

Symposium on

“Practices, Bodies and Things in Pedagogy”

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Practices do not primarily refer to methods of teaching, learning or strategies to improve these. Neither do they refer to outcomes of teaching and learning. They can, however, involve affective perspectives, rituals, intergenerational relationships. Practices can for instance describe how a child interacts with sand whilst playing in the schoolyard, thus learning about the shape and form of materials. Practices can refer to the tacit dimensions of rituals and performativity. Practices can refer to how teachers work with turn-taking in a classroom building, with climates of interaction and with the question how the polyphone voices of the students are facilitated. Practices can also describe students thoughts captured by recording devices through which students are able to document their reflexion during an ongoing lesson in an earpeace and compare these with students doing the same from a variety of countries. Just as practices can compare the pro's and con's of a digital dissection of frogs to a live dissection in biology education etc. Practices then describe the many diverse activities, which can be observed or documented within pedagogy. Practices also demand the development of new methodological considerations. And in attempting to address these we must turn to diverse practitioners in fields related to or supporting pedagogic activity such as artists, film-makers, sculptures and musicians. An understanding of their attempts at documenting fields of corporality can enable researchers to find new perspectives regarding their own attempts to do the same. This co-operation is enabling groups of researchers to expand their documentation techniques and their methods of analysis. Practices enable us to develop new perspectives on the classroom and an understanding of our own practices as teachers. Practices also aim to achieve a student perspective so as to better understand how to develop pedagogical practices to become an intergenerational experience where the working environment is not constantly understood and constructed from the teacher's view-point.

Further information: tacitdimensions.wordpress.com

What is Materiality in Pedagogy?

Anja Kraus

It is quite puzzling that, as Florian von Rosenberg shows, the German Qualitative Empirical Research in pedagogy today focusses on subjectivity by to a great deal leaving out, or even “forgetting the world”¹ (Rosenberg 2011: 49).

Hans-Christoph Koller & Arnd-Michael Nohl (2010) answer to this lack with the task to work out the genesis and the inter-relational constitution of the subject and the world from a transactional perspective. In empirical research this perspective is supposed to disclose diverse social formations and the research on them as well as to remodel the research on the processes of Bildung.

Their approach meets with the critical approach of phenomenology to sciences (cp. Lippitz 2003) by working out the pre-scientific and non-scientific roots and backgrounds of theories, terms and scientific approaches (cp. Merleau-Ponty 1966, 1976; Straus 1956).

Obviously, there are two sides of materiality in pedagogy, as to say, its methodological and its thematic side that have to be beard in mind.

Let me at first unfold several...

Approaches to Materiality in the Field of Pedagogy

According to the critical approach to pedagogy referring to the Frankfurt School things deeply influence education, socialization and our learning, and by this our behavior. Praxis is understood here as modeled by and remodeling the objective (societal) reality (cp. Holzkamp 1988: 17).

¹ „Weltvergessenheit“

However, today it is scarcely possible to regard societal reality as something objective.

Anyway, the field of empirical research on things in pedagogy appears to be ruled by the commitment to make out some kind of objective matter and material effects of things on social affairs and relations.

Thus, in Germany, e.g. Michael Parmentier in 1998 pleaded for a structural empirical analysis to investigate the “[...] objective logic of the use of things, independent from the accidental acting of an individual”² (1998: 114f.). Manfred Lueger (2000) proposes an analysis in three steps. Arnd-Michael Nohls “Pedagogy of the Things”, published in the year 2011, affirms Parmentier’s approach and Lueger’s model.

Multispecies Ethnography explores biological and ecological alliances, symbiotic attachments, the mingling of diverse (not only human) creative agents and interspecies sense-making.

Besides that, in Phenomenological Pedagogy referring to Herman Schmitz concepts of atmosphere and temper (cp. Schultheis 1998; Goetz 2007 etc.) things are conceptualized as affecting us as individuals and our social bindings obscurely and to a high degree.

Let me mention a critical point concerning more or less all these materialistic approaches.

Their limits become clear, when e.g. Hans-Michael Nohl (2011: 200) in the field of processes of Bildung, in reference to G.-H. Mead, even regard the things as “significant and generalized others”, or stresses their not binding, but anyway distinct and also distinctive appealing character. Things are supposed to open up possibilities to unfold someone’s own capacities. This might be true for some degree in handicraft, in doing art, theatre, design, architecture etc. or for technical devices, but the idea of a thing “acting” like a person is rather puzzling. There is no doubt that there are strong impulses and effects deriving from things in our handling with them. Anyway, I plead for minding a new materialistic pragmatism that might not at last merge into the concepts of the development and application of competences and of learning in school. As by doing this we would join the choir of the general and rather materialistic and pragmatic approach to the acquisition of competences.

In order to take the agency of things to some degree into account, I will stick to the point of the Psychoanalytical Pedagogy of Karl Josef Pazzini (1983) to relate the effects (here in special the rather well introduced psychoanalysis) of things not so much to learning, but to socialization. I will develop this point later.

Anyway, we cannot think of any human state of mind without taking materiality into account. Human cultures are largely constituted by things in the sense that it is culturally important how one deal with a certain thing and where a thing is situated. Things link social and psychological realities and they function also as means for the reproduction of these realities. Karl Mannheim (1980: 207) describes the interrelation between the things of the world and human beings as a “contagion”: That is to say, in our meeting up and dealing with things we enter into conjunctive interactional spaces like plural social milieus and traditions,

² All quotations are translated by the author. In German: „objektiven Logik ihres Gebrauchs, unabhängig von den Zufälligkeiten des jeweils handelnden menschlichen Individuums“

characterized by certain frames and measures of orientation, habits, tempers etc. (cp. Nohