸⁰

Evoking Harvie Ferguson's notion of the body as shadow, Bloch notes the burden that the sick body becomes to the subject. Utopian wishes of our time are impatient in overcoming sickness: 'Swimming around in blood in the morning, healthy and up and about at midday' (p. 455). Bloch refers to modern healing potions as 'shortcuts' that patch up sick organs: 'Disease is not abolished, but its end, death, is amazingly pushed back' (p. 455). Here, Bloch could be referring to the use of aspirin in the case of influenza, and he does indeed explicitly mention painkillers and anaesthetics, which fulfil the 'sick man's dream of not being present during the operation on his body' (p. 456). One of Bloch's criticisms of traditional utopian literature with respect to health was that it could not disconnect itself from the desire to control, in capitalist society imposed through 'planning and medicine.' Here, Bloch mentions More's *Utopia*, which 'makes medicine easier' (p. 457). In this text, More speaks of 'a state of health undisturbed by any minor ailments.'²⁸¹ This age-old wish to 'develop a body less susceptible to illness' continues to be a modern utopian dream.

Painkillers and anaesthetics, for Bloch, contribute to the compensatory mode of modern medicine; 'unnatural relief added from the outside.'²⁸² Although Bloch does not enter into any detailed discussion following this point, this particular view of painkillers seems to concur with his category of abstract Utopia. Abstract utopia is related to compensatory elements, and can be contrasted with concrete utopias,

²⁸⁰ Bloch, 1995, p. 454.

²⁸¹ More, 2003, p. 77.

²⁸² Bloch, 1995, p. 457

which are associated with anticipatory, utopian hope. Of the concept of concrete utopia, Ruth Levitas writes,

It is not merely fictitious compensation for the discomforts of experienced reality, but a venturing beyond that reality which is essential to the inauguration of a transformed future. Utopia contains compensation, but also anticipation.²⁸³

Therefore, it is the potential of concrete utopia to transform experience that is of particular interest to Bloch, given his Marxist standpoint. The abstract and concrete utopian forms should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive: both can be experienced in the same utopian example.²⁸⁴ Nor does the concrete stand for something more 'real' or fixed than the abstract. According to Peter Thompson, concrete, rather than referring to that which is pre-formed or a blueprint, comes from a Hegelian understanding of the term, from the Latin concrescera, to grow together, or condense. It therefore opposes any notions of fixity. Abstract is associated with the verb, meaning to take out of context. In Bloch's case, out of context specifically relates to a historical context, which drives forward the utopian impulse and paves the way to revolution. In an abstract utopia, states Thompson, the truth is limited to itself, and erases the possibility for history to be transformed.²⁸⁵ The compensatory aspect of the painkiller, for Bloch, bears relation to abstract utopia which pushes the real issue of ill health under the surface and complies with the demands of capitalist society, where health can only be defined in terms of work, rather than being meaningful as a concept in its own right.

How do Bloch's views on the painkiller, and abstract and concrete utopia contribute to his theory of utopian hope as a whole? Bloch develops his theory of anticipatory consciousness based on the idea of the utopian impulse. He observes that all living beings are instilled with an urge to survive, and they need to go outside of themselves in order to do so. Life itself is not felt; it is rather striving that is defined as the affective state of living. For Bloch, striving is intentional, but we are

²⁸³ Levitas, 1990, p. 86.

²⁸⁴ Levitas, 1990, p. 88.

²⁸⁵ Peter Thompson, 'Introduction, The Privatization of Hope and the Crisis of Negation', in Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek (eds). *The Privatization of Hope* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 12.

not always conscious of what our intentionality is directed towards. Utopia, then, continues to be a no-place in that it is posited in the future, but this focus on the future is directly related to the present. According to Bloch, the Here and Now is the 'most central' utopian category, whereby the focus on the future is needed to access a hidden present, one that escapes our consciousness: 'we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness, in order to penetrate precisely the nearest nearness.²⁸⁶ Part of this future-oriented, anticipatory consciousness is based on Bloch's critique of the Freudian unconscious. Sharing the perspective of Freud's Project (discussed in the previous chapter), Bloch states that drives propel the organism to search beyond itself. However, Bloch is critical of Freud's later development whereby the formation of the Ego is dependent on the libido. Freud's all-encompassing explanation of the drive in terms of sexuality, for Bloch, illuminates Freud's bourgeois standpoint. In addition, Bloch writes that Freud ignores hunger as the basic drive, even subsuming it into his libidinal thesis. He writes 'Hunger and troubles constrict libido in the working classes' (p. 66), and claims that hunger is the most basic drive relating to self-preservation (p. 75). His example is used to argue that social and cultural factors shape the drives because survival, health and well-being are not only of the individual body but of the social one (pp. 45-77). A revolutionary outcome in terms of health, for Bloch, would result in a health resulting from balance, where the nutrition and working conditions of the working classes are addressed.

A utopian body in Bloch's view offers an alternative to both Foucault's utopian body and Bauman's utopia of late modernity in that it has a direct material focus on the body. Transcendence is not sought in terms of the body itself but in the conditions provided by the social body which have a direct relation to comfort in terms of social health. However, the difficulty in distinguishing between the abstract and concrete remains one of the problems in Bloch's work due to the affective nature of hope and the anticipatory nature of utopia, which exists in both forms, the abstract and concrete. Bloch writes,

The anticipatory thus operates in the field of hope; so this hope is not taken only as emotion, as the opposite of fear (because fear too can of course

²⁸⁶ Bloch, 1995, p. 12.

anticipate), but *more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind* (and here the opposite is then not fear, but memory).²⁸⁷

In addition, according to Peter Thompson, 'Hope is not happiness and bland optimism. Hope is what gives us strength in the face of the knowledge of entropy and death, both of the individual – what Bloch calls the greatest of all antiutopias – and of the universe as a whole.'²⁸⁸ Hope, for Bergson, was described as a particular type of intensity; one which related to an infinite number of future possibilities:

What makes hope such an intensive pleasure is that fact that the future, which we dispose of to our liking, appears to us at the same time under a multitude of forms, equally attractive and equally possible. Even if the most coveted of these becomes realised, it will be necessary to give up the others, and we shall have lost a great deal. The idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality.²⁸⁹

Thus, hope may be defined as 'an affective state of anticipation.'²⁹⁰ What has our belief in the painkiller and the advertisement of aspirin and related over-counterpainkillers sold to us, if not hope? The instant expectations of modern medicine, selling us a cure-all, promise to cure our discomforts, tapping into our hopes even if we know some of their claims may not be realised. If both abstract and concrete utopias are dependent on an affective state, what is to stop the working classes from turning to more immediate comforts rather than investing in long term revolutionary action? What when they reject a nutritious meal for an aspirin? George Orwell remarks on precisely this phenomenon in *The Road to Wigan Pier*: 'a cup of tea or even an aspirin is much better as a temporary stimulant than a crust of brown bread.'²⁹¹ To counteract the hostile conditions that they are subjected to, the working classes, as observed by Orwell, are not interested in fruit or whole grains which may

²⁸⁷ Bloch, 1995, p. 12.

²⁸⁸ Thompson, 2013, p. 8.

²⁸⁹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay in the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen& Unwin Ltd, 1971), pp. 9-10.

²⁹⁰ Darren Ellis and Ian Tucker, 'Virtuality and Ernst Bloch: Hope and Subjectivity,' *Subjectivity* 4.4 (2011), 434-450 (p. 440).

²⁹¹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.89.

endorse their long term health, but opt for a quick fix, choosing, as well as a cup of tea and an aspirin, other 'tasty' options such as white bread and ice cream. Hunger may, as Bloch notes, be a driving force for the working man or woman, but comfort food cannot be equated with what is known to provide the best nutritional value. Where Bloch's emphasis on hunger as the primary drive falls down is his insistence on viewing the consumption of foodstuff as simple exchange of energy. Perhaps, by considering appetite in more general terms, and looking at aspirin alongside other substances we can understand why such 'abstract' utopias which retain the status quo have been so important in providing comfort from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Here I would like to suggest that we can understand more about the use of aspirin by adding it to the list of intoxicants and stimulants such as tea, coffee, alcohol and confectionary that become popular during modernity. The German term used by Wolfgang Schivelbusch to describe such substances is Genussmittel, which has no direct translation into English, but literally means 'articles of enjoyment.'292 Schivelbusch does not add Schmerzmittel (painkillers) to his list but, in light of Buck-Morss's work on anaesthesia, we could draw some parallels between the use of aspirin and these substances. In her essay 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics', Buck-Morss demonstrates the importance of the dialectic interplay between both feeling; the aesthetic, and not feeling; the anaesthetic, in modernity. Her work looks at the anaesthetic as a force present in everyday life, rather than being confined to the painkiller or surgeon's table. Through her reading of Walter Benjamin, who made the comparison between the modern bourgeois interior and psychoanalysis (explored in chapter 1), Buck-Morss states that anaesthetic processes were vital to shield modern subjects from the 'shocks' they received from the new technologies of the time,²⁹³ such as railways, printing presses and electricity to the practices of photography, cinematography and radiography.²⁹⁴ The shocks of modernity, such as those created by the machinery in the factory, acted in a twofold manner, exciting the

²⁹² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants, trans. David Jacobson (Vintage Book, New York, 1992), p xiii.

²⁹³ Buck-Morss, 1992.

²⁹⁴, Sara Danious, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception and Aesthetics* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. 2.

subject but also pacifying him, through their repetitive motions whereby they actually numb him. In turn, sensory life is reclaimed through a variety of practices and substances from drinking coffee or alcohol, or taking recreational drugs. Although aspirin is not typically classed as such a drug, its uses fit a similar contradictory use, for example being used as a sedative, nerve tonic, and as a stimulant. Aspirin is therefore comparable to other panaceas of its time such as Coca-Cola and Coffee which made similar claims. Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis in his writing, Walter Benjamin reads this process as a material manifestation of Freud's stimulus shield ("Reizschutz"),²⁹⁵ an argument that Schivelbusch also makes in *The Railway Journey*.²⁹⁶ The reclamation of sensory experience exemplified by the consumption of various substances, from recreational drugs to coffee to alcohol, is this part of a complex process of both inducing and escaping comfortable numbness. As Buck-Morss writes

Anaesthetics became an elaborate technic in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Whereas the body's self-anaesthetizing defences are largely involuntary, these methods involved conscious, intentional manipulation of the synaesthetic system. To the already-existing Enlightenment narcotic forms of coffee, tobacco, tea and spirits, there was added a vast arsenal of drugs and therapeutics practices, from opium, ether, and cocaine to hypnosis, hydrotherapy, and electric shock (p. 18).

In adding aspirin to this reading of anaesthesia, the process of becoming comfortably numb can be interpreted as highly affective; a constant transition between states and sensations. Etymologically, anaesthesia is the opposite of the aesthetic, which implies a discourse of the body,²⁹⁷ derived from the ancient Greek *Aisthitikos*, meaning 'perceptive by feeling.'²⁹⁸ By contrast, the anaesthetic insinuates a loss of feeling. However, as Pink Floyd's song lyrics already imply (the chorus quoted at the opening of the chapter), becoming comfortably numb is a nuanced, affective state, where certain perceptions are modified but not totally shut off. The song was

²⁹⁵ Sigmund Freud. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London: penguin, 2003), pp. 43-102.

²⁹⁶ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, trans. Anseln Hollo (New York: Berg, 1986), pp. 148-158.

²⁹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 11.

²⁹⁸ Susan Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 6.

inspired by Roger Waters collapsing backstage at the Philadelphia Spectrum with stomach cramps. A physician injected him with a muscle relaxant so that he could perform, but it left him with no feeling in his hands. He was later diagnosed with hepatitis.²⁹⁹ Later, Waters commented that the endurance of the show marked the longest two hours of his life.³⁰⁰ Not entirely eliminating his discomfort, the drugs masked the worst of his pain so that he was able to carry on performing, but induced a variety of side-effects, including sickness and causing him to lose feeling in his hands and arms. His anaesthesia implies a comfort that is very closely linked to the idea of keeping going, the fitness required by late capitalism in the name of 'work,' rather than one which focuses exclusively on the exclusion of painful sensations. A compensatory utopia of anaesthesia, which may be accompanied by affective hope is therefore far from a passive state of indifference or non-feeling.

Comfort as this compensatory type of oscillation takes us back to a Freudian conception of subjectivity through the stimulus shield, where comfort is dependent on a separation, yet continuous interaction between inside and outside. What would happen if we were to move beyond this dialectical relationship? One possible outcome would be a vision of utopia that is realised, and therefore slips into a dangerous dystopia, such as Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. In Huxley's utopian (or dystopian) society, killing pain, both 'physical' and 'emotional,' becomes a lived reality. Huxley describes the Brave New World as the ultimate realisation of 'happiness and comfort.' This vision is shaped by scientific progress, where natural conception and birth belong to history. Artificial reproduction occurs via the Bokanovsky method, representing 'the principle of mass production at last applied to biology.³⁰¹ Each artificially manufactured caste member is kept satisfied in his or her place, through both biological and social conditioning. Brainwashing is a normal part of childhood, as are practices such as erotic play (p. 26) and visits to the hospital death room which desensitise individuals from affective living. They are, in their own way, a form of anaesthesia. Affect signals terror in this sanitized world – one of

²⁹⁹ Mark Blake, *Comfortably Numb: The Inside Story of Pink Floyd* (Cambridge MA: De Capo Press, 2008), p. 253.

³⁰⁰<http://web.archive.org/web/20090429063944/http://rollingstone.com/news/story/6596159/comfort ably_numb> [accessed 5th July 2014].

³⁰¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2007), p. 5.

Brave New World's catchphrases states 'when the individual feels, the community reels' (p. 81). The idea of home comfort is obsolete, the very idea of home evoking acute disgust, where home is described as 'an understerilized prison,' riddled with 'darkness, disease and smells.' Home is no longer required as a safe haven from the chaos of the outside, as Huxley has abolished chaos itself in a world where there is no sickness, disease or discomfort. When sensory life threatens to disrupt the system, the inhabitants pop a pill: soma. Huxley says of his fictional drug:

Soma was not only a vision producing tranquilizer, it was also (and no doubt impossibly) a stimulant of mind and body, a creator of active euphoria as of the negative happiness that follows the release from anxiety and tension.³⁰²

Although Huxley finds the idea of a single substance used at once as tranquilizer and stimulant 'no doubt impossible,' Soma is arguably very closely related to the consumption of many substances common to modernity such as alcohol, coffee, and even aspirin. Although more interested personally in the effects of LSD, which are seen in Soma's hallucinogenic qualities, Huxley's invention functions as a total anaesthetic, something like a combination of an analgesic and antidepressant. The eradication of discomfort in *Brave New World* gives a picture of the world where reaching a utopian body free from pain is possible. But is also demonstrates that when utopia ceases to be a process and becomes a final form, is it transformed into dystopia. In realising a utopian state of comfort and happiness, comfort becomes meaningless, as there is no space of affect between the discomforts of everyday experience and image of a utopian body. A critique of the situation is voiced by the savage, who is discovered on an island and introduced into the society of the *Brave New World*. The savage confronts Mustapha Mond, the controller, criticising him for 'getting rid of everything unpleasant' (p. 186):

'But I like the inconveniences.'

'We don't', said the controller. 'We prefer to do things comfortably.' 'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.'

³⁰² Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), p. 104.

'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow, the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'

There was a long silence.

'I claim them all.' Said the savage at last (p. 187).

In the differing conceptions of the utopian body, from Foucault's to Bauman's to Bloch's, we have seen that a utopian body, in the case of anaesthesia, remains a noplace, an unattainable, impossible state. If such a state was achieved, utopia as in the case of Huxley's *Brave New World*, is transformed into dystopia, where both comfort and discomfort are rendered meaningless. It would seem that for comfort to be both meaningful in terms of the concept of utopia– whether in the case of Bauman's late capitalist hunter, or in the case of Bloch's utopian hope, it must appear as a possible future state, marking a transformation of current states of discomfort. Comfort and discomfort therefore interact in a dialectical relationship, where comfort is defined by its negative, discomfort.

The question remains whether the anaesthetic world does really mark a transformation from the pre-anaesthetic world in terms of the idea of comfort. Morris's work already suggests otherwise: killing pain remains utopian because the discontents of humanity can never be cured by popping pills. As Foucault noted, the utopia of an incorporeal body is one of the oldest utopian dreams, embedded in the 'myth' of the soul, which resides in the body but is also immune to its materiality in its mobility and ability to maintain its purity.³⁰³ The entrenchment of utopian images in the Christian tradition did not go unnoticed by Ernst Bloch. Hope in the name of salvation is what protects the Christian subject from the void: 'Jesus Christ. What an immense and wonderful phantasmagoria against entropy.'³⁰⁴ Whereas Bloch's utopian materiality may mark a departure from dreams of an incorporeal body associated with salvation of the soul, the structure of hope on which the utopian impulse is predicated shares much with the Christian tradition and religious utopias.

³⁰³ Foucault, 1966, p. 230.

³⁰⁴ Bloch, cited in Thompson, 2013, p. 87.

The connection between the Christian tradition and late modern culture can tell us something about the nature of anaesthesia. Although Morris refers to the time period before the second half of the nineteenth century as preanaesthetic, that is not to say that anaesthetic processes were absent from experience before this time period. The role of anaesthesia in the Christian tradition forms an important component of Nietzsche's critique on culture and seemingly opposite categories, as the good and the bad in The Genealogy of Morality. This text and its implications are discussed in more depth in relation to the theme of the ascetic ideal in the following chapter. However, important to note here is the figure of the ascetic priest who is involved in numbing his subjects through the use of pain, which, in turn, causes the subject to thirst for more pain in the quest to distract him from his everyday pains and discontents. This, for Nietzsche, is no real cure, maintaining the conditions that continue to produce a particular construction of the Christian subject.³⁰⁵ This structure of anaesthesia defines comfort as truly utopian in that it only exists in another world, and can only be reached through salvation, in the afterlife, in becoming incorporeal. The complexity of anaesthesia in modernity that we see in Buck-Morss's reading of Walter Benjamin could thus be read as relating to a longer tradition; the shocks of modernity replacing the ascetic priest in providing numbress through pain.

During modernity, the Christian tradition of renouncing the flesh and transcending the limitations of the body are not in the name of eternal life but in the name of a utopian body in the form of eternal labour power and beauty. Yet, this final example of a late modern utopian body from David B. Morris's work demonstrates the persistence older forms of anaesthesia in our current age. In a chapter titled 'Postmodern Pain,' Morris writes of the postmodern utopian body in relation to the example of a body builder. Morris states that the 'insistently private and secular postmodern utopias reflect a belief that the only valid remaining space of perfection lies, ready-at-hand, in our own individual flesh: a paradise of curves and muscle.'³⁰⁶ This is what detaches it from older versions of utopia, which feature social and spiritual goals. Bodybuilding relies on proportions inherited from Greek

³⁰⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 101-5.

³⁰⁶ David B. Morris, 'Postmodern Pain', in *Heterotopia: Postmodern Utopia and the Body Politic*, ed. Tobin Seibers (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 150-173, p. 152.

sculpture. It is not solely about building strength, but about creating an aesthetic that depends on symmetry inherited from ancient Greek proportions, whereby the neck, calves and arms should be the exact same size (p. 160). However, what sets it apart from the original meaning of these proportions is the emphasis on a self-created, individual form:

The individual, malleable, postmodern flesh constitutes in every sense a new body. It dispenses with every reference to shared civic and moral virtues, thereby making a decisive break with the body as depicted in ancient Greek art (p.152).

Morris illustrates his notion of postmodern pain with the story of Sam Fussell, the son of two Ivy League Professors, who was terrified of being alone in New York. Taking inspiration from his hero Arnold Schwarzenegger, Fussell turns to body building as a form of comfort through self-fashioning of his body. Morris observes the level of pain experienced by Fussell and his fellow body builders, how the excessive working out puts the muscles through extreme stress in this punishing regime. Body building, Morris observes, is about creating a semblance of well-being, looking great whilst feeling like shit. However, although the process induces pain, it acts as a 'portable anaesthesia,' in Fussell's terms, 'a place in which I wouldn't have to react or feel' (p. 162). Morris's postmodern utopian body is thus an example of how pain itself is used as an anaesthetic to mask other symptoms of everyday life such as fear, loneliness and depression. In our age of chemical assaults on pain, the use of anaesthesia in Fussell's case does come from chemicals that we associate with pain-killing drugs, reminding us that the anaesthetic goes beyond chemical assaults on pain and that anaesthetic processes are not confined to the modern and latemodern.

Utopia, as Morris writes, is 'deeply historical' – but whether conceived of as a state or a process in terms of comfort will always posit comfort in the negative, as paradoxically possible yet impossible and unattainable. Anaesthesia, also with a history of its own, can be seen as a utopian concept. In an age defined by endless possibilities of comfort we remain as much as ever defined by our discomforts, as being free from pain remains an impossible ideal. Although, as we have encountered through the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Ernst Bloch, the idea of utopia can be conceived of as a process rather than a form, utopian thinking has continued to form

an integral part of subjectivity. The death of God, in Nietzsche's terms, and our anaesthetic age, did not, as Nietzsche observed, lead to a new mode of subjectivity. Although there have no doubt been historical shifts in both anaesthesia and utopia and the belief systems surrounding them, each example discussed in this chapter has led to, either in Bloch's Hegelian terms or Buck Morss's Freudian terms, a dialectical understanding of comfort. Discomfort is defined as the 'not' of comfort, and comfort defined negatively in relation to discomfort. Here it becomes apparent that viewing utopia as an open system does not necessarily change this dialectical relationship. How, then, can we overcome this? Is utopia a useful concept in which to continue defining comfort as a process of becoming and active event of difference as developed so far?

A closer look at the differences in the construction of subjectivity in Bloch and Deleuze may help in answering some of these questions. In their paper 'Virtuality and Ernst Bloch: Hope and Subjectivity,' Darren Ellis and Ian Tucker draw on the affective quality of hope in Bloch and use this to relate Bloch's theory of the 'unfinished subject' to a Deleuzian process of becoming. Although, as I have argued, hope is an affective state, the idea of affect alone is not enough to draw such strong parallels between the theories. Neither is the fact that both Bloch and Deleuze critique the Freudian notion of desire. Ruth Levitas argues that Bloch's Not-Yet-Conscious is not a purely psychoanalytical concept due to the Not-Yet-Become, a belief that the material world is not finished. It is 'in a constant state of process, but a process whose direction and outcome is not predetermined, there are always many possible futures.'³⁰⁷ The unfinished materiality of the world also corresponds to Bloch's view of the subject, which, as Ellis and Tucker state

[...] is regarded as an unfinished mode of being, much more related to verbs than any particular noun. It is a constant state of striving to know the self as the completion of its being lies in the future, its identity is hidden: the *homo absconditus*. Subjectivity is seen to build around what he calls the 'Not' that includes hunger and striving.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Levitas, 1990, p. 87.

³⁰⁸ Ellis and Tucker, 2011, p. 440.

Although noting that the genesis of subjectivity is a process for both philosophers, Ellis and Tucker unknowingly hint at an important difference here: although Bloch is critical of Freudian Psychoanalysis, subjectivity for him is founded on the 'not,' or the negative. Here, they fail to pick up a fundamental difference between the two thinkers: in broad terms, Bloch is faithful to the Hegelian dialectic in the construction of the subject, where subjectivity is founded on the negation of being. Deleuze, however, heavily influenced by Nietzsche (explored in the following chapter) was committed to overcoming this tradition. Neither becoming, nor desire, are founded upon the negative or lack for Deleuze. In addition, there are marked differences in the notions of possibility referred to in Bloch and the virtual in Deleuze's work. As Elizabeth Grosz states, 'Like Bergson, Deleuze devoted a career to the analysis and intuition of becoming through the creation of an ontology that privileges temporal movement over substance and self-identity.³⁰⁹ In Bergson, the possible is part of the real, but falsely, we say the possible has been realized in the real. Deleuze, to overcome this problem, rejects the possible in favour of the virtual, which always exists in the real. Life, for Deleuze, is always singular and indefinite: a *life*. He writes

A life contains only virtuals. It is made up of virtualities, events, singularities. What we call virtual is not something that lacks reality but something that is engaged in a process of actualisation following the plane that gives it its particular reality.³¹⁰

The virtual is then actualised, rather than realised, but lacks nothing. Because the virtual already exists in the real, no final identity is posited in it. Becoming is therefore always a process, one with neither beginning nor end. For Bloch however, and in the idea of utopia more generally, the idea of a possible future exists. Utopia remains directed towards an outcome: it is historical and intentional, whereas becoming is not. Could utopia, then, be seen as 'evolution – not a place but a process

³⁰⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming', *Parallax* 11.2 (2005), 4-13, (p.12).

³¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 25-33, p. 31.

of becoming³¹¹ in Deleuzian terms? In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze discusses the idea of utopia, and characterises Greek philosophy as utopian, in the sense that philosophy takes criticism of its own epoch to its highest point. It is therefore concerned with moving away from the present in an act of deterritorialisation, but at the same time is connected to the present. This seems to mirror Bloch's discussion of the 'Here and Now' existing in utopia. Deleuze directly, albeit briefly, draws on Bloch's two kinds of utopias 'authoritarian utopias or utopias of transcendence,' [his reading of Bloch's abstract utopias] and immanent, revolutionary utopias, libertarian utopias [his interpretation of Bloch's concrete utopias].³¹² However, eventually he concludes that utopia overall is not a useful way in which to look at philosophy, stating

Utopia is not a good concept because even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an ideal or motivation. But becoming is the concept itself. It is born in history and falls back into it, but is not of it. In itself it has neither beginning nor end bit only a milieu. It is thus more geographical than historical (p. 110).

This idea tells us something more central about Deleuze's body of thought as a whole and his concept of becoming which is so central to his work. Deleuze's thought, and his work with Guattari moves beyond the Marxist tradition of thinking of revolution as a historical rupture, a clear break with the past. It is instead, in the words of Guattari, 'something by nature of a process, a change that makes it impossible to go back to the same point...a repetition that changes something, a repetition that brings about the irreversible.'³¹³ Thus in the idea of revolution, the virtual is more important for Guattari than the possible. Can the utopian express the virtual? According to Roland Bogue '...utopias are the antithesis of becoming, process and movement toward a future that is genuinely new and thus inherently

³¹¹ Jennifer Rogers 'Fulfilment as a Function of Time, or The Ambiguous Process of Utopia,' in *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. le Guin's The Dispossessed*, ed. Laurence Davies and Peter G. Stillman (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 181.

³¹² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*? trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso: 1994), p.100.

³¹³ Félix Guattari, Molecular Revolution in Brazil, ed. Sue Rolnik, trans. Karel Clapshow and Brian Holmes (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008), p. 258, cited in Thomas Nail, Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 1.

unpredictable, defiant of any mapping. Motivation cannot be external to the process of becoming, and becoming cannot be goal-directed.³¹⁴ Thus, utopia is not fully compatible with becoming, even when utopia is posited as a process. It would then follow that a utopian body would therefore not be an intensive Deleuzian body of becoming.

In the effort to overcome such historical ideals or motivations, Deleuze favours the term *Erewhon* over the idea of utopia. He borrows the term from Samuel Butler's 1872 novel. Erewhon: Or Over the Range. Neither utopia nor dystopia. Erewhon offers a critique of certain aspects of Victorian society such as the asylum and religion. The title, according to Butler, is an anagram of 'nowhere,' a reference to the no-place of utopia. Yet, as Deleuze writes, taking the anagram a step further. 'Erewhon. the word used by Samuel Butler, refers not only to no-where but also a The term also appears in the preface to Deleuze's earlier work, now-here.³¹⁵ Difference and Repetition (1968), where he explains that his empiricism is not incompatible with the task of creating concepts (which he later returns to as his definition of Philosophy in What is Philosophy?). Here, he writes 'Empiricism is a mysticism and mathematicism of concepts, but precisely one which treats the concept as object of an encounter, as a here-and-now, or rather as an Erewhon from which emerge ever new, differently distributed "heres" and "nows.""³¹⁶ The here and now are thus important factors in Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, where immanence is the encounter itself and past, present and future are irreconcilable. The immanent encounter is a life for Deleuze, composed of the virtual. For Bloch, life is a process of survival predicated on the possible.

Foucault, too, had his reservations about utopia and the utopian body, alluded to even at the end of the radio broadcast. Foucault concludes that in an encounter with another body, the body is not a no-where but a 'here,' where it can feel itself, defined by the touch of another. At this point, the utopian nature of the body is calmed.³¹⁷ For Foucault, the opposite of utopia is not dystopia, but it is neither, as he

³¹⁴ Roland Bogue, 'Deleuze and Guattari and the Future of Politics: Science Fiction, protocols and the People to Come', in *Deleuze Studies* 5, 77-97, (p. 81).

³¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 99.

³¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 2010, p. xix.

³¹⁷ Foucault, 1966, p. 233.

first thought, the body's corporeal materiality. It is a presence marked by the 'here.' Foucault, hinting at his own S/M practices and experimentation with drugs, used his own experience to explore the limits of the body, challenging what it could feel and become. S/M was 'the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure' for Foucault -"to invent oneself" - to make a new "self" appear and also "to make of one's body a place for the production of extraordinary polymorphic pleasures" [...].³¹⁸ Foucault was not satisfied with what we might call comforts - 'those middle range pleasures that make up everyday life.'³¹⁹ A glass of fine wine was not enjoyable enough for him. Rather, 'A pleasure must be something incredibly intense' (p.13). Although admitting that pleasure could come in the form of a club sandwich, a coke and an ice cream (p. 12), Foucault admitted that he was incapable of arranging his life around middle range pleasures. He was instead in search of an intense pleasure which he saw as being close to death. Although an active, affective comfort could not be associated with such total expenditure or death, characters pointing towards death such as the drug addict and anorexic are observed in relation to Deleuze's body without organs, an idea related to his asymmetrical synthesis based on open systems, encountered in the previous chapter. Drug addicts exist in the in-between space or milieu between life and death, but do not quite achieve the body without organs. As we will see in the following chapter, the body without organs was influenced heavily by Nietzsche, who sought to overcome dualisms in his work. Foucault's S/M activities, according to biographer James Miller, also harbour traces of Nietzsche's influence in Foucault's lived experience, which challenges the pleasure/pain dualism.³²⁰ To posit comfort in the here and now rather than predicate it in utopian hope or in memory means to acknowledge that comfort and discomfort are not necessarily separable, either spatially or temporally from each other. Only then can we start to define comfort in an immanent sense, as an event in itself rather than negatively in relation to discomfort.

³¹⁸ Michel Foucault, cited in James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 263, p. 269.

³¹⁹ Michel Foucault, cited in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.) *Michel Foucault: Politics. Philosophy, Culture, Interviews and Other Writings*, trans. Alan Sheridan et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 13.

³²⁰ Miller, 1993, p. 219.

4. Comfort Food: Asceticism and the Search for Well-being through Ill-being

Over-the-counter painkillers may have altered our expectations of comfort and changed the landscape of pain, but have not ultimately led to a different understanding of comfort as it continues to be defined in opposition to discomfort. Whereas the previous chapters have sought to challenge dualisms including nature/culture and inside/outside, this chapter seeks to challenge the categories of illbeing/well-being, in order to define comfort as a process in its own right, rather than negatively against discomfort. It traces how Deleuze's concept of becoming and his asymmetrical synthesis have been applied to his theories of bodies via his reading of Nietzsche. It is a formation of bodies that provides an alternative to a phenomenological approach, that brings into question fixed identity where a continuous self is opposed to the non-self, and where an 'I' and a self are identical. I turn to Nietzsche and Deleuze to propose that a fortuitous body composed of flows and intensities can challenge seeing ill-being and well-being, and therefore discomfort and comfort as diametrically opposed events. Nietzsche died in 1900, a year after the first synthesis of aspirin, and therefore did not live to see its full effects. Yet, arguably, his work is ever more poignant in a rethinking of bodies and comfort in the 'post-aspirin' age of today, pointing to a new dialectic and defying comfort as an act of compensation.

To start this line of enquiry I take food as a 'material' of comfort, developing themes briefly touched on in the previous chapter. Food is one of many examples that show us that the organism has to go outside itself for survival, assimilating the outside with the inside to reduce the gradient or intensity of hunger. Yet our relationship to food extends far beyond mere survival, intertwined with politics, status and ritual. In an example to demonstrate that food (French cuisine in particular) is more than a commodity, Andrew Hussey introduces his programme *France on a Plate* with late French president Francois Mitterrand's final supper before his death in 1995. Foreign to our Anglo-Saxon fast food sensibilities, the highlight of the banquet was the consumption of the ortolan, an 'illegal delicacy and protected species' of songbird. After 'being drowned in burning Armagnac' and being baked, the birds were consumed, bones and all, by Mitterrand and his guests

whilst veiled in linen, 'partially to keep in the aroma of their treat and partially to hide their appalling act from God.³²¹ Whilst this ostentatious example is distant from the rituals surrounding the average mealtime, the ritualistic elements of eating can also be expressed in the everyday. One such example is the idea of 'comfort food,' where particular food items are chosen with the intention of creating certain affective states. According to Gloria Hander Lyons, the term 'comfort food' was added to the Merriam Webster Dictionary in the early 1970s, defined as 'food prepared in a traditional style having a usually nostalgic or sentimental appeal.³²² In addition, it is usually easy and cheap to prepare, and as adults, we consume it to evoke pleasant childhood memories or love and joy at stressful times. We are told that comfort food is usually hearty, or stodgy, composed largely of carbohydrates and/or sugar. However, comfort and food share a complex relationship. In their book Consuming Passions: Food in the Age of Anxiety. Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace observe that the consumption of food, especially in the Western world, is characterised generally by discomfort rather than comfort. Anxiety, unlike its premodern form, which was characterised by worry over 'God's wrath in the form of fire and plague,³²³ is now caused by innercity decay, the limitlessness of technology, the economy and the environment. In short, we live in the age of anxiety, exemplified in terms of food by a series of scares from BSE, salmonella, and more recently, horse meat as well as the unknown effects of genetically modified produce. Paradoxically, cooking is sold to us as a stress-relieving leisure activity: 'Chop a few porcini mushrooms, mix your pesto into your pasta and you can forget about the anxiety of modern living in the age-old traditional process of cooking' (p. 3). In addition, Scott Wilson has argued that cookery programmes project the family meal as simulacra, and are 'an object of nostalgia for a domestic idyll that never existed,³²⁴ exposing a central theme in the concept of nostalgia itself. Svetlana Boym writes 'The sheer overabundance of nostalgic artefacts marketed by the

³²¹ France on a Plate, (UK: BBC 4, 16th March 2010) [TV broadcast].

³²² Gloria Hander Lyons, A Taste of Memories: Comforting Foods from our Past (Blue Sage Press, 2009), p. 1.

³²³ Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace (eds). Consuming Passions: Food in the Age of Anxiety (Manchester: Mandolin, 1998), p.1.

³²⁴ Scott Wilson, *The Order of Joy: Beyond the Cultural Politics of Enjoyment* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), pp. 169-70.

entertainment industry, most of them sweet ready-mades, reflects a fear of untameable longing and noncommodified time.³²⁵ According to Susan Stewart, nostalgia 'is always ideological: the past it seeks had never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, the past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.³²⁶ Again, through the idea of nostalgia, comfort in terms of food has been aligned with dominant ideas in psychoanalysis: lack and desire. This chapter, however, seeks to interrogate this meaning of comfort food in broader terms, by looking at the role of food and asceticism in the Judeo-Christian tradition and its role in well-being and ill-being. In particular, I turn my attention to the role it has played in the writings of three philosophers who have sought to remake well-being through ill-being: Havi Carel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze. In his 2004 book, *A Philosophy of Discomfort*, Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau asks,

Could we not use discomfort deliberately or to an advantage that might be pleasurable at a remove? Perhaps we could even desire discomfort (for ourselves or for others on whom we impose it) if we knew how to forge a path through it to well-being. Maybe we could develop a new kind of hedonism out of it.³²⁷

This is the path already taken by Havi Carel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze. Contemporary philosopher Havi Carel takes a phenomenological perspective to find well-being within ill-being. Over a century ago, Friedrich Nietzsche was grappling with a similar predicament. It was however, Pierre Klossowski, writing in the 1960's, who fully theorised Nietzsche's writings in terms of his state of health. Deleuze, drawing on Nietzsche's work and acknowledging his sickly state, conceptualised the body in terms of active and reactive forces. He later draws on Klossowski, developing the concept of the body without organs in his writings with Félix Guattari. There is evidence to suggest that Deleuze was also influenced by his own ailments in his writing on the body. Desiring, or least enduring discomfort in the search for well-being has its history in Judeo-Christian morality. In his search for well-being, Nietzsche questions the ascetic ideal of the

³²⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xvii.

³²⁶ Susan Stewart, On Longing (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993), p. 23.

³²⁷ Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau, *A philosophy of Discomfort*, trans. Vivian Sky Rehberg (London: Reaktion, 2012), p. 14.

Christian tradition, in particular Christianity's need to attribute meaning to suffering. However, his own practices relating to diet and exercise could be described as ascetic. Ascetic practices, with a particular focus on diet, have also played an important role in the writings of Havi Carel and Gilles Deleuze, requiring us to assign a greater cultural importance to relationship between comfort and food. In exploring the work of these three philosophers, this chapter continues to challenge the bounded body, this time to argue that comfort and discomfort are not dichotomous opposites.

The Cry of the Flesh: Havi Carel and the Habitual Body

Havi Carel was a self-confessed health freak. In her early thirties she had secured her dream job, as Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of the West of England. She admits that healthy living practices were of prime importance to her: she ate little fat, lifted weights, and confessed to spending forty-five minutes per day on the Stairmaster.³²⁸ She considered herself fit and healthy. However, on a walking holiday with friends she became extremely short of breath during an uphill trek, and asked herself, 'how could I be so unfit? Why isn't my body responding well to all the exercise?' (p. 19). The shortness of breath continued, and Carel thought she was developing asthma. But her health continued to deteriorate, and during a trip home to Israel, her father took her to see a lung specialist. The diagnosis was far worse: lymphangioleiomyomatosis (LAM), a chronic lung condition, and the prognosis a mere ten years (p.4). Carel's lungs, at the age of thirty-five, resembled those of a sixty-five year old smoker.

In a struggle to deal with her new body, now defined by degeneration and decline, Carel turned to philosophy – specifically the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. The basis of her philosophical project is to find a wellness that can exist within illness, using herself as a case study in her book *Illness: the Cry of the Flesh*. Her approach rejects the naturalist account of illness – one which views illness as purely 'biological dysfunction,'³²⁹ and also criticises a normative approach, which she accuses the medical profession of adhering to. A normative approach

³²⁸ Havi Carel, Illness: The Cry of the Flesh (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), p. 19.

³²⁹ Carel, 2008, p. 8.

focuses on 'the ways in which illness may socially handicap the ill person' (p. 12), implying that the main way in which illness is defined is by rendering the ill person as excluded from 'normal' modes of living. Her phenomenological view instead focuses on the lived experience of the ill person and how illness relates to the physical, psychological and social (p. 12). Carel's work can be understood as a way to overcome well-being and ill-being as diametrically opposed states of being.

Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty, Carel views her illness in terms of a rupturing of the habitual body, through the refusal of the body to incorporate illness into its 'repertoire' or schema. The term Körperschema ['body image' or 'body schema'l was coined by Paul Schilder (1886-1940), a student of Sigmund Freud, in 1935. Schilder defined the body image or schema not as a representation of the body but as a 'self-appearance of the body,'³³⁰ implying a dialectical relationship between self and body. He argued that body image was not static, but dynamic and plastic: we are always building up new 'postural models' of ourselves (p. 12). Schilder claimed that body image could be altered by many things, including dance and expressive movement, clothing, imagination, and illnesses such as hysteria and neurasthenia, as well as by hypnosis in the case of phantom limb sufferers. This idea has proved especially important in phenomenological studies of the body such as Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception (1945). Illness sees a body torn away from the self, haunting a conception of subjectivity formed in wellness. Central to Carel's phenomenological understanding of the body is Merleau-Ponty's theory that the body is both subject and object at once.³³¹ The idea of auto-affection, or the ability to both inhabit the body and experience it as external object, is central to Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodied consciousness. This involves a 'synthesis of one's own body' (p. 171), where these two 'ambiguous' bodies are unified in the subject. The body is therefore a creation, a 'work of art' as Merleau-Ponty phrases it. Essential to this process of synthesis is habit. Habit, in Merleau-Ponty's examples, is a form of learning, (p. 166). It is the ability to assimilate objects into the body so that they form part of the body schema. This gives meaning and significance to objects, including the objective body, which is 'constituted' (p. 169). Merleau-Ponty further

³³⁰ Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche* (New York: International Universities Press Inc., 1950), p. 11.

³³¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 106.

states 'The body is our general medium for having a world (p. 169). In his discussion of body image, Merleau-Ponty focuses his detailed analysis on the 'dysfunctional' body of his patient, Schneider, a soldier recovering from injuries endured during World War I. Thousands like him would have to re-learn their bodies after injury, which led Merleau-Ponty to the conclusion that the body schema could be 'recast' by the acquisition of new habits (p. 177).

Carel uses this example of the habitual, synthetic body to explain illness in phenomenological terms, stating that the healthy body is the synthesised body, where there is harmony between the body as subject, or the lived body and the body as object, or the biological body. She states, 'the healthy body is transparent, taken for granted,'³³² whereas we notice an ill body, due to the discord between the body as subject and the body as object. This view specifically relates to her own illness, which is chronic rather than transient, and developed during adulthood. It ruptured an already formed, habitual body, which in turn shattered the perception of her world. She states, 'The change in illness is not local but global, not external but strikes at the heart of subjectivity' (p. 29). The shrinking of the perceptual world, as described by Merleau-Ponty, became a lived-experience for Carel, imposing new boundaries and limits on all aspects of being. Indeed, the social and psychological aspects to her suffering holds true to this view. Carel is forced to carry round a conspicuous oxygen cylinder on her back. She describes how people she believed to be good friends simply could not deal with the illness, and instead of getting in touch to ask how she was doing, cut their ties. Other situations included confrontation by 'Horrible Men,' an archetype constructed by Carel to signify a typical response to her condition, such as the husband of a friend who, at a dinner party, forced her to explain why she did not, or was not planning on having children. It is these uncomfortable, painful encounters that exemplify illness as a total shattering of lived experience.

Carel focuses of the rupture between the biological body and the lived body to define the betrayal by and increasing alienation from her body. The refusal of illness as part of our identity is multi-faceted. Stan Van Hooft states that 'disease is 'Other', it is part of that which outside the subject and defines our being as difference from

³³² Carel, 2008, p. 26.

it.'³³³ This is echoed in the work of Susan Sontag who Carel refers to. In the opening passage of her essay *Illness as Metaphor*, Sontag declares,

Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick.³³⁴

Presented as dichotomous opposites, health and sickness also allude to a splitting of the subject: a healthy self and a sick self. Disease and illness, as Sontag discusses, have been and are surrounded by myth which is exemplified by our use of language. She states that to utter the specific names of diseases, in particular cancer, is a taboo in itself, so much so that the medical practice has needed to think of strategies to protect patients from being exposed to detrimental language (p. 8). She states, 'cancer patients are lied to, not just because the disease is (or is thought to be) a death sentence, but because it is felt to be obscene – in the original meaning of that word - ill-omened, abominable, repugnant to the senses' (p. 9). This feeling of disgust goes some way to explain why we reject disease as part of our identity. Additionally in Sontag's work we see the tendency to believe that disease is an invasion, coming from outside of the body. This is especially true in the case of cancer, which takes up unwanted residency in any organ of the body. Disease (quite literally dis-ease) as Carel mentions, is a political as well as a pathological term, reminding us of comfort's relationship to social control and regulation. To disease is 'to deprive of ease, make uneasy, to put to discomfort or inconvenience,' 'an unhealthy or disordered state.³³⁵ Disease therefore marks an exclusion from the self and the social, as Drew Leder notes, constricting the spatial and temporal,³³⁶ typified by 'complex patterns of dysfuntion'. He further states:

In disease, one is *dis*-abled. Abilities that were previously at one's command and rightfully belonging to the habitual body have now been lost. This could be termed the phenomenon of the "I no longer can" (p. 81).

³³³ Stan van Hooft, 'Disease and Subjectivity', in James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder (eds). *What is Disease*? (Totowa: Humana, 1997), pp. 287-324, p. 314.

³³⁴ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), p. 3.

³³⁵ OED, IV, 764.

³³⁶ Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 75.

Leder, also taking a phenomenological perspective, argues that the body disappears in Western thought which, dominated by Cartesian dualism is defined by an absence. However, in illness the body occupies a paradoxical position, at once becoming an object of consciousness, very much present. In response to this paradox, Leder characterises the diseased body as 'dys-appearing,' dys being an archaic spelling of the prefix dis, its Greek etymology referring to 'being apart, away, asunder.'³³⁷ The ill body is therefore both absent and present, torn from 'normal' body image and subjectivity.

In addition, the overarching themes of pain and illness as punishment are deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, which has historically sought to ascribe meaning to human suffering. It is thus interesting to note Carel's initial reaction to her illness, where her body fails to corroborate her healthy lifestyle. Carel writes,

I was good. I ate a healthy diet. I exercised. I didn't smoke or drink. I took care of myself. When I compared myself with friends, many of whom had been heavy smokers for over twenty years, I felt I deserved to have the lives they have, just by chance, more than they do.³³⁸

The relationship between food, exercise and subjectivity is striking here. As Deborah Lupton states, 'Food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which is in itself inextricably linked with subjectivity.'³³⁹ Due to the incorporation of food into the body, writes Ken Alba, 'What we eat literally become us, and we become it. Logically, therefore, food is among the most powerful expressions of identity.'³⁴⁰ Both Lupton and Alba note that the control and restriction of one's diet is the reflection of an effort to control not only one's body but other aspects of one's life, regimen expressing an outlook or set of beliefs. In addition, Lupton adds, foods are codified, for example, good or bad, healthy or non-healthy, a comfort or punishment,

³³⁷ Leder, 1990, p. 87.

³³⁸ Carel, 2008, p. 31.

³³⁹ Deborah Lupton, 'Food and Emotion', in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005) pp. 317-324, p, 317.

³⁴⁰ Ken Alba, 'Historical Background to Food and Christianity', in *Food and Faith in Christian Culture*, ed. Ken Alba and Trudy Eden (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 7-20, p. 7.

sin or virtue (p. 318). The teaming of the healthy and the good can be seen as a modern manifestation of historical (albeit complex) relationships between the consumption of and abstinence from food in the Christian tradition. In the same way that Max Weber observed the protestant ethic in industrial capitalism. Alba states, 'Counter to what one might expect, post-reformation-era attitudes do not shift away from food, they merely redirect attention to other aspects of consumption: toward commensality, body image, the nature of self-restraint and control' (p. 9). A slim body and the ability to control diet in contemporary times can be read as the manifestation of the ascetic ideal (p. 17). As Elaine Scarry notes, the place occupied by suffering in the Christian tradition, as a penalty for sin has not simply disappeared with the advent of the medicalization of pain in the nineteenth century.³⁴¹ However, in our secular times we also have the view that disease is an 'accident.' like an earthquake or a sinking ship. This view is linked to the body as machine of isolated parts which can malfunction in isolation.³⁴² Carel's narrative communicates the overlaying of these views; in one sense, her diet and exercise regime symbolises the moral good, and in another, her disease cannot be explained by her lifestyle and is defined as accident, as suddenly, the kind of practices that Carel had believed in ceased to be meaningful:

People who recommended detox diets and acupuncture made me shake with rage. My lungs were being destroyed by a complex, barely understood cystic process and they are telling me to eat fruit.³⁴³

In her quest to find well-being in ill-being, Carel focuses on creating a new, habitual body. Whilst she challenges illness and health as diametrically opposed states of being, the dialectic between the two bodies, the lived and biological remains in her construction of well-being. Identity is thus posited as habitual, and whilst relying on malleability to an extent, the body continues to mediate between the two. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to thinking the body beyond image, representation and mediation through the work of Nietzsche, Klossowski and

³⁴¹ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 18.

³⁴² Van Hooft, p. 315

³⁴³ Carel, 2008, p. 62.

Deleuze, who offer us an alternative to the phenomenological body and therefore a different means of finding well-being within ill-being.

Whispers of the Flesh: Klossowski's Nietzsche and the Fortuitous Body

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) drew on his personal suffering, as well as the idea of suffering more generally, to construct his philosophy. He questioned Christianity's attribution of suffering to morality through the ascetic ideal. This led him, according to Pierre Klossowski, to ascertain a non-dialectic interpretation of subjectivity rooted in the body. Nietzsche went as far to attribute the brilliance of his mind and clarity of his thought to his frequent bouts of illness. The onset of his headaches and eye troubles were thought to start during his time at high school [*Domgymnasium*] in Naumberg, Thuringia, and he was released from his studies there in 1856, aged 12, due to his poor health.³⁴⁴ If we are to read *Ecce Homo*, written in 1888, two years before Nietzsche's death, as an autobiographical text, the onset of his migraines followed the death of his 'delicate, lovable' father, who dies at the age of thirty-six. By the time Nietzsche himself was thirty-six he had reached his lowest point:

I still lived, but without being able to see three paces in front of me. At that time – it was 1879 - I relinquished my Basel professorship, lived through the summer like a shadow in St Moritz and the following winter, the most sunless of my life, *as* a shadow in Naumburg. This was my minimum: 'The Wanderer and his Shadow'³⁴⁵ came into existence because of it.³⁴⁶

As Gregory Moore notes, Nietzsche wrote of his migraines, eye pains, stomach problems and nervous exhaustion in letters to his friends and family from the 1860s onwards. He spent vast amounts of time visiting doctors in search of a diagnosis and

³⁴⁴ Chronology, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1992), p. xx.

³⁴⁵ The third book of *Human*, All Too Human.

³⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 8.

a cure, turning to one after another in despair.³⁴⁷ Moore asks how conceptions of sickness and health during Nietzsche's lifetime contributed to his perception of himself and his writing. Nietzsche was known to own many medical books, for example, C.F. Kunze's Kompendium der praktischen Medizin [Compendium of Practical medicine] (1881), a textbook aimed at medical students and general practitioners, and popular medical bestsellers, such as Das Buch vom gesunden und kranken Menschen [The Book of the Healthy and Sick Person] (1870), by Carl Ernst Bock, a Leipzig professor of anatomy, a best-seller, selling 100,000 copies between 1855 and 1876 (pp. 72-3). He used these books not only to read about medicine, but to practice it, which as Moore observes was characteristic of nineteenth-century practice. Bock's views of the body were typical of the time, and he claimed that well-being was put at risk by new technologies and practices such as sitting in the workplace. He stated, 'every sensible person is a doctor,' the impact of which echoes through Nietzsche's writing: 'But from now own I want to be absolutely my own physician.³⁴⁸ Books such as Bock's advocated the practice of hygiene, a system of self-care that included 'all the habits that govern the well-being of the body,' such as diet, exercise, sleep and sexual practices.³⁴⁹ We see a particular emphasis on diet and the stomach in Nietzsche's writing. In Ecce Homo, he criticises the German diet. Soup before a meal, 'meat cooked to shreds, greasy and floury vegetables; the degeneration of puddings to paperweights' are all to his distaste,³⁵⁰ although he remarks that large meals are easier to digest than small ones (p. 23). When it came to beverages he was every bit as discerning. Coffee made him 'gloomy', tea was only to be taken in the morning, but it had to be strong; if it was too weak in the slightest the entire day would be thrown off-course. Alcohol was even more of a problem, 'a glass of wine or beer a day is quite enough to make life for me a "Vale of Tears" (p. 23). How ironic that Dionysus, as well as representing all that was outside of human reason, was also the God of wine. Water was Nietzsche's drink of choice, especially

³⁴⁷ Gregory Moore, 'Nietzsche, medicine and Meteorology' in *Nietzsche and Science*, ed. Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 71-90, (p. 71).

³⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Breifwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, III/I, 9 July 1881, cited in Moore, 2004, p. 73.

³⁴⁹ Moore, 2004, p. 72.

³⁵⁰ Nietzsche, 1992, p. 22.
when it came from a fountain, and he mentions examples from the destinations he visited – Turin, Nice and Sils-Maria. Many fountains and natural springs were believed to have healing properties and were frequented by the sick in a period of growing health tourism. These destinations are also telling of the late nineteenth century and its 'medical climatology,' where rest breaks in warm, dry climates were commonly recommended for headaches and other common complaints.³⁵¹ This was Nietzsche's reason for travelling to Turin where he suffered his final collapse in 1889 before requiring the care of his mother and sister throughout the final eleven years of his life.

In addition to this acquired knowledge of hygiene and self-medication, Moore argues that Nietzsche would also have been aware of the conception of the body as thermodynamic machine (see chapter 2). Aligned with this conception of the body was the idea of equilibrium – not strictly thermodynamic, but a balance between rest and exertion, a quest for moderation over excess, which would facilitate maintaining stable quantities of vital Kraft. According to Moore, Nietzsche's obsession with his digestive system stems from this idea, the stomach initiating the circulation of the system as a whole. His stomach doctor, Joseph Wiel, diagnosed him with gastric catarrh, which he thought restricted the blood supply to Nietzsche's brain.³⁵² Nietzsche also suffered from constipation, which according to hygienists of the time, including Bock, was again caused by a lack of vital Kraft. A common opinion of the time was that neurasthenia was caused by the overuse of the nervous system, which fell culprit to the over-stimulation of the mind and the under-use of the body. This is reflected in Nietzsche's insistence on taking long walks rather than sitting all day to write. In Ecce Homo he writes 'Sit as little as possible; credit no thought not born in the open air and while moving freely about [...].³⁵³ Although we see much to suggest that Nietzsche viewed illness and ill-being through the lens of his time, Nietzsche's focus on his own suffering, and the suffering upon which Christianity is founded upon had a profound influence of his work, in particular the notion of the ascetic ideal.

³⁵¹ Jan R. McTavish, *Pain and Profits: The History of the Headache and Its Remedies in America*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 17.

³⁵² Moore, 2004, p. 78.

³⁵³ Nietzsche, 1992, p. 8.

The history of asceticism, food and Christianity is not a straight-forward one. In one sense, the ingestion of food is more closely associated with death and mortality than with life and morality for Norman Wirzba, who notes death's precondition in life. He writes,

Death is eating's steadfast accomplice. It is also each creature's biological end, for no matter how much or how well we eat (for the sake of life's preservation), we cannot erase our mortal condition. Why eat if eating, even vegetarian eating, implicates us in so much death? Why eat if eating is the daily reminder of our own need and mortality?³⁵⁴

Thus, in eating for survival, life's opposite is always implied. Death also makes itself present in relation to food through the sacrifice of animals in Judaism, which became less prominent, argues Ken Alba, as Jewish traditions gave way to Christian ones. Whereas Judaism forbids the eating of certain meats, Christianity advocated that the eating of all meats was in keeping with the religion, which was helped by Paul, who stated that Jesus dying on the cross was himself the sacrifice. Therefore material sacrifice disappeared, yet the Eucharist saw the continuation of the prominent position of food in Christian ritual. Representing the body and blood of Christ, bread and wine serve as a memory of Christ's sacrifice when taken on such occasions. 355 The restriction of food has also manifested itself strongly in the Christian tradition. Fasting for Jesus and his apostles meant total abstinence from food. Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert, and whilst total abstinence may be a step too far for ordinary mortals, the ideal remains (p. 12). Lent, the period of fasting for forty days in the run up to Easter is a tribute to Jesus's fast, but traditionally only meat and dairy products are given up and the fast is broken on Sundays. Today, we commonly see other food and drink items, such as chocolate or alcohol given up. Either way, there is no expectation of total abstinence from food during lent. More generally, Alba observes, Christianity is concerned with the avoidance of gluttony, one of the seven cardinal sins, which can be interpreted in a variety of ways relating to excess: eating too much, too fast, or too extravagantly, for example. Philosophers of the Stoic school as

³⁵⁴ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1-2.

³⁵⁵ Alba, 2011, p. 11.

well as the Platonists believed that the needs of the body should be met but not exceeded in order to maintain virtue, and thus even feasting on special occasions was seen as 'base and brutish' (p. 13). The virtuous subject should therefore avoid luxuries and maintain a 'constant regimen' the whole year round. In fact, asceticism comes from the Greek aketes (monk) and askeo (exercise), and has the general meaning of any disciplined practice on an object.³⁵⁶ Early Christianity also saw the overlapping of Christian morals with humoral medicine, and an 'overly nourished body,' especially one over-fed with meat, was thought to produce an excess of blood, which was linked to the production of sperm (in both sexes) and therefore another of the deadly sins: lust (p. 14). In Technologies of the Self, Foucault argues that the notion of askesis in the Greco-Roman period has a different relationship to the subject to the asceticism of Christianity. In this text, Foucault distinguishes between the history of the beliefs of Christianity and its practices. He is more interested in the latter, which have shaped the subject through practices or 'technologies,' which 'permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so that they transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.³⁵⁷ Foucault states that in the stoic tradition, askesis is not renunciation but a 'progressive consideration of the self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of the truth' (p. 35). However, the asceticism of Christianity is involved with a renunciation of the self and of lived reality, as Christianity is concerned with salvation. The subject must renounce his or herself to access another level of reality. Stemming from the practice of Christianity as a confessional religion, the connection between asceticism and salvation has come to define subjectivity. It is this relationship between salvation and asceticism that Nietzsche sought to challenge.

Nietzsche was aware that that the morality of Christianity was compatible with atheism and stated that atheism is only one of the ascetic ideal's last phases of

³⁵⁶ Bryan S. Turner, 'The Discourse of Diet', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 2001), pp 158-162, p. 161.

³⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton (eds). *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), p. 18.

development. He was well aware that the 'Christian consciousness' had been 'translated and sublimated into scientific consciousness.'358 As Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg state, 'atheism, as a manifestation of the will-to-truth' is not opposed to the ascetic ideal. Rather, the metaphysical need and the ascetic ideal 'may reappear in a secularized form, in a faith in new idols.'³⁵⁹ The ascetic ideal is central for man to understand his discomfort and suffering, and allows him not to denv it, but to will it because he is seeking the answer to the question 'suffering for what?' Whether attributing meaning to suffering allows man to get away from the materiality of the world, from happiness, or death, man would rather be defined by a will to nothingness rather than not to will at all (GM, p.128). For Nietzsche, the 'death of God' therefore does not offer any intrinsic truth or different mode of subjectivity in itself. The ascetic ideal was of central importance to Nietzsche as it sets up the condition on which he challenges ideas that are historically constructed but appear natural or normalised – the seemingly dichotomous relationships between good and evil and suffering and health. Important in the criticism of the ascetic ideal is the figure of the ascetic priest, whose speciality is the alleviation of suffering and consolation. Nietzsche writes 'We have every right to call Christianity in particular a large treasure-trove of the most ingenious means of consolation, so much to refresh, sooth and narcotize is piled up inside it [...].' The ascetic priest offers consolation, combating the 'discomfort of the sufferer' but does not cure 'the actual state of being ill' (GM, p. 101). He cures discomfort by reducing 'the awareness of life to its lowest point' so that all feeling is to be avoided. This process concurs with Foucault's analysis of Christian asceticism, whereby the 'this-worldly' is denied in the attainment of another world. Indeed, Nietzsche refers to this type of comfort as a 'loss of self'; a process of hibernation or hypnosis, a shutting-off from the conditions of the world (p. 103). Nietzsche sees the relevance of this ideal in the time in which he is writing in 'mechanical activity,' where the 'blessing of work' is effective in the alleviation of suffering as it diverts the sufferer away from his pain (p. 105). We can therefore see a connection between comfort as a zero degree of feeling articulated in Freud's constancy model, and the idea of comfort in fatigue in the nineteenth-

³⁵⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 126 (Hereafter referred to as *GM* in the text).

³⁵⁹ Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 'The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault', *Parrhesia*, 2 (2007), 44-65, (p. 48).

century expressed in the Christian tradition. In addition, the ascetic priest can also alleviate suffering by creating an 'excess of suffering' where 'long-drawn-out melancholy' and everyday discomforts are displaced by powerfully affective states to distract the sufferer from his misery. This leads to more suffering in the form of guilt, creating 'bad conscious,' turning cruelty 'back on itself' to keep the sick in their place (pp. 109-110). Both these techniques employed by the ascetic priest on the sufferer relate to the relationship between master and slave. Slavish ressentiment can be redirected to look for the cause of suffering in the self, through sin. Humankind's need to give meaning to suffering is termed by Milchman and Rosenberg as 'metaphysical comfort,' an historical construction which suspends the body and the present moment in their overcoming by eternal life. Nietzsche, by contrast, 'looks towards the day when it [metaphysical comfort] can be superseded by the quest for what he terms "this-worldly comfort" [diesseitigen Trostes].³⁶⁰ They further state that both Foucault and Nietzsche, in their ethic of self-fashioning are responding to the same crisis: the death of God, although Foucault's response comes some eighty years after Nietzsche, and it is the death of man that he responds to. But for Foucault the death of man, or the death of a certain historical constitution of the subject was already at stake in the writings of Nietzsche. We can understand Nietzsche's work, in terms of comfort, as an overcoming of the privileging of spiritual or 'ghostly' comforts over 'worldly' comforts addressed by Thomas More (see introduction), insisting on the corporeal in the formation of the subject whereby God's position as the great physician is transposed onto man.

Pierre Klossowski reads Nietzsche's work as a personal as well as a philosophical overcoming of the relationship between the master and slave, the good and bad, and the healthy and sick. Central to this is the role of the body in the formation of subjectivity and the overcoming of fixed identity. Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1969), a collection of essays which performed a significant role in the Nietzsche revival in France in the 1960s and 1970s, develops Klossowski's own concepts through a reading of Nietzsche whereby Nietzsche is

³⁶⁰ Milchman and Rosenberg, 2007, p. 47. The Phrase *Diesseitigen Trostes* can be translated as *this*worldly comforts or *this-worldly consolations* and is cited as such in the text: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Or: Hellenism and Pessimism*, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 26.

seen to use his 'own sick body as a kind of experimental laboratory.'³⁶¹ In the second chapter, 'The Valetudinary States at the origin of a Semiotic of Impulses,' Klossowski describes the process of Nietzsche's suffering in relation to his writing, stating that, 'It may seem absurd to read Nietzsche's successive texts as so many "migraines" inverted in words.'³⁶² Nietzsche, the valetudinarian, consumed by his sickly constitution, was periodically struck by illness in the 'cerebral organ' (p. 22). These 'furious assaults' of his illness 'would soon throw him back into a period of isolation, which further encouraged his contemplative states and an ever greater abandonment to the tonalities of his soul' (p. 16). During these periods Nietzsche was unable to write or even to re-read his own notes, which he often gave to his friend Peter Gast to decipher. In a letter to Gast, he describes his regimen,

My programme for the summer is complete: three weeks at a moderate altitude (in Weisen), three months in the Engadine, and the last month in taking the real St Moritz drink-cure, the best effect of which is not supposed to be felt before the winter. This working out of a programme was a pleasure for me, but it was not easy! Self-denial in everything (I had no friends, no company; I could read no books; all art was far removed from me; a small bedroom with a bed, the food of an ascetic – which by the way suited me excellently, for I have had no indigestion the whole of the summer) – this self-denial was compete except for one point – I gave myself up to my thoughts – what else could I do!³⁶³

Interestingly here, Nietzsche describes ascetic practices which may initially seem to be contradictory to his philosophy. However, in *The Will to Power*, he writes:

I also want to make asceticism natural again: in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening. A gymnastics of the will; abstinence and fasting of all kinds, in the most spiritual realms too; a casuistry of deeds in regard to the opinions we have regarding our strengths; an experiment with adventures and arbitrary dangers.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Ashley Woodward, 'Klossowski's Nietzsche', in *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence*, ed. Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 81-98, p. 82.

³⁶² Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Althone, 1997), p. 16.

³⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Letter to Peter Gast, Saint-Moritz, 11 September 1879, cited in Smith, 1997, pp. 17-18.

³⁶⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage books, 1968), p. 483. Hereafter referred to as *WP* in the main body of the text.

Keith Ansell-Pearson defines asceticism as 'any practice which places self-denial at the centre of its understanding of life.'³⁶⁵ Nietzsche's problem with the ascetic ideal is the devaluation of 'earthly, sensual life,' and the idea that this ideal gave man no other meaning to life than this ideal itself (p. 141). Drawing on the work of Ansell-Pearson, Milchman and Rosenberg argue that Nietzsche was not against ascetic practices as they had the potential to lead to self-mastery, as we see in his letters. They suggest that Nietzsche's own use is of ascesis is closer to Foucault's meaning of *askēsis* from the ancient Greek, a self-fashioning or practical training that led to self-mastery, rather than a practice that denied the corporeal.³⁶⁶ In this particular example, for Klossowski, it is again not the practices in themselves that are the problem here, but the role of consciousness. Nietzsche's self-denial was not total, for he succumbed to his thoughts. Consciousness of the body forms part of the ascetic ideal paving the way to sickness by attributing meaning to suffering. Through consciousness, the body is structured by guilt. Klossowski writes:

He followed a treatment, a diet. He changed climate. Moreover, he distrusted therapeutics; little by little, he managed to invent a therapy of his own derived from his observations. Once he recovered his faculties, he tried to describe this suspension of thought, to reflect on the cerebral functioning in relation to other organic functions – and he began to distrust his own brain.³⁶⁷

Through a reading of Nietzsche's works and letters, Klossowski develops a relationship between consciousness and the body. As Dan Smith states, Klossowski is absolutely 'doing philosophy' as this project embarks on the creation of concepts, which is the task of the philosopher according to Deleuze and Guattari's definition of

³⁶⁵ Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'A Genealogy of Morals', in *An Introduction to Nietzsche as a Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 121-146, p. 140.

³⁶⁶ Milchman and Rosenberg, 2007, p. 59. The more general definition of *askēsis* is also drawn upon by Peter Sloterdijk in his book *You Must Change your Life: on Athropotechnics* (London: Polity, 2014). With reference to Nietzsche, Sloterdijk states that *askēsis* means 'exercise' or 'training' (p. 33). He argues that, whether in religious or secular society, or in ancient or modern times, practicing is and has been the central activity that defines us as human (p. 4). This in turn informs Sloterdijk's theory of immune systems: practice, training and repetition lead to a theory of immunity. Ascetic practices can be nihilistic or non-nihilistic, the latter clearly central to Nietzsche's thinking and of importance to Sloterdijk's work (p.6, pp.29-39). Sloterdijk's *Nietzsche Apostle* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013) also addresses Nietzsche's relationship to Judaeo-Christian morality, whereby Sloterdijk links Nietzsche's 'megalomania' with an affirmative life.

³⁶⁷ Klossowski, 1997, pp. 22-3.

philosophy in *What is Philosophy*?³⁶⁸ Although Klossowski's concepts revolve around the body, he makes frequent reference to the term 'soul' [*âme*]. This interest in theology, Smith argues, should be understood not as a direct reference to the transcendence of God, but as a reference to the irreducibility of the soul which is reflected upon here as the irreducibility of the body to something stable or static or known (p. 9). Klossowski writes that a human 'believes itself to be in *its own body*. But its own body is only the fortuitous encounter of contradictory impulses, temporarily reconciled.³⁶⁹ For Klossowski, consciousness is involved in a semiotic relationship with the body which falsifies through its interpretation. 'The body, insofar as it is grasped by consciousness, *dissociates itself* from the impulses that flow through it' (p. 27). Thus, the body becomes an 'instrument' of consciousness, interrupted by it, and a 'homonym' of the person (p. 27). The becoming conscious of one's own suffering which Nietzsche grappled with is a barrier in thinking the body outside of a self-same representation of the subject:

I am a sick body that does not belong to me. My suffering is only an interpretation of the struggle between certain functions or impulses that have been subjugated by the organism, and are now rivals: those which depend on me and those which escape my control. Conversely, the physical agent of my self [*le suppôt physique de moi-même*] seems to reject thoughts I have that no longer ensure its own cohesion, thoughts that proceed from a state that is *foreign* or *contrary* to that required by the physical agent, which is nonetheless identical to myself (p. 28).

The view of the body as a historical collection of moulding, over a duration that is irreversible, is an illusion. Klossowski states:

Nietzsche would no longer be concerned with the body as a *property of the self*, but with the body as the locus of impulses, the locus of their confrontation. Since it is a product of the impulses, the body becomes *fortuitous*; it is neither irreversible nor reversible, because its history is that of the impulses (p. 30).

³⁶⁸ Daniel W. Smith, 'Klossowski's Reading of Nietzsche: Impulses, Phantasms, Simulacra, Stereotypes', *Diacritics: Whispers of the Flesh: Essays in memory of Pierre Klossowski*, 35.1 (2005), 8-21, (p. 8).

³⁶⁹ Klossowski, 1997, p. 28.

The term impulse, according to Dan Smith, comes from a variety of terms used by Nietzsche himself, including 'drive' [*Treib*], 'desire', [*Begierde*], 'instinct' [*Instinkt*], 'power' [*Macht*], 'force' [*Kraft*], 'passion' [*Leidenschaft*], 'feeling' [*Gefuhl*] and 'affect' [*Affekt*].³⁷⁰ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explains how his 'uninterrupted threeday headache accompanied by the laborious vomiting of phlegm' led him to produce other great works including *Daybreak*.³⁷¹ Through his ability to 'invert perspectives' he was able to look at the world anew and thus produce his philosophical works through a 'will to health' (p. 10). It is in this process that Nietzsche attributed agency to himself: 'I took myself in hand, I made myself healthy again' (p. 10). Nietzsche was concerned with the idea of self-fashioning, expressed here and in the title of title of *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. However, as we have discovered, this is not a self-fashioning of habit. Nietzsche writes:

Yes, at the very bottom of my soul I feel grateful to all my misery and bouts of sickness and everything about me that is imperfect, because this sort of thing leaves me with a hundred backdoors through which I can escape from enduring habits.³⁷²

For Dan Smith, the emphasis on 'fluctuating intensities' of this fortuitous body is a consequence of the 'death of God,' which is characterised by 'the loss of both the identity of the Self and the coherence of the World' – God, Self and World forming the 'three great terminal points of traditional metaphysics.'³⁷³ The chaos of impulses that constitute a body and a self in the history of metaphysics thus far are held together by the phantasm, another of Klossowski's invented terms, which is in French the *suppôt*. The 'unity of ourselves as subjects,' as Dan Smith terms it, is such as phantasm, which is abolished in Klossowski's fortuitous body of impulses. As Smith states, *suppôt* is derived from the Latin *suppositum*, 'that which is placed under' and is etymologically linked to *substantia* [substance] and *subjectum* [subject]. However, Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche essentially leaves us without

³⁷⁰ Smith, 2005, p. 9. The German terms are given in the plural in the article. I have quoted them here in the singular.

³⁷¹ Nietzsche, 1992, pp. 8-9.

³⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), book 4, §295, p. 237.

³⁷³ Smith, 2005, p. 10.

a model of body as self-same – it is not a shadow or reflection of subjectivity. There are no two terms that need to be reconciled to hold together the subject. The body does not mediate anything.

At this point it is worth returning briefly to Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau and his concept of anti-comfort. He illustrates this using his personal example whereby he deliberately deprives himself of the warmth of his bed and responds to the ringing of his alarm clock at five O'clock in the morning. Minutes later, he is to be found outdoors partaking in his daily fifteen-minute jog. Not even the warmth of the shower he takes afterwards can compensate for this discomfort as his cold body cannot absorb the contrast in temperature. He comments, 'this voluntary discomfort or "anti-comfort," the inconvenience felt doesn't change its nature or intensity.'³⁷⁴ As he is not a masochist, as he states, he expects be recompensed. The compensation is not, as we have observed, the warm shower, but the 'higher pleasures' that come from the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle:

In imposing these rigours on myself, am I not also ceding to an omnipresent discourse that is "good for the heart" to jog like this every day, that cold water is a good "shock to my system", and that I am "hardening" my body and mind and "sharpening" my will? Similarly, doesn't the gastronomic anti-comfort of denying myself pleasure by eating low-fat cheese or yogurt, replacing the butter on my toast with 'improved' margarine and attentively reading the percentage fat on every label, articulate another subjection...? (p. 59).

This process seems to describe the very conditions that Nietzsche wrote of whereby the ascetic priest is able to albeit falsely relieve suffering from the mundane discomforts of life by generating an excess of feeling. According to Alenka Zupančič, the aesthetic ideal has as much significance in our postmodern, hedonistic times as it has in the history of Judaism and Christianity. Following Nietzsche, she is clear to state that the ascetic ideal is not simply a renunciation of 'enjoyment,' but actually implies the very invention of enjoyment which is to be understood as distinct from pleasure.³⁷⁵ As we have already read in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*,

³⁷⁴ Pezeu-Massabuau, 2012, p. 58.

³⁷⁵ Alenka Zupančič, 'The Ascetic Ideal', in *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), pp. 47-61, p. 47.

religion does not only provide comfort through soothing pain, in Zupančič's terms 'in the form of an analgesic or tranquilizer' (p. 47), but displeasure and suffering are offered an antidote through a stimulant – and 'irritant' or and 'excitation raiser' so that the sufferer thirsts for more pain rather than comfort. Pezeu-Massabuau, then, does not offer a new method of transforming discomfort into comfort, but acts out today's version of the Christian ascetic ideal. The modern practice of psychoanalysis did not abolish the connection between subjectivity and guilt. The link between Nietzsche and Lacan, according to Žižek, is the idea of law making founded on enjoyment, so that everyone's right to justice is equal. Lacan develops this idea through the legal term 'Usufruct,' a right to enjoyment of property, enabling profit or benefit as long as no damage is done to the property, bringing together the idea of law and *jouissance*.³⁷⁶ But, as it is not possible to impose an enjoyment of equality, we are left with shared prohibition, which manifests itself under the guise of enjoyment today. Žižek explains,

recall the yuppie who combines narcissistic self-fulfilment with the utterly ascetic discipline of jogging and eating health food. This, perhaps, is what Nietzsche had in mind with his notion of the Last Man – it is only today that we can really discern the contours of the Last Man, in the guise of the prevailing hedonistic asceticism. In today's market we find a whole series of products deprived of their damaging properties: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol...so it goes on [...]. Everything is permitted, you can enjoy everything – on the condition that it is stripped of the substance that makes it dangerous.³⁷⁷

Pezeu-Massabuau's anti-comfort exemplifies the ascesis of Christianity, showing us the last man who seeks comfort and therefore is only capable of 'moderate virtue.'³⁷⁸ He therefore does not develop a new understanding of comfort, reflecting on an existing model firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. Pezeu-Massabuau discusses ascessis in his text, using Franz Kafka's 1924 essay, *Ein Hungerkünstler (A Hunger Artist)*, as an example of a thirst for pain. It is difficult to see how this example

³⁷⁶ The seminar of Jacques Lacan, On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love an Knowledge, Book XX, ed. Jacques Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), pp. 1-13, p. 3.

³⁷⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Jacques Lacan* (London: Granta, 2006), pp. 37-38.

³⁷⁸ See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969).

differs from the process of anti-comfort he describes. The tale tells of a caged hunger artist whose profession is at risk of becoming unfashionable. He sits in his cage, his body 'pallid' with protruding ribs, practicing his art. During the night he is watched by those elected as watchers by the public (normally butchers), but there is no need for them to exercise control, for the hunger artist does not cheat. He is irritated that they marvel at his ability to sneak food into the cage, or eat whilst singing, when in fact he does not deviate from the rules, and basks in the superiority of his asceticism whilst the watchers feast on their breakfast. However, his stint of starvation is always interrupted after forty days, not for the purpose of his health, but because this time limit sees the decline in interest of the public (note also the reference to Jesus's fast in the desert). The unleashing of the hunger artist allows his keeper to profit from the further spectacle of him breaking his fast which is carried out with ritual. This interruption of his ascetic practice causes him the greatest discomfort. Why should he be forced to stop? He could fast for longer and set a new record for himself. 'Besides, he was comfortable sitting in the straw, and now he was supposed to lift himself to his full height and go down to a meal the very thought of gave him a nausea...,³⁷⁹ When he is lifted to full height, the image of Christ is evoked, the 'suffering martyr' has a hollowed out body, his legs cling close together at the knees and the weight of his body hangs as if he were not on solid ground (p.256). After years of the periodic fasting and feeding, the hunger artist becomes bitter and melancholic about this act. Nobody understands the meaning that he himself attributed to the denial of food. He could push the boundaries and set a new record. But he pushes the limits too far, resulting in his death.

Although it would be incorrect to equate the performance of the hunger artist to the malady of anorexia nervosa, it is interesting to note the moral connotations surrounding the abstinence from food in both cases. Historian Rudolph M. Bell uses the modern category of anorexia nervosa to read the denial of food by Italian saints Catherine of Sienna, Veronica Giuliani and St Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi as 'Holy Anorexia.' Following the work of William Gull, who challenged the definition of what we now refer to as anorexia nervosa as part of hysteria, Bell argues that the

³⁷⁹ Franz Kafka, 'A Hunger Artist', in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, trans. Michael Hoffman (London, penguin, 2007), pp. 252-263, p. 256. Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' is also discussed by Sloterdijk in relation to asceticism, where he argues that it is not the religious analogies that are important here, but the illustration of dissolving boundaries between the possible and impossible in ascetic practices. See *You Must Change your Life* (2014), pp 68-9.

conscience of the anorexic is inscribed with morality and guilt. Bell writes that Pierre Janet, like Gull

observed a hyperactivity in the anorexic which he suspected "was central to the disease itself and involved a suppression of the feeling of fatigue, something much more important than any possible anaesthesia of the stomach." The result of such suppression, he told his Harvard audience, was a heightened level of "physical and moral activity, a strange feeling of happiness, a euphoria." 'The feeling of euphoria,' suggested Janet, "as it is known in the ecstatic saints, for instance, does away with the need of eating."³⁸⁰

Drawing on the work of Hilde Bruch, Bell stresses the themes of identity, autonomy and perfection in the condition of anorexia. The refusal of food is bound up with the striving for good, which 'becomes a catalyst for guilt and in turn the refusal of food is used as method of control' (p. 17). The anorexic is responding to demands made by her adolescent body, and/or feelings of inadequacy, and through abstinence from food, she 'becomes the master of herself.' Bell goes on to state that the reason so many anorexics remain uncured is that in understanding that she is ill, the anorexic 'must give up mastery for slavery.' Incorporating the Christian ascetic ideal that is involved in a certain construction of the subject, anorexia is also 'a particular mode of subjectivity' (p. 20).

Deleuze and the Rejection of the Body as Organism

Anorexia brings us to our third philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, or more accurately, his wife, Fanny Deleuze. In *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet, Deleuze pays homage to Fanny following a critique of psychoanalysis as a form of power, arguing that desire is not internal to a subject, nor is it directed towards an object. In addition, Deleuze states that lack is not a void, and this leads him into his discussion of anorexia, which he states has been misinterpreted by psychoanalysis. Here he makes a comment on ascesis and desire:

Ascesis has always been the condition of desire, not its disciplining or prohibition. You will always find an ascesis if you think of desire.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Rudolph M. Bell, "Recognition and Treatment", in *Holy Anorexia* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 1-21, p. 12.

³⁸¹ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Althone Press, 1987), pp. 100-101.

Ascesis, and therefore its relationship to lack, privation and desire, is refuted by Deleuze in the case of anorexia. He links the anorexic body to his concept the body without organs. A body is not an organism, but a 'desire assemblage' composed of fluxes (p. 109). Fanny's anorexia is conceptualised in such terms:

It is a question of food fluxes, but combines with other fluxes, clothes fluxes, for example (specifically anorexic elegance, Fanny's trinity: Virginia Woolf, Murnau, Kay Kendall). The anorexic body consists of a body without organs and voids and fullnesses. The alternation of stuffing and emptying: anorexic feasts, the imbibings of fizzy drinks. We should not even talk about alterations: void and fullness are like two demarcations of intensity; the point is always to float in one's own body. It is not a matter of a refusal of the body, it is a matter of the refusal of the organism, of a refusal of what the organism makes the body undergo (pp. 109-110).

In addition, Deleuze argues that anorexia is a political statement, a protest against the family mealtime, against consumption, against food. Deleuze refers to Fanny as the fashionable 'model-cook' (p. 110). Scott Wilson draws our attention to the questions that this interpretation of anorexia raises, asking if these practices can really be read as a protest against the norms of consumer society, noting that the 'food flux' and 'clothes flux' bring together haute couture and haute cuisine that were captured in the 'anorexic elegance' of 1980s *Nouvelle Cuisine*.³⁸² Could there be another approach to Fanny's anorexia besides a seemingly naïve reading that rejects the ascetic alongside the cultural significance of the disease? Wilson notes that Deleuze himself had a difficult relationship with food, with a phobia of milk products.³⁸³ In the words of Olivier Revault d'Allonnes: 'We often invited Gilles to dinner. He always asked the hostess if there was any milk in the dish and if there was, he couldn't eat it'.³⁸⁴ In the film interview *L'abecedaire de Gilles Deleuze*, again with Parnet, Deleuze describes the eating of cheese as total horror, a kind of cannibalism. He also talks about his dislike of eating in general, claiming that it is the most boring

³⁸² Wilson, 2008, pp. 169-70.

³⁸³ Scott Wilson, 'Lars von Trier and the Fear of Philosophy', paper given at *Ten Public Lectures on Philosophy, Politics and Art*, Central St. Martins, London, 23rd May 2013.

³⁸⁴ Olivier Revault d'Allonnes, cited in François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 98.

thing in the world. He despised eating alone, and noted that this very common dislike showed how awful eating as an act is. Parnet notes here that Deleuze had a preference for food that brought him strength and vitality, such as marrow and lobster. Deleuze comments that his own sublime trinity of food is marrow, tongue and brain, although he had never eaten them together.³⁸⁵ Deleuze's own complex relationship with food could thus also thus be seen as ascetic. Whereas Deleuze did not particularly enjoy eating, drinking occupied both a place of scholarly interest and personal addiction.³⁸⁶ Deleuze refers to both to Fanny and himself in stating that the assemblage of the anorexic, the alcoholic, the drug addict or the masochist is never truly a body without organs. Deleuze asks 'why does the anorexic assemblage come so close to going off the rails, to becoming lethal?' This is a question that psychoanalysis is unequipped to answer, as it is dominated by a 'pre-established interpretation' relating to lack.³⁸⁷ Both anorexia and alcoholism go some way towards achieving the body without organs but do not attain it, having the ability to destroy the organism totally.

Laura Cull has given the theme of Deleuze's work and sickness some attention in her paper *Deleuze's Bodies, Philosophical Diseases and the Thought of Illness*. She says 'It is hard to imagine that Deleuze was ever able to forget his body.'³⁸⁸ In 1947 his asthma attacks were described as violent. During the writing of *Difference and Repetition* (published in 1968), he was diagnosed with the return of tuberculosis, which had made a sizable hole in his lungs having resisted treatment by antibiotics. Cull attributes Deleuze's frequent references to fresh air as a response to his lung problems. Again in the film '*L'abecedaire Gilles Deleuze*' under 'M for maladie' Deleuze states that 'illness is not an enemy, not something that gives the feeling of death, but rather, something that gives a feeling of life,' and that 'illness sharpens a kind of vision of life or a sense of life' that is not one's own. In addition

³⁸⁵ L'abecedaire de Gilles Deleuze, dir. Pierre-André Boutang (France, 1996) [TV Broadcast].

³⁸⁶ Deleuze mentions alcoholism in passing in many texts including *Logic of Sense* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the film *L'abecedaire de Gilles Deleuze*, dir.Pierre-André Boutang (1996), under 'B for boisson', he talks of how he used to think that alcohol contributed to his ability to create philosophical concepts, yet he changed his mind after giving up drinking.

³⁸⁷ Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 111.

³⁸⁸ Laura Cull, 'Deleuze's Bodies, Philosophical Diseases and the Thought of Illness', unpublished paper presented at *Philosophy on Stage 3*, Vienna, 24-27th November 2011 http://homepage.univie.ac.at/arno.boehler/php/?p=5360 [accessed 20th February 2014].

Deleuze speaks of the freedom from social norms that his fragile state of health brought. He had never liked late nights, nor travelling, but illness legitimatised his behaviour and in a sense brought him relief. This insight into Deleuze's state of health adds to our understanding of the concept of active and reactive forces in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) and the concept of a body without organs presented in *Anti-Oedipus* co-written with Félix Guattari (1972) and later developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Although Deleuze has no comprehensive philosophy of the body, these ideas can be understood as Deleuze's attempt to seek well-being in ill-being.

Deleuze wanted to move beyond the Hegelian dialectic and Cartesianism in his work generally and specifically in Nietzsche and Philosophy. But, as Daniel Smith argues, Deleuze cannot be read strictly as an anti-dialectical thinker. By considering the way in which Deleuze learnt philosophy, through a strict history of philosophy concentrating on meticulous readings of past great philosophers, Deleuze maintains this approach to his own work, yet adds a creative dimension by giving a unique reading of his predecessors.³⁸⁹ This is seen in his monographs on figures such as Nietzsche (1962), Kant (1963) and Bergson (1966) (p. 63), where it becomes almost impossible to determine where Deleuze ends, and for example Nietzsche begins (p. 64). Deleuze's philosophy is therefore a becoming of whichever philosopher he is writing on. Although Deleuze states that he detested Descartes and Hegel, Smith argues, Deleuze's work fits into the tradition of dialectical thought whereby he treats all who influence him with the same rigour. The explicit anti-Hegelianism that we see in Nietzsche and Philosophy should therefore be read as a polemic, and the opposition we see in Difference and Repetition to Hegel not strictly anti-dialectical, but offering a new dialectic.

Through his reading of Nietzsche in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze comes to the idea of a non-dialectical body of active and reactive forces. Deleuze makes reference to Spinoza's observation: 'we do not know what a body can do.'³⁹⁰ This body is not limited to the human or even the organic. Deleuze asks,

³⁸⁹ Daniel W. Smith, 'Hegel', in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 59-71.

³⁹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 36.

What is the body? We do not define it by saying that it is a field of forces, a nutrient medium fought over by a plurality of forces. For in fact there is no 'medium', no field of forces or battle [...] Every relationship of forces constitutes a body – whether it is chemical, biological, social or political (p. 37).

A body is always, therefore, a process, becoming or encounter. Deleuze's categories of reactive and active correspond to the slave and the master, and the bad and the good in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. Noble morality, the master or the good define themselves, whereas slave morality is posited as 'other' and 'non-self.' Non-affirmative slave morality thus rives rise to *ressentiment*, as slaves are denied 'action' and 'compensate for it only with imaginary response' (*GM*, p. 21). Nietzsche states that the action of the slave, due to its dependence on its external world, 'is basically a reaction' (p. 22). Deleuze also draws on *The Will to Power* in the development of the body of active and reactive forces. Nietzsche writes:

My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (– its will to power:) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire for power. And the process goes on – [...] (*WP*, p. 340).

Deleuze's body of active and reactive forces therefore becomes the process of a body extending its force to become master over all space. However, active and reactive forces must not be interpreted in a hierarchical manner, for both "obedience" and "commanding" are forms of struggle.³⁹¹ Deleuze saw the will to power as a 'plastic principle,' constantly shifting but never separable from a relation between forces (p. 46-47). Again, drawing on Nietzsche's critique of consciousness, Deleuze states that 'consciousness is essentially reactive' (p. 38). Therefore, we do not know what a body can do as consciousness gets in the way. In addition, Deleuze places memory and habit in the category of reactive forces, as well as 'nutrition, reproduction, conservation and adaptation' (p. 38). Reactive forces in an organism are conscious, but they are only conscious of themselves. However, the body requires active forces, which are superior to consciousness, to 'make it a self and define the self as superior and astonishing' (p. 39) – which is the body's will to power. Active forces are

³⁹¹ Deleuze, 2010, p. 37.

'appropriating, possessing, subjugating, dominating and have the Dionysian power to transform' (p. 39). Active and reactive forces are not fixed; they are in constant flux with each other. Just as the slave can change places with the master, reactive forces can become active, and active forces can become reactive. However, this is not a question of them swapping roles. Reactive forces become active in a new sense, by separating active forces from what they can do (p. 53). Deleuze writes; 'What Nietzsche calls weak or slavish is not the least strong but that which, whatever its strength, is separated from what it can do' (p. 56). Here, Deleuze uses illness as one such example of the becoming active of reactive forces. Drawing on *Ecce Homo*, Deleuze writes:

Illness, for example, separates me from what I can do, as reactive force it makes me reactive, it narrows my possibilities and condemns me to a diminished milieu to which I can do no more than adapt to myself. But, in another way, it reveals to me a new capacity, it endows me with a new will that I can make my own, going to the limit of a strange power (p. 61).

Deleuze then questions if this illness, which becomes active in separating me from what I do, is the same illness that opens up the possibility of domination and power. He comes to no concrete conclusion, stating 'these are different nuances, affects and types that the genealogist must interpret, that no-one else knows how to interpret' (p. 62).

Why did this example of illness appeal to Deleuze? I suggest that Deleuze saw something of himself in the sick Nietzsche. As Laura Cull notes, many writers and philosophers that inspired him were of a sickly disposition, such as Spinoza, Kafka and D.H. Lawrence who, like Deleuze, suffered from TB.³⁹² *Nietzsche and Philosophy* was first published in 1962, seven years before Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. The term 'body without organs' is borrowed from Antonin Artaud's 1947 radio play, *To have Done with the Judgment of God*, first appearing in *The Logic of Sense* (1969). Developed further in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), co-authored with Félix Guattari, the body without organs points to a new dialectic of the body:

³⁹² Cull, 2011.

The body without organs is not the proof of an original nothingness, nor is it what remains of a lost totality. Above all, it is not a projection; it has nothing whatsoever to do with the body itself, or with an image of a body. It is the body without an image.³⁹³

This concept clearly draws on Klossowski's work. Deleuze and Guattari praise Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche for challenging the view of the subject where the subject 'seeks only his own centre' and is oblivious of 'the circle of which he himself is part' (p. 21). Quoting Klossowski, Deleuze and Guattari write 'identity is essentially fortuitous, and a series of individualities must be undergone by each of these oscillations, so that as a consequence the fortuitousness of this or that particular individuality will render all of them necessary' (p.22). As a result, there is no fixed subject:

There is no Nietzsche-the-self, professor of Philology, who suddenly loses his mind and supposedly identifies with all sorts of strange people; rather there is the Nietzschean subject who passes through a series of states, and who identifies these states with the names of history (p. 22).

Deleuze also reveals his indebtedness to Nietzsche in *The Logic of Sense*, following the section where he challenges a fixed subject whereby a skin or membrane define being (this is related to Simondon's work on open systems, cited in chapter 2). Nietzsche 'could not bear to stand on the fragile surface [...] [r]eturning to the bottomless abyss that he renewed and dug out afresh.'³⁹⁴ Here, Deleuze makes reference to Nietzsche's suffering, his migraines, paralysis, a 'corporeal syphilitic mixture.' His perishing, or 'quasi-perishing,' as Deleuze writes, 'as sickness and death are the event itself, subject as such to a double causality: that of bodies, states of affairs, and mixtures, but also that of the quasi cause which represents the state of organisation and disorganisation of the incorporeal surface' (p. 123). In his essay *Nietzsche*, the connection becomes even more explicit. Here, Deleuze comments on Nietzsche's life, writing of his trips to resorts in Switzerland, Italy and the South of

³⁹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 8.

³⁹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 123.

France, his illness and inability to read.³⁹⁵ For Deleuze, it is clear that illness is not to be seen as a source of inspiration for Nietzsche's thinking, nor is it 'an event that affects the body-object or a brain-object from the outside' (p. 58). Instead, Deleuze writes, Nietzsche 'saw illness as a *point of view* on health, and in health a *point of view* on illness.' (p. 58). Illness is neither subject nor object but constitutes a 'secret intersubjectivity' where there is no reconciliation between a sick and healthy subject. Therefore, according to Deleuze, Nietzsche never experienced unity of self.

Likewise, a body without organs never reaches a state of unity. Rather than constituting a fixed identity or body image, the body without organs is a limit that can never be fully reached: a body without an image. The active and reactive forces of Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche become intensities. On returning to Fanny's anorexia and Deleuze's health problems, it is thus clear to see Nietzsche's and Klossowski's influence on Deleuze's work, and thus understand these parts of this work as a search for well-being through ill-being. It is notable that Deleuze never refers to anorexia as illness or disease or eating disorder. Fanny is not sick, there is no evidence in the interview that he feels the need to save her from her anorexia. Relating anorexia to the body without organs means that it can be re-thought as something other than illness: a state of intensive becoming. A body without organs can therefore be seen as a response to phenomenological readings of the body, in particular body image, as it is a response to psychoanalysis where lack and desire constitute the body and the Ego. Through Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche, the body is transformed into a fortuitous encounter of intensities, shattering a notion of subjectivity based on fixity and a dialectic between body and soul, or lived and biological body. In this sense, the body is not bounded to an image of itself. Individuation must occur, but, according to Deleuze,

Individuation is mobile, strangely supple, fortuitous and endowed with fringes and margins; all because the intensities which contribute to it communicate with each other, envelope other intensities and are in turn enveloped. The individual is far from indivisible, never ceasing to divide and change its nature.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, 'Nietzsche', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 53-102, p. 57.

³⁹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 320.

In relating the body without organs to Deleuze's discussion of subjectivity in Difference and Repetition, we can also observe that this model of the body challenges a Freudian notion of subjectivity. Deleuze remarks that in a constitution of the subject where an 'I' is identical to a self, difference is cancelled out. For Deleuze, death is always inscribed in the formation of the subject, but not in the sense of Freud's death drive: 'It would be wrong to confuse the two faces of death, as though the death instinct were reduced to a tendency towards increasing entropy or a return to inanimate matter' (p. 322). For Deleuze, every death is 'double,' constituted in the cancelling out of difference in extension as well as the 'swarming of little differences in intensity' (p. 322). A body without organs does not enforce the categories of self and Other, life and death, or ill-being and well-being. It therefore has the potential to free comfort and discomfort from their seemingly dichotomous relationship. A body without organs is one of constant flux, where a multiplicity of sensations can co-exist in the virtual. Comfort and discomfort could therefore exist at once, in the same body, even, in the same sensation below the threshold of consciousness in these 'little differences of intensity' or 'microperceptions.'397 Comfort, then, does not have to be the utopian goal posited in a no-place or future dream, but a can be a 'now-here' of lived experience. By viewing the body as a relation between forces, comfort ceases to be a middle range pleasure, one of homogenous space where nothing happens, and becomes instead an intensity that happens in a space of difference.

It remains to determine where Havi Carel, Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze leave us in terms of comfort food. What they share in their attitude towards eating and drinking is a complex relationship towards food and drink, which provides as much discomfort as it does comfort. It is interesting to note how their philosophical work ties in with, or appears to diverge from their writings on the body. All three, as we have discovered, have had an ascetic relationship to food. We can then conclude that ideas relating to Christian morality surrounding food and drink practices has continued to provide meaning to the body and suffering after the death of God. This is explicitly seen in Carel's pairing of food with morality and health. But, as Nietzsche has shown us, it is not ascetic practices themselves that should be rejected, but their role in attributing meaning to suffering. Nietzsche thus

³⁹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 99.

advocated a sense of 'worldly comfort' based on a vision of health that related to balance, in keeping with dominant ideas of his time, as well as coming to an innovative philosophy of the body that was ahead of its time. Despite drawing on Nietzsche and Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche, Deleuze had a very different relationship to food, taking a distinct lack of comfort in eating. His refusal of the body as organism and of a subject founded upon lack and desire could be said to have been played out in his and Fanny's eating habits. Comfort and food then are intertwined historically and culturally in ways that go beyond homeliness and nostalgia, closely related to the formation of bodies and subjectivity.

5. Are You Sitting Comfortably? Refuting Physical and Philosophical Stasis

Sitting is the most horrible position in which to await death: seated, without strength to either to get up or lie down, watching for the signal that will make us stand up one last time and then lie down forever. Once seated, one cannot recover...

-Gilles Deleuze³⁹⁸

In the well-known Spanish Inquisition sketch in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, Ximénez repeatedly runs into the problem of finding a suitable method of torture to force his victim, the dear old lady, to confess. When he demands the rack, Biggles produces a drying rack. As an alternative, two sofa cushions are produced, but fail to result in a confession. As a last resort, Ximénez produces the 'comfy chair,' a plush, padded armchair, further adding that the victim will 'only get a cup of coffee at 11 O'clock.'³⁹⁹ Although a demonstration of the uselessness of the inquisition and the failure to produce a proper method of torture, the 'comfy' chair, hiding behind its unthreatening, chintzy appearance, is the cause of much discomfort in today's world in the form of back pain. The scene is even referred to by M.D. Hamilton Hall in his book about back pain, where he observes that 'large, soft, overstuffed pieces of furniture – would be torture for many back-and neck-pain sufferers,' the seat being so deep that you cannot rest your feet on the floor, and the back providing no support.⁴⁰⁰ Hall believes that the producers of *Monty Python* were well aware of this irony.

Throughout this study so far I have attempted to challenge common assumptions relating to comfort and the bounded body, striving towards an active and affective definition in a bid for a revised understanding of comfort, argued

³⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, 'The Exhausted', trans. Anthony Ulhmann, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 155. In this essay, Deleuze makes a distinction between tiredness and exhaustion with reference to Samuel Beckett's work, specifically referring to posture and gait. Whilst these themes are interesting to consider in relation to the topic of this chapter, they are not discussed here as it is felt that other pieces by Deleuze contribute to the overall argument of this chapter, and build upon the idea of the new dialectic that is central to this thesis. This chapter therefore engages with Deleuze's work on movement with reference to Bergson, and the idea of mircoperceptions.

³⁹⁹ Monty Python's Flying Circus, Series 2, Episode 2, First Broadcast by the BBC, 22 September, 1970, (online) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSe38dzJYkY [accessed 15 June 2014].

⁴⁰⁰ Hamilton Hall, *A consultation With the Back Doctor* (New York: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2003), p. 23.

through theories relating to in-between spaces, affect and intensity. I have attempted to show that we need to understand bodies as open systems, not completely unbounded, but where boundaries lend themselves to transformative forces. Bodies are not objects in space, but rather processes, events, or becomings. In the last chapter, I explored methods of finding well-being in ill-being, contrasting a phenomenological approach to a Nietzschian one (interpreted by Klossowski and later re-appropriated by Deleuze). Here, the phenomenological body image was found to be based on a habitual body, and although this image has the potential to be re-shaped over time, it involves a level of fixity in individuation, always dependant on a dialectical reconciliation or mediation between two bodies. By contrast, Deleuze's bodies of active and reactive forces, and the body without organs, inspired by Nietzsche and Klossowski are composed of forces and intensities, forming and reforming fortuitously. These theories of the body do not, as we have seen, completely dispose of boundaries, but define a body as composed of multiple 'fringes' that characterise it as infinitely divisible, rather than as a discrete, indivisible object. In this chapter, I continue along this train of thought, looking at comfort as a practice of movement rather than one of stasis. Sitting, as in the common phrase 'are you sitting comfortably?' implies a form of physical stasis. The activity of dance serves as a stark contrast. Without meaning to reduce sitting to stasis and dancing to movement as literal opposites, I relate them here to two types of movement. Exploring a cultural history of sitting, I focus on sitting as a practice of habit. Although dance could never be free from the habitual, it has the potential to make visible the virtual in the body - a fortuitous body in a continuous process of becoming. Whereas the habits that composed the body are seen as a passive synthesis of time for Deleuze - and false movement, true difference in repetition sees an active becoming of bodies. The dancer was a favourite motif for Nietzsche, and in a thinking of comfort that is active and affective, I suggest, drawing on the work of Clare Colebrook, Erin Manning and choreographer Wayne McGregor, that a 'dancerly philosophy,' or a 'thinking with the body' is required, further challenging the role of consciousness in the experience of comfort.

The Chair

Despite the discomforts of the chair bought to our attention by the *Monty Python* sketch, the chair is an emblem of seated comfort in the industrialised world. Although seated postures have been reported since Neolithic times, and appropriated by the ancient Greeks and Romans, the prevalence of the chair grew significantly from around 1490. From the Roman period, seating and reclining were postures that demonstrated hierarchy. The man, and later the woman of the house, would recline on a couch (previously the woman sat on a chair), but the children and servants would sit at a separate table on stools.⁴⁰¹ Medieval Furniture was sparse and sitting on chests or stools was not done for the purpose of physical ease, but to show status. An upright posture coincided with this mode of sitting. It was not until the seventeenth century that chairs with arms became popular, as did decorative features, and the chair became an item of fashion, often upholstered and padded. During the eighteenth century, the chair started to become a widely used item of furniture, coinciding with the growth of consumer culture. However, physical ease of the sitter was confined to the sick and infirm. For example, John Crowley observes that the easy chair was for the particular use of 'chronic invalids,' women in the late stages of pregnancy or who had recently given birth, and men with gout. Some of these chairs had a reclining back and leg supports to facilitate sleeping. Hence they were not found in parlours, but in bedrooms and chambers.⁴⁰² Seating in the parlour continued to highlight social hierarchy, and as Anne Massey states, the chair was predominantly used as a ceremonial device, 'reinforcing the status of the domestic patriarch' or as an object 'on which to perform the politeness of eighteenth-century society,' designed to keep an upright posture to preserve the arrangement of fashionable garments.⁴⁰³ Bodily restraint shown in such a posture was said to be a

⁴⁰¹ Galen Cranz, *The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body, and Design* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), pp. 38-9; Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 261.

⁴⁰² John E. Crowley, 'The Sensibility of Comfort', in *The American Historical Review*, 104.3. (1999), 749-782, (p. 756). (Online) http://www.jstor.org/stable/2650987 [accessed 22 May 2010].

⁴⁰³ Anne Massey, *Chair* (London: Reaktion, 2011), p. 102.

measure of gentility, civility and refinement.⁴⁰⁴ Lounging was also physically impossible for women attired in corsets and bustles. Such sartorial restrictions confined them to perching on chairs or standing.⁴⁰⁵ Jennifer Pynt and Joy Higgs state that genteel eighteenth-century society demanded an erect posture, the sitter remaining immobile:

We argue that as domestic seating was rigid, overstuffed and without recline it forced sitters into uncomfortable and poorly supported positions in which considerable muscular effort was required to remain erect without fidgeting $[...]^{406}$

Although the term 'uncomfortable' used here is a present-day judgement applied to a historical practice, this description emphasises the bodily discipline required in such a posture. It wasn't until the turn of the twentieth century that 'ease' of sitting was permissible for women with the rejection of the corset. Paul Poiret (1879-1944), a pivotal fashion designer in this movement, known for his elegant, flowing and unrestrictive women's garments, was said to have disposed of chairs in his own apartment as a gesture towards freedom of movement for women.⁴⁰⁷ He experimented with a technique called draping, favouring straight lines and shapes inspired by antique and eastern traditions, such as the kimono. Despite a turn towards physical ease and sitting in the twentieth century, sitting, and especially sitting still, is historically linked to genteel society and the outward projection of moral standards, demonstrating the relationship between the Christian tradition and consumer culture that John Crowley writes of and forming part of what Norbert Elias has termed the 'civilising process,' as explored in the introduction.

Increased ease in sitting began in the nineteenth century, coinciding with the democratisation of the chair. Galen Cranz suggests two reasons for this democratisation: firstly, the increased opportunity to buy chairs as they became more widely available and cheaper through factory manufacturing. Secondly, and

⁴⁰⁴ Crowley, 1999, p. 758.

⁴⁰⁵ Massey, 2011, p. 106.

⁴⁰⁶ Jennifer Pynt and Joy Higgs, 'Nineteenth-Century Patent Seating: Too Comfortable to be Moral?' *Journal of Design history*, 21.3 (2008), 277-288, (p. 278).

⁴⁰⁷ Massey, 2011, pp. 114-5.

culturally significant although often overlooked, was the changing nature of work. Cranz states:

Industrial work was more likely to be seated than agricultural work. Work at assembly lines and in offices where accounting and record keeping took place was usually done seated, usually on chairs with backs, and only occasionally on stools. Office clerks used to work standing, but that was never as common in the United States, and today office workers almost everywhere work seated at desks in chairs.⁴⁰⁸



Figure 5.1 Les Robes de Paul Poiret, Illustrated by Paul Iribe (1908)

The coiled steel spring, patented in 1828, had a significant impact in introducing physical ease into the chair.⁴⁰⁹ However, technological advances were slow to be adopted by designers and manufacturers of domestic furniture. Siegfried Giedion states, 'It was the ill fortune of the nineteenth century that the art and furniture of its ruling taste seldom found access to the absolute, the genuinely inventive.'⁴¹⁰ Giedion

⁴⁰⁸ Cranz, 2000, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁰⁹ Cranz, 2000, p. 104.

⁴¹⁰ Giedion, 1969, p. 389.

was critical of the nostalgic nineteenth-century revival of early periods such as the Rococo and Gothic, where the chair was purchased in the name of a type of comfort which related to fashion and taste rather than in the name of physical ease. Mechanised, patent furniture was not for living quarters, seen as source of embarrassment and confined to the workplace. Examples of such furniture include the dentist's chair and the rotating office chair that we see a version of in almost every office today. The new mechanised chairs drew upon a key feature of the rocking chair, which first appeared in the late eighteenth century: movement and manoeuvrability. Giedion praised these mobile qualities over the over-stuffed, padded nineteenth-century upholstery:

Relaxation of the body is not induced by stuffing, but is achieved by a method of seating, both resilient and oscillating, by movement forwards, backwards, or sideways, in reaching, or in any other spontaneous motion. Such unconscious shifts of position avoid the cramps that easily trouble the sitter in rigid seating (p. 404).

Due to the failure of the ruling classes to adopt the new mechanised chairs, seating in the parlour remained somewhat formal compared to the posture that could be permitted in, for example, the dentist's chair, workplace or railway seats, which allowed for a greater degree of movement.⁴¹¹ We should therefore remember that the history of the chair is not only aligned with the history of domestic space, but also of public life and the workplace, encountered in 'cars, subways, and buses, offices and schools, waiting rooms, movies and restaurants.' Even the toilet (often colloquially referred to as the 'throne') requires a seated posture in Western culture.⁴¹² Pynt and Higgs are correct to highlight the tension that continued into the nineteenth century between, on one hand, the ease of the body, and on the other, a comfort that was based on taste and 'moral advantage' offered by what we would now refer to as physical discomfort brought about by long periods of immobility and an upright, unsupported posture.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Giedion, 1969, p. 390, Cranz, 2000, p. 48.

⁴¹² Cranz, 2000, p. 15, p. 31.

⁴¹³ Pynt and Higgs, 2008, p. 283.

From this brief historical exploration of seated comfort we can conclude that the relationship between siting and comfort is not historically based on physical ease, although the relationship between the two is firmly embedded in our cultural understanding of comfort. Instead, sitting comfortably is a motif based on a combination of culturally and historically formed ideas surrounding taste, manners and moral attitudes. The chair persists as an ideal of comfort today. Due to their abundance, Cranz states, 'Chairs have become second nature to us, virtually indivisible from us – and therefore invisible to us.⁴¹⁴ The fact that adopting other postures, especially in the workplace, that may contribute to an employee's physical ease, such as standing or lying on the floor, are unacceptable in most office environments is a reminder that seated comfort represents order and social codes.⁴¹⁵ Our continued preference for sitting, despite health warnings from the nineteenth century to the present day, I propose, is a two-fold movement, relying on the cultural significance of sitting that has come to dominate Western culture, and also through the habitual forces that play on the body in this process. That is to say, although the chair may not provide us with physical ease, we continue to associate sitting and comfort through a habitual moulding of our bodies through repetitive sitting. Considering how repetition and habit lead to comfort will therefore provide an alternative angle on this history.

Comfortable Habits

Kierkegaard made a distinction between repetition and recollection in his 1843 essay, *Repetition*. A text presented as a narration by its fictional author, Constantine Constantious, the essay's subject is a melancholy young man, tormented by his intense love of a girl. His suffering is not caused by the experience of unrequited love, but by the condition that he cannot stop idealising the girl. His relationship to her is aesthetic, based on recollection. His downfall, according to Kierkegaard, is that he fails to realise the importance of repetition. Repetition's love is the only happy love because:

⁴¹⁴ Cranz, 2000, p. 26.

⁴¹⁵ Cranz, 2000, p. 55. Although this has typically been the case there is a growing current-day trend to question sitting in the workplace, discussed later in this chapter.

[...] it has blissful security of the moment. Hope is new attire, stiff and starched and splendid. Still, since it has not yet been tried on, one does not know whether it will suit one, or whether it will fit. Recollection is discarded clothing which, however lovely it might be, no longer suits one because one has outgrown it. Repetition is clothing that never becomes worn, that fits snugly and comfortably, that neither pulls nor hangs too loosely.⁴¹⁶

Kierkegaard's example of comfortable repetition and clothing could equally have been a relationship between a body and any 'object' such as a chair. To view comfort in these terms is to make a distinction between subject and object, or between the body-object and other objects. Comfort, then, becomes a matter of 'wearing-in,' a process of assimilation between body and object. Although comfort has not been a typical subject for philosophical consideration, repetition and habit have featured strongly in philosophical works from Aristotle to Hegel to Deleuze. In Hegel's Anthropology, we see an explicit relationship between ease, well-being and habit whereby habit plays a normalising role in the formation of the subject. For Hegel, habit is a force that explicitly saves us from disease or madness. Habit is necessary in the formation of the feeling soul, that is, in the process of transformation of the natural soul. Finally, the soul's 'immediate being' or 'corporeity' is moulded into the soul, producing an 'actual soul.'⁴¹⁷ The place of habit is to allow the transition between the natural and the feeling soul. Feeling (sensation) is the first way we know what is inside ourselves and what is outside or other. However, prior to acquiring knowledge as to what is self and what is outside the self, we enter a state of 'derangement.' Hegel states that the life of the unborn child resembles that of a plant; it is 'infinitely plastic' (p. 58), and must go through physical transformation before becoming a conscious subject. However, the child is in a diseased state as he is unable to differentiate between self and world. This disease, or madness, is the first stage of consciousness. Hegel states 'when these two sides become separated and mutually independent, this must be designated as *illness*,' because 'it does not constitute a moment of the objective life itself' (p. 106). In short, there are two kinds of madness, either idiocy or alienation. Idiocy is an imprisonment within the self,

⁴¹⁶Søren Kierkegaard, 'Repetition', in *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, trans. M. G. Piety (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.3.

⁴¹⁷ Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830), trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), § 390, p. 34.

whereas alienation is by contrast the inability to exist in the self (p. 36). Habit is the cure of this illness, mediating between universal and particular feeling. This cathartic aspect of habit depends on a dialectic between the natural and feeling soul, and then between the body and soul, contributing to a bounded body that persists up to the phenomenological idea of body as subject/body as object that are reconciled through the idea of body image, as discussed in the previous chapter. Habit becomes a mediating force of well-being connecting it to the idea of comfort.

Catherine Malabou developed her theory of plasticity from her reading of Hegel's work in her book *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic.*⁴¹⁸ Plasticity, she states, in its ordinary meanings, is the ability to both receive and bestow form. Plasticity requires flexibility, but it is not to be confused with elasticity. That which is shaped by plastic processes retains its form, whereas that which is elastic inevitably retains its original form. Plasticity must start with the organic, but, in Hegel's work, extends beyond the corporeal, creating the subject: the body is the signifier of the soul. Man is capable of 'idealizing the corporeal' (p. 38), which gives the human the possibility of transformation by culture. He is therefore able to plastically synthesise the genus and the ideal. This process has distinct temporal characteristics: 'it is future orientated, it is nothing less than the *formation* of the future itself' (p. 12). Habit has a role in giving form for the subject whereby it can anticipate itself. We can anticipate what we already are.

Habit therefore requires both stasis and change. The connection between wellbeing and habit is also to be found in Félix Ravaisson's essay, *Of Habit* (1838), where he defines habit as a 'prolonged change' or disposition which becomes 'second nature.' The repetition and the habit formed are apparently devoid of an origin or causal relationship. In Ravaisson's essay, we see a connection between habit and comfort through the idea of ease. Habit creates ease through a twofold process relating to sensation. Firstly, the intensity of sensation is decreased due to repetition. In turn, desire is produced, creating a need to repeat the action habitually and re-experience the sensation.⁴¹⁹ Ease is created by the diminishing effort or 'pain.' Ravaisson refers to this idea as 'grace,' a fluid ease of movement. Thus, in its

⁴¹⁸ Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁴¹⁹ Félix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, trans. Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair (New York: Continuum, 2009) p. 53.

repeated interaction with the chair, the body's comfort is created not only by diminishing fatigue or effort through the demise of conscious effort, but through the familiarity of the action that sees the body's desire or volition to further repeat the act of sitting. Through both Hegel and Ravaisson, habit has a normalising function relating to well-being. Drawing on the etymological links between habit, habitus and habitat, Georges Teyssot notes that 'malady' is also from this family, a state of *male habitus*, meaning to be 'in bad shape.'⁴²⁰ Ill-being and discomfort are hence etymologically opposed to habit.

The dialectic of plasticity requires an interaction between organic matter and its environment, requiring malleability or openness of the organic to be shaped. Although habit contributes to a level of fixity of the subject, allowing a futurity whereby the subject can anticipate what it is, habit is both movement and fixity, requiring malleability, or plasticity in Malabou's terms in the creation of the body and subject. Whilst this study has focused on the body as an open system, it must be recognised that an open and malleable body does not necessarily lead to forms of emancipation. It can equally render the body 'controllable and predictable.'⁴²¹ In the example of sitting, the chair, as Cranz states, has the power to shape us - our bodies and our consciousness.⁴²² A comfort related to habit could therefore exhibit central themes seen in Foucault's concept of the docile body. A docile body is one which may be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved.'⁴²³ Foucault shapes this idea with particular reference to military training from the eighteenth century onwards, arguing that the concept gains momentum through the nineteenth century in the spaces of institutions such as the school and the factory. This historical period saw a greater emphasis on the individual body, 'of maintaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself - movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal

⁴²⁰ George Teyssot 'Boredom and Bedroom: The Suppression of the Habitual' trans. Catherine Seavitt, *Assemblage*, 30 (1996), 44-61 (p. 54) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3171457> [accessed 23rd July 2010].

 ⁴²¹ See Clifford van Ommen and Vasi van Deventer, 'The Malleable and Open Body: Emancipatory or Oppressive?' *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 9 (2010), 92-99, (p. 92)
http://www.discourseunit.com/annual-review/arcp-9-marxism-and-psychology/ [accessed 15th June 2014].

⁴²² Cranz, 2000, p. 15.

⁴²³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: penguin, 1977), p. 135.

power over the active body' (p. 137). A docile body is one that is formed in relation to a mechanism – whether through school discipline or divisible labour in the factory – where the obedience of the body is seen to add to its utility. Bodies are 'broken down' and 'rearranged' so that they are pliable and malleable within a system of discipline, until 'disciplinary monotony' is reached (p. 138, p. 141). This process renders the body passive:

In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into "aptitude," a "capacity," which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reserves the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection (p. 138).

The body, then, becomes a 'composition of forces' very different to Deleuze's Nietzschean reading of active and reactive forces, reliant on 'tactics' which focus on the minute movements of the body which is subject to controlling signals (such as a school bell or military command). These obligatory responses are termed *dressage* by Foucault (p. 166). Although habit requires an openness of the body, and can provide comfort through well-being and ease, it can lead us back to a passive body, whereby comfort, through a diminished sensation and effort, is defined as a zero grade state of feeling.

In addition to these philosophical concerns, particularly when looked at in relation to the act of sitting, habit presents a problem in everyday life. What becomes habitual, and thus feels natural, graceful or easy may actually be the cause of discomfort. The chair, on the one hand, has become a symbol of comfort, yet on the other, the chair and sitting have become classed as a health hazard. There have been numerous studies condemning long periods of sitting from the nineteenth century to the present day. For example, Giedion comments on an 1876 article which states that people of 'sedentary habits' were complaining of back problems.⁴²⁴ Recently, an episode of the BBC's *Trust me*, *I'm a Doctor* investigated the impact of sitting and standing on health.⁴²⁵ The programme conducted an experiment in an estate agent's office in Chester, measuring the movement, heart rate, and blood glucose levels of ten participants, first for a week whilst they worked sitting down, and then standing

⁴²⁴ Manufacturer and Builder (New York, 1876), 1, p. 9, cited in Giedion, 1969, p. 400.

⁴²⁵ Trust me, I'm a Doctor (UK: BBC2, 17th October 2013) [TV broadcast].

at a height-adjustable desk. They ate the same diet for the duration of the experiment. The results showed that standing was far healthier, burning 25,000-30,000 extra calories over the course of year and alleviating the effects of poor posture. Habit, in the case of sitting, is then an example of the *pharmakon*; on one hand providing a cure, diminishing effort and fatigue and providing ease or 'grace,' but on the other hand, acting as poison, inducing discomfort by inducing back pain and a multitude of health problems.⁴²⁶ The following sections interrogate the relationship between sitting and comfort – focusing firstly on the chair itself, through the twentieth century science of ergonomics, then on the idea of habit and consciousness through the practice of the Alexander Technique, both of which have been the focus of Galen Cranz's work. Finally, abandoning the motif of sitting, I turn to movement, in particular dance, in a move towards a model of active comfort.

Ergonomics

Coined in 1949, the term ergonomics comes from *ergon* (work) and *-omics* (to manage). ⁴²⁷ The initial research in this field was inspired by the suffering endured by pilots during World War II, who were 'subject to such physical stress that they suffered from "complete operational breakdown." ⁴²⁸ Two research groups were formed, one at the University of Cambridge, and one at Oxford. The members came from various disciplines; they were anatomists, physiologists, industrial medical officers, industrial hygienists, design engineers, work study engineers and architects. This discipline was instructively one that involved a relationship between 'man and his working environment.' Murrell states the objective of ergonomics is 'to increase the efficiency of human activity by providing data which will enable informed decisions to be made' (p. xiv). Thus ergonomics was directly related to the field of work and productivity. The manner in which Murrell's work situates 'man' in his working environment conjures up images of the machine body and thermodynamic

⁴²⁶Slavoj Žižek, Madness and Habit in German Idealism, Part 1

<http://www.lacan.com/zizdaxedandconfused.html> [accessed 4th March 2013]. See also Jacques Derrida, 'The Pharmakon', in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 98-118.

⁴²⁷ Cranz, 2000, p. 97.

⁴²⁸ K.F.H. Murrell, *Ergonomics: Man in his working Environment* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. viii.

system. The caption to one diagram reads: 'man as a component in a closed loop system and factors which may affect his efficiency' (p. xv). These factors are split into general environmental (lighting, heat, cold and humidity, noise and vibration) and immediate environment (control, display design and compatibility, layout and posture). Within the category of immediate environment, ergonomics turns its attention to the seated man-machine. Murrell states 'modern man spends so much of his time either sitting or lying down that it might be said the homo sapiens has ceased to be an upright animal!' (p. 143). In a similar fashion to the standardisation of the ambient environment that was explored in the example of air conditioning (see chapter 2), ergonomics advocates the standardisation of the seat. For example, some of the basic principles noted by Cranz involve the height, depth and curvature of the seat, the distribution of weight and the space between the seat and the back of the chair.⁴²⁹ As a result of these guidelines, ergonomics also introduces universal standards of comfort in relation to productivity: for example, a seat height of 18 inches above the floor, and a seat depth and width of 17 inches. Thus, for all its focus on the relationship between the sitter and the chair, Cranz criticises the discipline for placing a disproportionate emphasis on the chair and not enough on the body (p. 59). The practice fails to observe that the body is not an inanimate object among other objects.

Cranz notes the inherent failure of any science that focuses on the chair and fails to observe the body. Most chair designs are based on the assumption that the sitter will adopt a fixed position upon sitting. However, all sitters form a pattern of sitting that oscillates between using the backrest, pushing the back backwards and moving the pelvis forward. To counteract this slouch, we sit on the edge of the chair, ignoring the back rest. And when we get tired we move back to the first position. The seated position is thus 'inherently unstable.'⁴³⁰ In other words, we fidget; our lack of ease with a static posture is revealed by restlessness. Cranz finds an inherent problem with sitting relating to the composition of the human body: it is a 'dynamic system, which cannot find stasis':

⁴²⁹ Cranz, 2000, pp. 102-4.

⁴³⁰ Cranz, 2000, p. 95.

Because we have ball-and-socket joints, we have no flat places in our joints that can be lined up against each other to lock into place, which might free our muscles from having to do any work.⁴³¹

Sitting, then, fails to be a fitting motif for an active definition of comfort, in part because the objects which we have designed for it expect corporeal stasis. In fact, being still is somewhat impossible for any living organism. It is, as Moshé Feldenkrais, founder of the Feldenkrais somatic educational method observed, 'more difficult to stand than to move.'⁴³² As dancer and philosopher Erin manning writes, standing still actually demands 'constant correction.'⁴³³ It is associated with posture, but both stillness and posture are in fact elusive. Posture therefore should be seen, following Feldenkrais, as 'dynamic equilibrium.' We have to keep moving through posture; it can't be an end point (p. 45).

Alexander Technique

As a trained practitioner of the Alexander Technique, Galen Cranz turns to this practice and the area of somatic practice more generally, not only to challenge an ergonomic perspective, but to rethink the idea of corporeal comfort. By the term somatic practice, Cranz means a practice which is embodied or can be described as mind-body rather than isolating one or the other. Due to the dynamic structure of the body, comfort must involve an aspect of muscular effort, or 'work.' She thus draws on the pre-modern definition of comfort which relates to strength:

Rather, for them [somatic practitioners], comfort means balanced work throughout the whole system. The subjective counterpart to this "balanced work" would be a feeling of vitality and ease. A somatic perspective on comfort, which seeks balanced work, is closer to the original Latin meaning of the word, "to make strong."⁴³⁴

⁴³¹ Cranz, 2000, p. 130.

⁴³² Moshe Feldenkrais, *The Elusive Obvious*, (Capitola CA: Meta Publications, 1981), p. 44, cited in Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2009), p. 43.

⁴³³ Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2009), p. 43.

⁴³⁴ Cranz, 2000, p. 127.
The Alexander Technique was invented by Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), an Australian Shakespeare reciter and actor. His technique was not developed in specific response to sitting, nor in response to the ills of the modern world, but coincided with a growing sedentary Western population. One review of Alexander's methods by H.M. Kallen remarked on the crippled postures of those belonging to many professions, including soldiers and farmworkers, as well as machinists and desk workers. He stated that our bodies do not 'fit well into a world of books, desks, skyscrapers, machines and drinks.⁴³⁵ Therefore, the technique, even in its early days, was recognised for its benefits in relation to the discomforts of sitting, even if not specifically designed to remedy them. Alexander suggested that exercise alone is not a cure for the detriment caused to the body by a sedentary lifestyle, as it can be taken up in an 'incorrect' way, therefore continuing to contribute to the deterioration of the body.⁴³⁶ In his 1932 book, Use of the Self, Alexander describes the ill health he suffered whilst on stage, developing problems with his vocal cords, gasping for breath and developing hoarseness of voice. After several unfruitful visits to the doctor, Alexander concluded that there was something that he was doing whilst he was reciting that was causing the problem. He needed to change his behaviour to regain his voice. He discovered the solution for himself whilst observing himself in the mirror:

From this I was led to conjecture that if pulling back my head, depressing my larynx and sucking in my breath did indeed bring about a strain on my voice, it must constitute a misuse of the parts concerned.⁴³⁷

Changing this use to the correct one was not only a matter of the body, and the practice he subsequently developed was based on the notion that neither human ills nor their cure could be classified as specifically 'mental' or 'physical.' Before the development of his technique, Alexander confessed that he subscribed to a dualistic

⁴³⁵ Appreciation received from the Professor H.M. Kallen, published in *The Dial*, June 6, 1918, cited in F. Matthias Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance: Conscious Guidance and Control in Relation to Human Evolution in Civilization*, (London: Mouritz, 1996), p. xxxiv.

⁴³⁶ F. Matthias Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance: Conscious Guidance and Control in Relation to Human Evolution in Civilization*, (London: Mouritz, 1996), pp. 9-10.

⁴³⁷ F. Matthias Alexander, *The Use of the Self* (London: Orion, 1985), p. 27.

way of thinking (p. 21). Through his experiments he discovered the interconnectedness between respiration and the position of the torso, head and neck. The first principle of the technique is 'putting the head forward an up,' lengthening the spine and widening the back. Alexander referred to this as 'primary control' (p. 30). This remains the basic principle of the Alexander Technique today. A typical class might include focusing on very general activities such as sitting, walking and the rest position (see figure 5.2). The Alexander Technique is not a postural technique, but a method that involves the conscious control of the body. In short, Alexander Technique participants learn 'directions' to become conscious of detrimental ways in which they move, carry their bodies and hold unnecessary tension, and learn how to counteract these habits, which are developed as reactions to stimuli. It is not a contact therapy, in the way that massage is, but the student relies on the guiding hand of the tutor, who sometime uses light contact and sometimes guides from a distance.⁴³⁸ In benefiting from the practice, the student will experience the alleviation of pain, resulting in 'ease' and 'comfort' (p. 99).

Theoretically speaking, the Alexander Technique can be defined as a practical manifestation of a pragmatic philosophy of habit. An incorrect 'use of the self' or 'direction,' explains Alexander, with reference to his own example, is directed by habit: 'I used myself habitually in the way that *felt natural* to me.'⁴³⁹ As movement of the body becomes habitual, we depend on the feeling to guide us, as it feels 'natural' or 'comfortable,' when it may actually be causing discomfort. The Alexander Technique depends on changing these detrimental habits. But, because we do not 'know' how we are moving our bodies, as habitual movements have become part of our unconscious, we must first analyse our movements and become conscious of them. It is not enough to give the student purely verbal directions if she does not know what exactly is resulting in pain and discomfort. For example, you can tell her to keep her head forward and up, but what she feels is forward and up may not be so. The new direction will feel 'wrong' at first, until relearnt as a new habit (p. 45). Alexander views habit as a response to a stimulus. If presented with that stimulus, we will react habitually. Consciousness therefore plays a vital role in what he terms

⁴³⁸ This is experienced by the author in the learning of the technique with Florence Hill MSTAT, London, August 2013.

⁴³⁹ Alexander, 1985, p. 35.

'inhibition' – interrupting the course of habit in order to change one's behaviour. Alexander's own thoughts are, then, another example of comfort as a theory of warding off stimuli, a sort of habitual 'stimulus shield.' The protection is created by becoming conscious of stimuli and learning how to resist their affects.

Alexander's work had a profound effect upon many of his contemporaries including pragmatist philosopher John Dewey and writer Aldous Huxley, who both learnt the technique directly from Alexander. Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) met Alexander in 1935, when Huxley was suffering from chronic fatigue, a weak stomach and insomnia. At the time he was finding the completion of *Eyeless in Gaza* a struggle, and ended up modelling the character of Miller, a medical anthropologist, on Alexander.⁴⁴⁰ The entry dated June 3rd 1934 in the novel reads

At today's lesson with Miller I found myself suddenly a step forward in my grasp of the theory and practice of the technique. To learn proper use one must first inhibit all improper uses of the self. [...] Become conscious, inhibit, cease to be a greedy end-gainer, concentrate on the means.⁴⁴¹

Huxley also hints at his interest in eastern philosophy here, drawing parallels between this and the Alexander Technique. Here there is a mention of Tibetan thinking which advocates maintaining an alertness and consciousness when partaking in mundane activities such as walking, sitting and eating (p. 214). In his philosophical essay, *Ends and Means* (1937), Huxley's thoughts seem very much in line with Alexander's. He talks about the need for 'practical reality' and refers to unawareness of the body as the route to evil. ⁴⁴² He praises Alexander's work, writing that the technique offers 'relief from strain due to mal-adjustment, and consequent improvement in physical and mental health...' (p. 259).

John Dewey met Alexander aged 57 in 1916 through a Columbia philosophy colleague, Wendell Bush. Dewey suffered from back pain, eyestrains and a stiff neck, and began taking lessons. Benefiting from the Alexander Technique for years

⁴⁴⁰ John B. Harer and Sharon Munden, *The Alexander Technique Resource Book* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. xix.

⁴⁴¹ Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p. 214.

⁴⁴² Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2012), p. 257.

to come, the two men mutually influenced each-other's work. ⁴⁴³ Dewey even prefaced each of Alexander's books. In The introduction to *Use of the Self*, he writes:

Personally, I cannot speak with too much admiration – in the original sense of wonder as well as the sense of respect – of the persistence and thoroughness with which these extremely difficult observations and experiments were carried out. In consequence, Mr Alexander created what may be truly called a physiology of the *living* organism.⁴⁴⁴

In Human Nature and Conduct (1922), Dewey references Alexander by name on two occasions. He writes 'We must start to do another thing which on one side inhibits our falling into the customary bad position and on the other side is the beginning of a series of acts which may lead to the correct posture.⁴⁴⁵ In the accompanying note, Dewey states that 'this process is stated in the book of Mr. Alexander.' Much of this chapter, 'Habit and Will,' draws on the principles of Alexander. He is mentioned again when Dewey gives the example of a man who wants to stand correctly, but cannot change his habit to acquire the new position (p. 28). This passage is clearly influenced by Alexander's critique of 'end-gaining,' where we are unable to change our behaviour by thinking of the end result a movement should lead to. Habit, for Dewey and Alexander, in Dewey's terms, is an 'active' and 'dynamic' force (p. 25, p. 48), subject to will. For Dewey, habit means will (p. 42), a key element that sets Dewey's pragmatist approach apart from Ravaisson before him. For Dewey, the plasticity of the child is to be utilised for education and human improvement (pp. 95-99). Therefore, habits are to be valorised, there are good habits and bad habits that can be made good through conscious interception. In addition, there is a causal relationship between mind and body, where the former controls the latter. Although aiming for an embodied mind, Dewey's pragmatist approach retains a mind/body dualism that tends to privilege the mind as master over the flesh. Bringing

⁴⁴³ Richard Shusterman 'Redeeming Somatic Reflection: John Dewey's Philosophy of Mind-Body', in *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindful and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 180-217, p. 193.

⁴⁴⁴ John Dewey, Introduction to Use of the Self, in Alexander, 1985, p. 8. Emphasis as original.

⁴⁴⁵ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Comino Classics, 2007), p. 35.

consciousness into the idea of habit in order to change 'bad' habits inherently supposes this structure.

In addition to the persistence of this mind/body dualism, other problems are to be found in at least the theoretical ideas behind Alexander's work if not in the experience of the practice itself. Moralising connotations are to be found in his earlier books, Man's Supreme Inheritance (1910) and Constructive Control of the Individual (1923). Richard Shusterman develops a critique, which he calls 'discomforts of Alexander's postural theory,' whereby he exposes Alexander's melioristic standpoint and 'evolutionary vision of human progress' as developed in these texts.⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, in the chapter 'Race Culture and the Training of the Children' in Man's Supreme Inheritance, Alexander expresses strong moral judgements against the actions of parents, such as condemning adding sugar to milk or the obesity of parents, both which impact upon the health of the child. He goes on to incite a particularly vicious attack against 'Free Expression' in schools, stating that children are under no circumstances equipped to educate themselves. He explains the case of a six year old girl whose head has assumed a permanent tilt to one side through Free Expression in dance. Music and dancing, we are warned, 'are excitements which make a stronger emotional appeal to the primitive than to the more highly evolved races. No drunken man in our civilisation ever reaches the stage of anaesthesia and complete loss of self-control attained by the savage under the influence of these two stimuli.⁴⁴⁷ Presumably, music and dancing which involve training or are classical in nature would not give cause for such alarm, although this is not discussed in the text. Shusterman states, 'the idea of physical, cognitive, and moral improvements through superior posture and self-use constitutes the core of Alexander's vision.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, the superiority of rational thought 'rejects any reliance on emotions or spontaneous feelings for guiding behaviour' (p. 209). His idea of comfort is therefore not only based on well-being in terms of habit, but also relates to a complex cultural coding or habitus. If we are to take Alexander's

⁴⁴⁶ Richard Shusterman 'Redeeming Somatic Reflection: John Dewey's Philosophy of Mind-Body', in *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindful and Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 180-217, p. 203.

⁴⁴⁷ F. Matthias Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance: Conscious Guidance and Control in Relation to Human Evolution in Civilisation* (London: Mouritz, 1996), pp. 76-7.

⁴⁴⁸ Shusterman, 2008, p. 209.

philosophy along with the practice he developed, it is apparent that his pragmatic approach continues to maintain a body/mind division, positing the mind as controller of the body. However, we have to make a certain distinction between Alexander's writings and the experience of the technique, and appreciate that, through its continued practice, it has developed and evolved.

Galen Cranz's use of the Alexander Technique to rethink the design of the chair is one example of this. She uses the rest position, or constructive rest position (pictured in figure 5.2) as the basis to her thinking. This position encompasses the 'primary control' of the Alexander Technique, keeping the neck long, the head free and the back wide. Lying on a flat, hard surface (such as a table or the floor), with a book under the head to keep the head slightly forward, the knees are drawn up in a 'supine' position. When instructed, the pupil is taught to focus on the body without daydreaming or thinking of other things, in the attempt to shield the body from stimuli that it is habitually exposed to. Granz deduced that two elements of this posture can be incorporated into seating design: firstly, the planar surface. 'Organic' or biological forms in furniture are the enemy of comfort, whereas a flat surface is essential in freeing the back from tension.⁴⁴⁹ Secondly, the angle of the hips and knees is important. This position, she observes, is close to how the body holds itself in zero gravity. It is somewhere between sitting and standing – a sort of perching. Incorporating some of these aspects into chair design, Cranz has gone some way in overcoming the discomforts caused by the practice of sitting. Yet, due to her view that sitting combined with long periods of stasis is incompatible with the structure of the human body, Cranz argues that until we stop sitting for long periods of time, there is only so much that can be done in design terms. Part of the battle is to develop a greater body consciousness that allows us to challenge our conceptions of comfort and to stop thinking 'Well, I like this and – it's soft and yielding, so it must be comfortable' (p. 165).

⁴⁴⁹ Galen Cranz, 'The Alexander Technique in the World of Design: Posture and the Common Chair, Part II: Body-conscious Design for Chairs, Interiors and Beyond, *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* 3 (2000), 155-165 (p. 158).



Figure 5.2: The rest position of the Alexander Technique.

Comfort in Movement

Drawing on Cranz's conclusion that the body is made for movement, it follows that an active understanding of comfort must focus on the body in motion. At a time when sitting was becoming ever more prominent, a remedy for its ill effects was being sought through exercise. Neurasthenia was the characteristic disease of modernity, the nineteenth century manifestation of nervous illness, which, in the eighteenth century was initially confined to the wealthy. Initially, it was luxuries of the day such as tea, coffee, spicy foods and general over–indulgence and excess that were said to have upset the delicate disposition of the upper classes. In George Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733), nervous illnesses included lowness of spirits, hysteria and hypochondria, which were diseases of the aristocracy.⁴⁵⁰ Nervous illnesses were then democratised along with the luxury that industrialisation brought. During the fast-paced speed of industrialisation, the disease of neurasthenia was documented by George Beard in his book *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (1881), where he attributed the new malady to modern civilisation. Neurasthenia was a disease with over seventy mental and physical symptoms, and

⁴⁵⁰ Peter Melville Logan, *Nerves and Narratives: A Cultural History of Hysteria in Nineteenth Century British Prose* (Berkley: University of California Press 1997), p. 18.

nervous disorders created 'an overly inscribable body, one too easily written upon by the stimulus of its day to day experience.⁴⁵¹ 'Shocks' from a variety of modern technologies played a part in this process, from printing presses to railways. Even those in sedentary occupations such as bank clerks and sales people were vulnerable to such a disease in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵² Carolyn Thomas de la Peña emphasises this link between sedentary lifestyles and neurasthenia, defining it as a malady of fatigue, stating that neurasthenia was brought on by 'excessive thought, asserting that people in business, writing law, and the professions were most precariously weakened.⁴⁵³ Physical exercise was seen as one form of cure, a 'desire to craft bodies' as powerful as machines and use them against the threat of 'terminal fatigue' (p. 25). This thinking has a direct relationship to the idea of the thermodynamic body, discussed in chapter 2. Although concerned with greater expenditure of energy, building muscle, for example, was seen as a way to increase 'useable energy' (p. 30). The nineteenth century also saw the industrialisation of gym equipment, from treadmills to rowing machines to weight machines. Before this, the dominant form of exercise was Turnen, the preferred German method, which relied on running, tumbling, jumping and parallel bar work that became popular following Germany's defeat in the Napoleonic wars and which was imported to America. We see, then, a two-fold transformation within industrial modernity where exercise shifts from a highly specialised method to a more widely available method used to compensate for increasingly sedentary lifestyles. In addition, physical activity performed through manual labour declined. Exercise, then, as a solution to the discomfort of sitting brings us back to the idea of comfort as compensation. As well as trying to philosophically overcome comfort as compensation, which forms part of this study, there is interestingly a growing body of medical advice which condemns exercise as compensation for long periods of sitting. For example, a study led by Daniela Schmid and Michael F. Leitzmann of the

⁴⁵¹ Logan, 1997, p. 28.

⁴⁵² Mark Pendergrast, For God, Country and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the World's most Popular Soft Drink (New York: Thomson Texere, 2000), p. 9.

⁴⁵³ Carolyn Thomas de la Peña, 'The Machine-Built Body', in *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), pp. 15-49 (p. 26).

University of Regensburg in Germany showed that you cannot just exercise away the harmful effects of sitting, as even those who sat all day whilst achieving the minimum required amounts of exercise were left with the same risk as their counterparts who did not exercise of developing cancer, obesity and vitamin D deficiency. The only solution, they say, is to interrupt long periods of sitting with intervals of activity throughout the day such as going for a walk, or eliminate sitting by working at a standing desk, or treadmill desk.⁴⁵⁴ Another article tells of the standing experiment of Dan Kois, who had become convinced that sitting was the worst thing he could do for his health. He spent a week standing at work, at mealtimes, and at all possible waking hours, commenting on the gruelling demands it made on his body. Eventually, he concluded that neither constant sitting nor constant standing were particularly healthy ways to live.⁴⁵⁵

Could we then consider movement in itself as a model for comfort? That is to say, to consider movement in its own right, rather than look at it in contrast to sitting or stasis. Following the Nietzsche – Deleuze trajectory that we encountered in the previous chapter in relation to finding well-being in ill-being, the final part of this chapter focuses on movement and dance. These two ideas were important to both philosophers. Dance, as observed by John Atwell, occupies a significant position in Nietzsche's writing. In addition, true philosophical movement is paramount to Deleuze in his new dialectic. By bringing together physical and philosophical movement, dance becomes a practice by which to understand Deleuze's idea of repetition as difference, and therefore a way in which to overcome the passive implications of comfortable habits. As we observed in chapter 4, Nietzsche detested sitting, preferring to wander in the open air with his thoughts before returning home to write. In *The Gay Science*, he writes:

It is our habit to think outdoors – walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains, or near the sea where the trails become

⁴⁵⁴ Hannah Newman, *Killer Habit: Why not even exercise will undo the harm of sitting all day – and what you can do about it <* http://qz.com/223160/why-not-even-exercise-will-undo-the-harm-of-sitting-all-day-and-what-you-can-do-about-it/#223160/why-not-even-exercise-will-undo-the-harm-of-sitting-all-day-and-what-you-can-do-about-it/> [accessed 3rd July 2014].

⁴⁵⁵ Dan Kois, 'Standing Room Only', in *i from The Independent*, 29th July 2014, pp. 30-31.

thoughtful. Our questions about the value of a book, or a human being, or a musical composition are: can they walk? Even more, can they dance? ⁴⁵⁶

Nietzsche continues to criticise books that were written by someone bent over a desk all day with 'cramped intestines' which reflect the author's narrow-mindedness, which in turn constricts the mind of the reader. Moreover, he compares the spirit of a philosopher to 'a good dancer.'⁴⁵⁷ Thus, for Nietzsche, dance appears as a motif for thought, exemplifying a certain freedom or liberation. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes '[...] in dance, man feels himself a God.'⁴⁵⁸ The dancer, Atwell notes, for Nietzsche, resembles an antidote to gravity, which represents the burdens of life, the Christian tradition⁴⁵⁹ and, drawing on the previous chapter, we might add, Nietzsche's own suffering.

It is important to note that dance, like sitting and any other practices that shape bodies, can never in reality represent total freedom – it is, after all, a cultural practice. Like the military and school system Foucault observed, dance is a highly disciplined practice with a long history that precedes it. As Philipa Rothfield writes, '[e]very culture implies a history (or genealogy) of constraint: that is, the selection of certain relations of forces which are expressed via the vicissitudes of (cultural) meaning.'⁴⁶⁰ As a mode of training or 'dressage,' dance can also find its comfort in habit, as steps become inscribed in the body and consciousness, re-enacted through muscle memory. Dance, for Rothfield, is an example of Pierre Bourdieu's habitus, it is shaped by culture and contributes to the shaping of culture. Its strict aesthetic values 'select' bodies (p. 206). 'If dance is judged,' writes dance historian Lincoln Kirstein, echoing Rothfield's observations, 'it is against performance within

⁴⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), p, 322, cited in John E. Atwell, 'The Significance of Dance in Nietzsche's Thought', in Maxine Sheets Johnstone (ed). *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations* (London: Associated University Press, 1984), pp. 19-34, p. 29.

⁴⁵⁷ Nietzsche, 1974, p. 346, cited in Atwell, 1984, p. 29.

⁴⁵⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Birth of Tragedy', in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner* (New York: Vintage, 1967) p. 37, cited in John E. Atwell, 1984, p. 23.

⁴⁵⁹ Atwell, 1984, pp. 23-4.

⁴⁶⁰ Philipa Rothfield, 'Dance and the Passing Moment: Deleuze's Nietzsche', in Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (eds). *Deleuze and the Body* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 203-223, p. 205.

tradition.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, the history of dance in the Western world shows that dance started life exactly as an expression of manners, part of the civilising process. Its relationship to ease was through the creation of an illusion, a portrayal of grace and lightness that appears to reject gravity. As Jack Anderson writes of the development of ballet in France, 'French aristocrats admired fine manners and made social encounters as intricate as choreography. Dance prospered in such an environment, and consequently, balletic deportment is aristocratic in nature and ballet steps retain French names.⁴⁶² Although ballet and other classical forms of dance exhibit these traditions more explicitly than contemporary dance forms, even seemingly 'freer' modern dance forms have their traditions indicated in the training undertaken by dancers today.

Deleuze and Nietzsche's writings on the body, as we saw in the previous chapter, have a closely woven interconnectedness. However, in Deleuze's later works with Guattari, as Claire Colebrook observes, dance becomes a mode of territorialisation whereby each pose marks a mannerism and spacing between bodies.⁴⁶³ Territorialisation can be described as a comforting process, building a home, creating a territory out of milieus and rhythms.⁴⁶⁴ Rhythm forms an inbetween, a 'chaosmos,' a milieu in which chaos becomes rhythm (p. 345). Art always has the tendency to territorialise, as it makes a mark. Dance territorialises by marking critical distance, not in measurable space but by rhythm (p. 352). Rhythm, of course does have this capacity, especially when teamed with the idea of habit. Drawing on the work Eviatar Zerubavel's *Hidden Rhythms* (1985), Tim Edensor observes that the rhythmic imposes a 'beat' on numerous everyday activities, such as work and consumption so that the temporality of everyday life becomes unreflexive.⁴⁶⁵ Part of this unreflexivity lies in the belief, advocated by Henri

⁴⁶¹ Lincoln Kirstein, *Movement and Metaphor: Four Centuries of Ballet* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1971), p. 17.

⁴⁶² Jack Anderson, *Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History* (New Jersey: Princeton Book Company, 1992), p. 37.

⁴⁶³ Claire Colebrook, 'How can we tell the Dancer rom the Dance?: The Subject of Dance and the Subject of Philosophy', in *Topoi* 24 (2005), 5-14,(pp. 12-13).

⁴⁶⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 347.

⁴⁶⁵ Tim Edensor (ed). *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature Place, Mobilities and Bodies* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 8.

Lefebvre, that rhythm is of the body, 'folded in and through a permeable body' (p. 4). Thus, Lefebvre, in his theory of *Rhythmanalysis* (1992) states that the rhythmanalyst must take his or her body as a measure of other rhythms.⁴⁶⁶ Eleni Ikoniadou, initially through the work of Susanne Langer, provides an alternative to this, arguing that rhythm can constitute a 'life of feeling.' Rhythms are not periodic, recurring events, but complex phenomena, constituting 'dynamic patters of feeling.'⁴⁶⁷ Using her installation piece 'Rhythm House' to develop her theory of virtual digitality, Ikoniadou discovers that digital sound is in fact born 'from intersections of analogue and digital processes.' The piece explores the "intensive aspects" of spacetime' where the participant encounters vibrations as they encounter the installation, stretchings of time – a topological and non-metric experience. Rhythms are not always felt by the body, nor do they come from the body. This example allows us to think of rhythm as heterogeneous, intensive and immanent (p. 37).

If we are to think of dance in these rhythmic terms, it would follow that dance also has the capacity to deterritorialise, to go beyond normativity and selection. Erin Manning's definition of dance as 'pure plastic rhythm' begins this process, where rhythm is not equated to repetition of the same. Dance has traditionally been ignored by philosophy, subjugated to other art forms such as poetry, painting and sculpture.⁴⁶⁸ However, Paul Valéry noted that dance is a 'fundamental art' because it is 'an art derived from life itself, since it is nothing more or less than the action of the whole human body; but an action transposed into the world, into a kind of spacetime which is no longer quite the same as that of everyday life.'⁴⁶⁹ The goal of dance is never anything outside of dance and movement itself, and thus already addresses the dichotomy of dancer/dance, as observed by Claire Colebrook in her essay, 'How Can we tell the Dancer from the Dance?' The title of her essay is taken from a poem by W.B. Yeats called 'Among School Children' in which life is 'fully real' when it is

⁴⁶⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁴⁶⁷ Eleni Ikoniadou, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media, and the Sonic* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2014), p. 15.

⁴⁶⁸ See Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, 'Man has Always Danced' in *The Corporeal Turn* (Exeter: Imprint, 2009), pp. 306-327.

⁴⁶⁹ Paul Valéry, *Philosophy of the Dance*, 1964, pp. 197-8, cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 309.

not striving for anything more than itself. The categories of means and end are rendered irrelevant, and in its essence, the poem has a distinctly Nietzschean perspective: 'There is no "being" behind the "doing."' Dance resonates with this way of living which goes against an Aristotelean perspective which views 'good' as acting towards a goal as much as it goes against a Christian good which views action as good in terms of salvation of the soul.⁴⁷⁰ Dance has a certain immanence about it where there is no end or preservation of the art form. As Colebrook writes:

Becoming-human is not on its way to any other end other than itself. Similarly, dancing - unlike writing a novel that would have an external object of completion - is, at each moment of actualisation a dance; one does not have to wait until the completion of the performance to produce the dance (p. 7).

In addition, the dancer need not rely on any 'external' materials to produce the dance; the body is its artistic medium (p. 8). From this point of view, thinking comfort through dance has the potential to do away with a subject/object dualism as well as a mind/body one that persisted in the pragmatist thinking of F.M. Alexander, despite his intensions to posit his technique as a form of embodied consciousness. Rather than thinking about dance, we can ask if dance itself serves as a way of 'thinking,' or as Colebrook writes, how we could construct a 'dancerly philosophy' (p. 5). This mode of thinking would not view dance as a signifier, but, following Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, would seek to capture 'the emergence of sense from life' (p. 10). For Colebrook, in dance, the body is 'both itself and the sense of the body as potentiality' (p. 11). It is in this 'potentiality' or virtual element where dance, continuing to follow Deleuze and Nietzsche, can find its place in an active, affective comfort.

Movement is an essential component of Deleuze's idea of intensive difference, revealing Bergson's influence on his work. In *Cinema I: The Movement Image*, Deleuze summarises Bergson's three theses on movement. The first states that movement is not the same as space covered.⁴⁷¹ Deleuze writes 'The space

⁴⁷⁰ Colebrook, 2005, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷¹ Daniel W. Smith, 'The Open', in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 256-265.

covered is divisible, indeed infinitely divisible, whilst movement is indivisible.⁴⁷² Space covered would relate to the extensive, which, as we saw in chapter 2, cancels out difference and favours the final form in a process of genesis or becoming. Bergson's first thesis already contains, for Deleuze, the idea that 'you cannot reconstitute movement with positions in space or instants in time' (p. 1). This is precisely what cinema does, creating an illusion of movement. Following this, the second thesis states that an instant is an immobile section of movement.⁴⁷³ We often refer to and depict positions in dance, such as the positions of the arms and feet, or poses, such an *attitude* or *arabesque*. In the attempt to understand the body in movement, Etienne-Jules Marey tried to capture dancers, athletes and animals in motion through series of photographic stills. Marta Braun writes 'Marey's method of multiple exposure was a consequence of his attempt to make photography represent motion as a continuous passage the way his mechanical inscriptors had done. It was meant to produce the largest possible number of images on one plate so that the most phases of movement being photographed would be available.⁴⁷⁴



Figure 5.3: Etienne-Jules Marey, Bicycling, 1891, Collège de France

⁴⁷² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement – Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 1.

⁴⁷³ Smith, 2012, p. 257.

⁴⁷⁴ Marta Baum, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 79.

Yet, for Deleuze, Bergson and Marey himself, these stills never happen. This is linked to his Bergson's third thesis, that 'movement is a mobile section of duration (movement expresses a change in duration or the Whole, which is equivalent to the Open).⁴⁷⁵ In other words, movement does not only affect the body perceived to be in motion, but involves a change of state of the environment. Thus, movement opens up a 'difference of potential' (p. 263). Dan Smith illustrates this with the example of hunger, the example used by Deleuze. A difference of potential is opened up between hunger and the perception of food. During the ingestion and absorption of food, 'a kind of equalisation' occurs. A change of state was, as noted in chapter 2, the definition of intensive difference for Deleuze. Movement is thus inextricably linked to difference and intensity. Dance has the ability to express this idea, as no stasis takes place (as already pointed out by Erin Manning). Even in the act of balancing, one is always shifting, stretching further in all directions to give an illusion of stasis. The dancer never 'hits' a pose, she is always moving through postures. Deleuze recognises this himself, stating that in the twentieth century

[...] dance, ballet and mime were abandoning figures and poses to release values which were not posed, not measured, which related movement to the any-instant-whatever (p. 7).

The any-instant-whatever refers to movement as the 'production and confrontation of singular points which are immanent to movement' (p. 7). Dance and mime thus saw themselves as relating to cinema, understanding movement through cinematic principles, but diverging from them. Bergson himself writes

In reality the body is changing form at every moment; or rather, there is no form, since form is immobile and the reality is movement. What is real is the continual *change* of form; form is *only a snapshot view of a transition*.⁴⁷⁶

Dance, then, illustrates the intensive nature of movement, and its ability to constantly re-form the body. A movement of a body is always a movement of the Whole,

⁴⁷⁵ Smith, 2012, p. 257.

⁴⁷⁶ Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (New York: Dover, 1988), p. 302, cited in Felicia M. McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 56.

which, as expressed by Erin Manning, means it is a 'becoming-with.' Movement is always relational, and 'when we are no longer still, the world lives differently.⁴⁷⁷

How, then, can we account for movement that is both singular and mastered through repetition which is so crucial for dance? Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* moves our reading of repetition beyond the habitual repetition of the past returning in the present. In stark contrast to F. M Alexander, Deleuze makes no valorising judgment of habit, stating that '[i]t is useless to point to the existence of immoral or bad habits.'⁴⁷⁸ In addition, Deleuze's reading of habit moves beyond the Hegelian dialectic, which, as we have seen continues to have significant credence in the way we understand comfort in relation to habit. This was interpreted by Deleuze as 'false movement,' an action of 'mediation' which he wanted to move beyond. Of his theory of repetition he writes

[...] it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind (p. 9).

Dance, for Deleuze, serves as a motif for real movement – movement which creates difference. Deleuze sees repetition as 'difference without a concept' (p. 26) and 'non-mediated difference' (p. 28), meaning that the repeated is never a copy or simulacrum of what has come before. Deleuze writes of the 'contraction' of habits which are inherent to organic life, which are essentially syntheses of time (p. 91). However, moving beyond a definition of repetition and habit as passive synthesis, Deleuze brings in the idea of the virtual. Rather than lacking conscious attention, habit almost becomes a form of consciousness. Drawing on *What is Philosophy*? (1994), Elizabeth Grosz states that the habits of a plant become a 'vegetative consciousness' where habit becomes a form of 'brain-becoming' or contemplation.⁴⁷⁹ In addition, contraction can also apply to non-organic life, such as a crystal. Habit is thus involved in the creation of sensation rather than lessening its

⁴⁷⁷ Manning, 2009, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁷⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2010), p.5.

⁴⁷⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, 'Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us', *Body and Society* 19.2 (2013), 217-239 (p. 231).

affective nature. Hence, 'habit is the way in which life accommodates materiality and brings its own materiality into coordination with the material forces that regulate its environment.' For Erin Manning, difference in repetition is given a particular materiality in dance. Despite any form of training or muscle memory, 'no movement can be cued, aligned to or performed in exactly the same way twice.'⁴⁸⁰ In addition, Deleuze's insight into habit as a form of contemplation can help build a case for movement (as the movement of difference) to serve as a mode of thinking or thinking-feeling. These two ideas are developed in relation to comfort in the following section.

Dance as Affective Comfort

How then, could we interpret the feeling of dance to the experience of comfort? The pleasure derived from dancing, as opposed to observing dance, has a specific aesthetic. It is not, as Bergson observes, the perceived ease of watching time unfold by means of graceful, curved lines, the rhythm of the music allowing the spectator to feel as though he or she were controlling the motions of the dancer as if the dancer were a puppet.⁴⁸¹ Nor is it the same as the sensation of habit which, according to Ravaisson creates an increased desire for a repeated sensation because the body has become desensitised to the action once assimilated or contracted into habit. Barbara Montero and Jonathan Cole observe that 'dancers will often claim that they experience pleasure in moving beautifully or gracefully; they seem to apply aesthetic predicates to themselves merely on the basis of *feeling* the movement.⁴⁸² Whilst those observing a dance may also feel aesthetic pleasure from dance, this pleasure comes partially from visual signals which a dancer does not attain from herself dancing. Instead, for the dancer, '[w]hen absorbed in a movement there may even be what might be described as a loss of self, a feeling that, at least as a locus of thought, one hardly exists at all' (p. 304). Whilst not expressing a lack of consciousness (and

⁴⁸⁰ Erin Manning, *Dance of Attention* http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/n6_manning.html [accessed 17th July 2014].

⁴⁸¹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay in the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen& Unwin Ltd, 1971), p. 12.

⁴⁸² Jonathan Cole and Barbara Montero, 'Affective Proprioception', *Janus Head*, 9.2 (2007), 299-317, (p. 302), emphasis added.

consciousness is a vast and complex question), this could be described as an altered or specific state of consciousness or sense. In their analysis of this affective quality of dance, Montero and Cole turn to the 'sixth sense' of proprioception. Brian O'Shaughnessy has defined proprioception as 'our awareness of our own limbs and body.⁴⁸³ It is not a feeling as such, but a way of perceiving, whereby the body arranges itself to interact seamlessly with its environment without a conscious effort. He describes it as a mode of perception which is closest to the sense of touch. This is because 'in every instance of tactile perception an awareness of one's own body stands between one and awareness of the tactile object' (p. 176). Due to this, he argues that proprioception is present in the sense of touch, rather than touch being involved in the process of proprioception (p. 176). Whereas touch can determine qualities in the object perceived, proprioception cannot; it does not depend on physical contact between body and object. Thus, it is argued that proprioception plays a vital role in shaping our body image, a term which Shaun Gallagher says always refers to a state of intentionality. In his phenomenological interpretation, proprioception is viewed as a state of experience of the body as an owned body, and often only a part of the body can be perceived at one time. Body image is always defined by a set of beliefs about the body which are not necessarily present in consciousness.⁴⁸⁴ Montero and Cole take on aspects of this phenomenological definition of proprioception, which they combine with a definition from their neuroscientific perspective. Proprioception is defined as 'low threshold touch' which reaches the cortex of the brain not through the usual touch pathways that lead to S1 (the primary somatosensory cortex) and S2, (the secondary somatosensory cortex) but through 'an area of insula cortex associated with other inputs related to hunger, thirst, [...] pain and discomfort [...].⁴⁸⁵ In relating proprioception to the affective nature of dance they begin to challenge the means and end relationship in dance and other physical activities. The affective quality of dancing is more than a translation of intention into action. It is an embodied experience that does not separate the body

⁴⁸³ Brian O'Shaughnessy, 'Proprioception and the Body Image', in José Luis Bermudez, Anthony Marcle and Naomi Eilan (eds). *The Body and The Self*, (London: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 201.

⁴⁸⁴ Shaun Gallagher, 'Body Schema and Intentionality', in José Luis Bermudez, Anthony Marcle and Naomi Eilan (eds). *The Body and The Self*, (London: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 228-229.

⁴⁸⁵ Cole and Montero, 2007, p. 301.

as subject and object. Proprioception then becomes more closely aligned to Deleuze's definition of the virtual, where it would form part of the real. Brian Massumi has already thought of proprioception in these terms. Kinaesthesia, and therefore proprioception, as it is a kinaesthetic way of sensing

references the relation of the phases of an unfolding movement to each-other – its accelerations and decelerations, increases and decreases in intensity, starts and stops – as belonging to the same event. Proprioception is not one sense mode among others. It is the mode of experience that is amodal as such. The whole concept of the activation contour is that the "same" contour is to be found across modes, in the *rhythm* of seeing, or touching, or hearing. Rhythm is amodal. It is the abstract shape of the event as it happens, across whatever modes happen with it. It is the immediate thinking-feeling of nonlocal linkage.⁴⁸⁶

If we begin to inject what we think of as 'conscious' thought, we lose this particular affective intensity of the experience of dance. As Cole and Montero write:

True enough, when one focuses on proprioceptive input, one's movements sometimes falter; the dancer who all of a sudden on stage starts thinking about how to do a jump or a turn is headed for trouble.⁴⁸⁷

Proprioception could therefore be defined as a mode of bodily thinking, or 'thinkingfeeling' that guides movement. Although Cole and Montero refer to the affective nature of proprioception as 'pleasure,' I would like to suggest here that it could define a new way of looking at comfort, linked to the way in which, in the previous chapter, we uncovered ill-being and well-being not to be dichotomous opposites. As any dancer knows, dancing involves a high level of athleticism, strength and energy, it is the labour of the body but for no means other than to expend the body's energy. It is activity for the sake of activity. Dancers are familiar not only with injury, but with the regular impact of dancing that results in fatigue, muscular pain and stiffness. Yet these discomforts are not viewed in a negative light. They instead contribute to the affective nature of dance. Here, I am not trying to make the argument that the comfort we could attribute to the dancing body is situated on a continuum between

⁴⁸⁶ Brian Massumi, Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2011), p. 125. Emphasis as per original.

⁴⁸⁷ Cole and Montero, 2007, p. 309.

pleasure and pain. Occupying a homogenous and measurable space would contradict the very nature of intensity. Rather, we could say that the affective intensity of dance is composed of what Deleuze refers to as 'microperceptions,' 'minute, obscure, confused perceptions'⁴⁸⁸ which do not cross the threshold into consciousness. Instead of seeing these perceptions distinctly as pleasure and pain, they can co-exist temporally. Deleuze asks 'How could a pain follow pleasure if a thousand tiny pains, or half pains were not already dispersed in pleasure, which will then be united in conscious pain?' (p. 99). Explaining comfort in terms of these 'pricklings' or 'foldings' below the level of consciousness takes comfort away from a state between pleasure and pain, recasting it as both pleasure and pain rather than mediating between them. Comfort itself then becomes a movement of difference.

So far, we have seen that proprioception can provide one example of a bodily thinking that can challenge dualistic thinking. The final section of this chapter draws on two further examples from contemporary choreographer Wayne McGregor's collaboration with cognitive science and digital technologies to take this idea further. Erin Manning is sceptical of the collaboration between technology and dance whereby dance can be reduced to a mapping of the beginning and end point of a movement. This approach

may direct the techno-dance process toward establishing a kind of grammar of movement that would – paradoxically – be more likely to tie the body to some pre-established understanding of how it actualises. "Mapping" gesture risks breaking movement into bits of assimilable data, replicating the very conformity the computer-dancer interface is seeking to get beyond.⁴⁸⁹

In other words, mapping the body can lead to reducing movement to stills or instants that would lead back to a false movement that Bergson and Deleuze wanted to depart from. We must, in facilitating these collaborations, therefore be careful to retain a wholeness in movement (p. 62), and not be lured into subjecting the body to 'predefined parameters,' which 'catch not the dancer's pre-acceleration in its present-passing, but the ways in which the movement stimulates a transformation of the video image' (p. 63). We must continue to ask what a body can do, rather than

⁴⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 99.

⁴⁸⁹ Manning, 2009, pp. 61-62.

ask what technology can do. Wayne McGregor's collaborative projects appear to retain this wholeness, and ask how dance could serve a mode of 'thinking with the body,' rather than privileging the brain as the control centre of thought.

Wayne McGregor is an award winning British choreographer and dance director, renowned for his 'groundbreaking collaborations across dance, film, music, visual art, technology and science.⁴⁹⁰ In 2013 he presented *Thinking with the Body*. an exhibition at the Wellcome Collection in London, exploring choreographic thinking through his collaboration with cognitive scientists. This was the latest in a number of collaborative projects which started over ten years ago with Choreography and Cognition (2002-2004). One of the choreographic thinking tools featured in the exhibition was an interactive digital software tool called *Becoming*, a tool developed to help dance-making in the studio. One cannot fail to notice the Deleuzian implication of the name, nor the Spinozist undertones to McGregor's question: 'what could a body be?' Working with digital developers in Becoming, McGregor has created a moving being, whose presence fills the studio on a screen, influencing the way in which the dancers move. It assumed the position of 'an 11th dancer' in the studio with which the dancers interact. Becoming is described by software developer Marc Downy as having a 'creature-like form that decides how to modify its body,' enacting these decisions as movement. It has nodes, responds to gravity and is aware of the edges of the screen. The aim of *Becoming* is to 'elicit a kinaesthetic response⁴⁹¹ from the dancers, in short, making them move, or making them aware of a desire to move. These collaborations between art and science are intended to be a mutual learning process for all parties. Exemplifying this, anthropologist and collaborator on the project James Leach states that he has learnt that McGregor works with a 'kinaesthetic intelligence, with the way in which bodies elicit response from other bodies.' Interestingly, in relation to this project, McGregor and his dancers refer to bodies as 'objects in space.' However, Becoming demonstrates that in movement, the Whole is affected and that bodies are produced and reproduced in relation to each-other.

⁴⁹⁰ <http://www.randomdance.org/wayne_mcgregor> accessed 15th August 2014].

⁴⁹¹ <http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/exhibitions/thinking-with-the-body/videos/av06--becoming-final-02_1.aspx> [accessed 15th August 2014].

Cognitive scientist David Kirsh, another collaborator on the project, works on embodied cognition. He observed the way in which McGregor gave instructions to the dancers, and was interested in the ways that he expressed these, such as 'dance like a skyscraper.⁴⁹² One particular element that he was particularly interested in was the learning process of 'marking,' a common process to dancers defined as 'a low energy version' of the dance. Marking is a standard way in which dancers learn a new combination – mapping patterns but not performing the dance to its full – not stretching as far or moving the legs as far off the ground as they would when dancing, for example. In addition to conserving the energy of the dancer and avoiding injury, Kirsh found that marking had another purpose, and was more effective in executing the routine faithfully later, compared to learning by dancing the new routine fully in order to learn it or by lying down and imagining the movements. Marking, according to Kirsh, is 'evidence of physical activity influencing thought' (p. 168). Marking can therefore be described as a mode of bodily thinking, kinaesthetic learning or thinking-feeling which does not privilege the mind over the body.

These examples from Wayne McGregor's work do not reduce the dancer's body to a docile object, nor do they privilege 'scientific' thought over dance as a mode of thought. By recognising dance as a way of thinking, and by viewing dance as a transformation of the Whole or intensive change of state, as an example of kinaesthetic intelligence and affective proprioception, dance can go some way in overcoming Nietzsche's problem of becoming conscious of the body, which he saw as an obstacle to well-being. In becoming with or thinking with the body, we do not have to think of the body as an object, something separate to the brain or mind. Whereas dance shows these ideas in a particularly lucid manner, movement in general can be thought of along the same lines. Movement is the only way for a body to exist, and therefore the only way in which to conceive of a becoming-comfortable of the body. The first chapter of this thesis features the work of R. Buckminster Fuller. His daughter, Allegra Fuller Snyder, is a dancer and dance ethnologist. She also believes that dance serves a way of thinking, which she calls 'kinaesthetic-

⁴⁹² Ewen Callaway, 'Leap of Thought', in *Nature*, 1.502 (2013), 168 (p. 168).

conceptualisation.⁴⁹³ Her father was a great influence on this theory, and like Nietzsche, he liked to walk for hours a day. This, according to Fuller Snyder, was his best thinking time. She writes 'his thinking was connected to his body. It was an integration of his body and his mind. This is what dance is as I have come to understand it.' She also writes 'Bucky was a dancer in the way I understand dance, as a way of knowing, and his understanding of universe was through his dancing in his mind.'

In this chapter we have moved from Catherine Malabou's theory of plasticity inspired by Hegel's Anthropology to the idea of dance as 'pure plastic rhythm,' and from habit as a passive loss of sensation and consciousness to repetition as difference and movement as a form of thinking-feeling. Dance, although it may serve as a model for active comfort, displays the problem of a malleable and open body, which is on one hand subject to the forces of neoliberal power and cultural fashioning. On the other hand, it offers the chance to think of bodies as processes of becoming rather than as static, closed and docile. Hence, both implications of openness and malleability return. Useful in distinguishing between them is Malabou's distinction between flexibility and plasticity. Malabou develops her theory of plasticity not only from philosophy but also with regard to neuroscience, noting that terms within brain science, such as 'neuronal plasticity,' and 'synaptic plasticity' have an important relationship to the formation of the subject and capitalist society.⁴⁹⁴ Flexibility is plasticity's 'mistaken cognate': both flexibility and plasticity require openness and malleability. Flexibility, however, is defined in its moulding from society, the demand to bend to ever increasing pressures of working life, for example, through 'part-time jobs, temporary contracts, the demand for absolute mobility and adaptability' (p. 10). Flexibility is docile. Plasticity, however, for Malabou implies a two-fold movement in every form created: a movement of yielding, but also one of resistance. It is a process of creative destruction: 'if we didn't destroy ourselves a bit, we could not live' (p. 74). Dance, in the words of Erin Manning, as 'pure plastic rhythm,' expresses this sort of plasticity: a constant formation and reformation of the body. But it is a plasticity that extends beyond habit, one in which life is defined by

⁴⁹³ Allegra Fuller Snyder, *Experience and Experiencing*

<a>http://www.thirteen.org/bucky/allegra.html> [accessed 23rd January 2015].

⁴⁹⁴ Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 4.

intensity. True mind-body plasticity leads to rethinking comfort as movement, both in terms of physical movement and as philosophical movement through Deleuze's new dialectic, reached not only by rethinking bodies but as a mode of bodily thinking.

Conclusion: Towards a New Sensibility of Comfort

Bodies are not volumes but coastlines; irresolvable but undelimitable penetrabilities, opportunities for the real decomposition of space.

-Nick Land⁴⁹⁵

At the outset of this thesis the idea of corporeal comfort was brought into question in relation to the notion of the bounded body. Marking a departure from the vast body of existing literature on the theme of comfort, I sought to approach the topic from a different angle; one which captured a notion of well-being which has never really left the idea from its etymological origins, from the Latin *confortāre*, to give strength or to strengthen, to John Crowley's present day definition, 'a self-conscious satisfaction between one's body and its immediate physical environment.'⁴⁹⁶ It has been precisely this 'in-between' the body and its environment which has been called into question on a genealogical journey through the different conceptions of bodies explored from 1840 to the present day and their bearing on our understanding of comfort.

Theories of boundedness have led to passive connotations of comfort, as the avoidance of stimuli or a zero grade feeling. As a result, comfort has been constituted as a middle or in-between itself, to borrow Foucault's phrase, the middle range of pleasures that make up everyday life. By bringing the middle or in-between into question, comfort need not be thought of in these terms. Rather, following the Spinoza-Nietzsche-Deleuze trajectory, comfort becomes affective, intense and joyous. That is not to take it away from its position as part of the everyday, but to note that the active and affective are experienced as microperceptions, beneath the threshold of consciousness. And this returns us again to Crowley's definition, questioning comfort as a 'self-conscious satisfaction,' and asking what role consciousness need occupy in a definition of comfort. Rather than a sensibility of becoming-comfortable. More than specifying that comfort is a feeling, this

⁴⁹⁵ Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 161.

⁴⁹⁶ Crowley, 1999, p. 750

sensibility, following Deleuze, is the first beyond of the pleasure principle (and therefore the bounded body), where sensation is not a given. Sensation itself is involved in a process of becoming, formed in an encounter between a body and the Whole, and this is what takes it away from forming a passive subject. A passive synthesis of time gives way to the habits that create organs, and also forms the basis to Freud's pleasure principle – a synthesis of time which assumes that sensation already exists so that it may be repeated.⁴⁹⁷ However, thinking movement beyond the Hegelian dialectic and beyond a passive synthesis, exemplified through actual movement of the body, can lead to different ways to thinking comfort through or with the body. A dancerly mode of thought where sensation does not refer to conscious thought but becomes a mode of thinking-feeling allows us to further explore what a body is and what it can do.

Central for this production of active subjectivity has been Deleuze's theory of asymmetrical synthesis, where an 'I' is not identical to a self. This carries through to the formation of the body in a body without organs, where a body does not represent or mediate anything. Bodies are constituted as form gives way to encounters of forces, dynamic and fortuitous. This formation of an open-ended body takes its inspiration from thinking around open systems, whereby asymmetry exists at the threshold of a system. This gradient is an intensity, a becoming, a space on the threshold of death that is necessary for life. Comfort can never be a constant, entropic state, a monotonous 22 degrees, a form of stasis, a keeping within the boundaries; it must always be on the verge of or coupled with discomfort to exist. In addition, comfort does not have to be defined negatively in relation to discomfort. One can exist in the other as microperceptions shift beneath the level of consciousness. Whereas the bounded body has been at stake in this thesis, it is important to note that challenging the notion of the bounded body has not led to the dissolution of borders, membranes and fringes, but instead has multiplied them. From Sloterdijk's intersubjective spheres to Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs, they are multiplied, transgressed, broken and reinforced. It is therefore not openness itself that leads to an active reading of comfort (this can in fact lead to quite the opposite if the body is thought of as inscriptive surface, as Foucault's notion of docile bodies has shown), but rather the notion of in-between spaces as

⁴⁹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 120.

productive thresholds. Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs takes many forms which go some way to achieving it, but go off the rails, existing too close to death, (the anorexic, the alcoholic, the drug addict). Perhaps the closest that Deleuze came to finding a motif was the 'intense egg,' which is a fitting example for comfort. Rather than signifying embryonic life that is protected by a shell, the full or intense egg is the egg that is always carried around. Adding a dimension to Sloterdijk's creation of spheres, this egg is populated by 'gradients, migration, zones of proximity'⁴⁹⁸ – always reconstructing itself. It acts as a motif of comfort that marks a departure from shelter and protection whereby the shell is posited as intensive milieu rather than a divide. However, the topological ideas of self-organisation and continuity that are important in this intensive understanding of comfort raise further questions. Whilst the sensibility of comfort I have proposed aims to challenge the subject/object dualism, the questions of disruption, stoppage and the discrete in relation to the ideas discussed merit further attention, as the phenomenological aspect of the experience of comfort cannot be ignored. Whilst ideas of the intentional, phenomenological body have been contested, the question of experience remains pertinent to comfort. As Brian Massumi remarks,

We ourselves, as spatially located forms in regular interaction with other forms, as embodied subjects in reciprocity with objects – we ourselves must be co-occurrences with depth and boundary, co-emergences of concentration and stoppage, companion arrests, fall-out and befallen. "We" ourselves are stoppage events in the flow of experience.⁴⁹⁹

With reference to Deleuze and Guattari's topological approach, Steven M. Rosen comments on the tendency of topological ideas to create new oppositions rather than fully dissolving existing binary terms. For example, becoming is contrasted to being, and difference is privileged over identity.⁵⁰⁰ The active and affective understanding of comfort emphasised in this thesis could therefore be said to privilege movement over stasis and continuity over the discrete. There is therefore scope to develop more

⁴⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004).

⁴⁹⁹ Brian Massumi, 'Sensing the Virtual, Building the Insensible', in Gary Genosko (ed), *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1066-1084, p. 1077.

⁵⁰⁰ Steven M. Rosen, *Topologies of the Flesh: A Multidimensional Exploration of the Lifeworld* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006).

subtle topological thinking around the cuts and breaks within the continuous aspects accentuated in this work.

It has become apparent that comfort, requiring some notion of limits, borders and boundaries, is an event concerning transcending the limitations of the body. This has been the case when mapping comfort through the Christian tradition to industrial capitalism to late modernity – from ghostly comforts to the utopian body to the thermodynamic body. A Christian definition of comfort as consolation came about due to the insistence of the soul and the idea of salvation, positing comfort in the ghostly or other worldly. This led, according to Nietzsche, to a false reversal between comfort and discomfort, where suffering was used as a method of control by the ascetic priest, to keep the weak in their place. To truly find comfort in discomfort, for Nietzsche, was to live in the 'this worldly,' to affirm both ill-being and well-being without one being the negation of the other. As Nietzsche warned, the death of God did not necessarily signal a change in the formation of the subject, and hence, we continue to see the other worldly in wishes for a utopian body expressed in late modern cultural forms. Nietzsche's body, read by Klossowski and then Deleuze, signals a body aligned with immanent comfort, comfort that exists in itself and is a now-here rather than a no-where. Yet it is still a body where we are concerned with a beyond – the beyond for Nietzsche and Deleuze of the feeling of the will to power. This beyond can be found in the space-time of dance, where a body is continually reforming, considering its limits and exploring movement at its edges.

On this note, it is worth going back to comfort's original meaning: to give strength or to strengthen. How could this meaning be attributed to the interpretations of comfort encountered in this study? Throughout this thesis, three definitions of strength emerge with reference to the idea of the body as bounded yet open: resilience, resistance and a third mode, which would look something like a Deleuzian interpretation of Nietzsche's will to power as an aesthetic principle: the feeling of the will to power. In addition, these notions of strength correspond roughly to three types of repetition, creating three notions of comfort space-time.

Resilience

Resilience relates to a sort of pseudo-active comfort. Resilience is a phrase that is increasingly difficult to ignore, permeating contemporary cultural life, as observed by Mark Neocleous. Whilst training courses encourage us to learn resilience in the workplace, the UK government seeks to build up the resilience of its army, police force and population.⁵⁰¹ In addition, the buzz-word has pervaded diet, exercise and self-help literature. It was even part of a strategy to improve the happiness index of the nation, not limited to adults but part of a schools programme introduced by Lord Layard under our current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (p. 6). Resilience has assumed an aspirational status in our culture, with entire studies devoted to developing it. Al Siebert, author of *The Resiliency Advantage* (2005), writes:

Highly resilient people are flexible, adapt to new circumstances quickly, and thrive in constant change. Most important, they expect to bounce back and feel confident that they will. They have a knack for creating good luck out of circumstances that many others see as bad luck.⁵⁰²

This definition was quoted in an article by Jessie Sholl, titled 'The 5 Best Ways to Build Resiliency' (2011), where Sholl clearly saw resilience as an essential quality or life skill. Her '5 ways' included steps such as positive thinking, openness to new experiences, and taking care of one's wellbeing.⁵⁰³ All this is in the hope to 'bounce back' from 'discomfort and adversity,' illustrated by incidents in Sholl's article such as severe accidents and depression. Resilience is a politically loaded buzz-word. As Marc Neocleous writes:

Resilience wants acquiescence, not resistance. Not a passive acquiescence, for sure, in fact quite the opposite. But it does demand that we use our actions to

⁵⁰² Al Siebert, *The Resiliency Advantage* (Berrett-Koehler, 2005), cited in Jessie Sholl, 'The 5 Best Ways to Build Resiliency' in *Experience Life*, September 2011

⁵⁰¹ Marc Neocleous, 'Resisting Resilience', in Radical Philosophy 178 (2013), 2-7, (p.3).

https://experiencelife.com/article/the-5-best-ways-to-build-resiliency/ [accessed 10th January 2015].

⁵⁰³ Sholl, 2011.

accommodate ourselves to capital and the state, and to secure the future of both, rather than to resist them (p. 7).

If resistance implies going against the grain, reliance is a going with the flow, it is essentially adaptive. Not only content with being comfortable in your skin, resilience asks that you develop a thick skin, enforcing the idea of boundedness. Much in line with comfort in terms of a stimulus shield, it does not ask, as Neocleous observes, that stimuli are avoided, Rather, it acknowledges the traumatic subject and the process of formation of the stimulus shield. In doing so, it confirms a boundary or border and a process of exchange between the inside and outside. However, in its adaptive and essentially reactive position, in terms of well-being, resilience always works within the status quo. Resilience is a method of 'bouncing back from traumas.' It is exactly the message adapted by the advertisers of over-the-counter painkillers which advocate resilience to discomfort, ignoring the questions relating to our pain and discontents so that we adhere to the neoliberal demands of working life.

If we were to look at resilience from Nietzsche's perspective, it is perhaps the strength that the ascetic priest supports, distracting the sufferer from his or her everyday worldly discomfort, allowing for a pseudo-transformation of this life dependent on hope of a better, eternal life. It is Nihilistic, in Deleuze's terms, a becoming reactive of forces, 'the victory of no over yes' where 'Life becomes adaptive and regulative, reduced to its secondary forms; we no longer understand what it means to act.'⁵⁰⁴ This reactive form of comfort encourages a false sense of creating well-being through ill-being, a 'becoming sick of all life.' If resilience were to be attributed to a form of repetition, it would be to the automated repetition of the same, where sensation diminishes, yet where repetition is sought due to a want to experience the sensation. Sensation itself is detached from a process of intensive becoming.

Resistance

The difference between resilience and resistance in terms of its meaning relating to strength in comfort can be conceptualised through Catherine Malabou's definition of flexibility in opposition to plasticity. Although both concepts, flexibility and

⁵⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze, 'Nietzsche', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), pp. 53-102, p. 75.

plasticity, require the openness of the body, subject or brain, Malabou states that flexibility is the 'ideological avatar of plasticity, at once its mask, its diversion, and its confiscation.⁵⁰⁵ Flexibility, central to the idea of resilience, is another term we see commonly associated with capital - as Malabou notes, in ideas such as flexitime or flexible working (p. 12), reflected in the zero hour contract of today. Flexibility is 'the demand for absolute mobility and adaptability' (p. 10). This is essentially resilience. It is the capacity to receive form and adapt without resistance. Plasticity, on the other hand, sees the constant negotiation between receiving and giving form, between creation and destruction. If plastic materials do not return to their original form, there is room for transformation, not only of the body but of the Whole. A strength based on plasticity is one of resistance. It is a well-being which relies on the coexistence of sickness and health, comfort and discomfort. Drawing on Alan Ehrenberg's words, 'the individual today...is neither sick nor healed. He is enrolled in multiple maintenance programs' (p. 68), Malbou refers to flexibility (and therefore we would note resilience) as 'chronic health.' This sort of health, or fitness, is perhaps no different to the influence of the ascetic priest. In conclusion, showing a close synergy with Neocleous, Malabou writes:

What we are lacking is *life*, which is to say: *resistance*. Resistance is what we want. Resistance to flexibility, to this ideological norm advanced consciously or otherwise by a reductionist discourse that models and naturalizes the neuronal process in order to legitimate a certain social and political framing (p. 68).

Resistance implies a life or strength that holds onto the notion of the dialectic, and therefore the notion of the body and the world. Through an interaction of forces, the body is created through forces of habit that are truly plastic. According to Žižek's reading of Malabou's work, 'the subtle plasticity of habits proper' signal a different type of repetition to 'zombie-like sluggish automated movements' – the zombie being a zero-level form of life. Life as resistance is an affective life, but one whose affective quality is posited in negation.⁵⁰⁶ Again, according to Žižek, the feeling

⁵⁰⁵ Catherine Malabou, *What Should we do with Our Brain*? trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 12.

⁵⁰⁶ Slavoj Žižek, Madness and Habit in German Idealism, Part 1 <http://www.lacan.com/zizdaxedandconfused.html> [accessed 4th March 2013].

subject cannot feel its finitude because it is within it, 'we cannot step out of it and perceive its limitation.'

The Feeling of the Will to Power

Could there be a third sense of strength that goes not only beyond resilience, but beyond resistance? A form of strength that is neither 'with' nor 'against' a dominant flow? A strength that is neither a sickness of all life, nor a form of 'chronic health'? A strength that goes beyond the traumatic subject protecting itself from stimuli? In her own reading of a post-traumatic subject, Malabou theorises the destructive capacity of plasticity outside of repetition through the example of Alzheimer's. Representing a break in the continuity of the subject, Alzheimer's is a shock that cannot be incorporated into the subject, and hence a new subject emerges, a subject without a past and without memory.⁵⁰⁷ Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche implies another beyond of the traumatic subject and bounded body whereby the body is composed of a relation of forces; it is a fortuitous body of becoming, never fixed in its identity. This body is related to Deleuze's reading of the eternal return and the will to power, which for Deleuze are directly related. Aligned with Deleuze's theory of difference in repetition, the eternal return must be read as the return of difference. The will to power continues to involve 'plastic principles' for Deleuze.⁵⁰⁸ In addition, it is always, following Spinoza, 'manifested as the capacity for being affected, as the determinate capacity of force for being affected,' where the former is not a passivity but a 'sensibility, a sensation' (p. 58). Whether acting, reacting, being separated from or turning internally towards forces, all encounters between forces are processes of 'sensible becoming.' This mode of living or becoming, a life, affirmative, singular, indefinite and non-individual, goes beyond the Hegelian dialectic and specifies a strength that is something other than resistance. It is a strength that is purely sensible, where sensation is not directly related to the thinking subject. A comfort based on a relation of forces configures strength as neither a with nor against.

⁵⁰⁷ Catherine Malabou, *The New Wounded*, trans. Steven Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁵⁰⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 46.

By reconfiguring a sensibility of comfort from John Crowley's 'selfconscious satisfaction between one's body and its immediate physical environment'⁵⁰⁹ to a sensibility based on a body composed of a relation of forces, comfort becomes concerned with an aesthetic not to do with taste and style, but one in its original sense, of the body. This body, not completely devoid of borders and boundaries, but instead fringed with thresholds and transformative spaces, leads to a new kind of strength-giving, one of a feeling of strength where the outside is not in opposition to the inside, and one where the body is not in opposition to its surroundings. This intensive feeling of strength is bound to a space-time of the body defined by affirmative difference, a body that is always in a process of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, a body that feels its limits, moves beyond them and forms new ones.

The Future of Comfort

The doctrine of habit, reliant on the bounded body, is for Catherine Malabou the anticipation of the future – the way by which the organism anticipates what it is. Without boundedness there is no future. But, according to Claire Colebrook, boundedness itself traps us into thinking anthropocentrically; paradoxically with boundedness there is no future. The bounded body forms an obstacle to thinking beyond 'bounded organisms, egos, self-interested subjects and upright citizens, whereby we 'remain mired in the narcissistic captivation that regards the world only in terms of the viability of our own sensory-motor apparatus.⁵¹⁰ Poised on the brink of extinction, we need to think what life might be outside of our Anthropocene era. As Colebrook has already hinted, non-organic, non-relational and non-bounded life that does not live in a 'trauma-sensitive membrane' needs to be addressed, for example, viral life. Comfort beyond sensitivity to trauma has been central to this thesis, but the question as to whether affective comfort is predicated on the (organic) body remains. This calls for plasticity in our perception of the affective, urging us to ask if there is such an experience or event of comfort without a body. Considering life as singular and indefinite forces us to consider what comfort means for a body also singular and indefinite and not limited to the organic, leading back to Spinoza's

⁵⁰⁹ Crowley,1999, p. 750.

⁵¹⁰ Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 42.

question reiterated by Deleuze – what can a body do? For Brian Massumi, a body moves and it feels. Yet, this definition has already been challenged by Stamatia Portanova in her 2013 book *Moving Without a Body*, which, through a mode of choreographic inquiry, takes movement away from anthropocentric thought and organic life. In seeing the virtual as 'incorporeal potential for variation,' Portanova departs from Massumi's centrality of the body in the notion of affect where it is 'not equated with any sensed or material continuity.'⁵¹¹ Similarly, Eleni Ikoniadou's *The Rhythmic Event* (2014) enforces the affective state of non-organic forms. Thinking with the body, or bodily thinking, needs to extend to the non-organic to continue to transgress the boundaries of comfort.

⁵¹¹ Stamatia Portanova, *Moving Without a Body: Digital Philosophy and Choreographic Thought* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2013), p. 9.

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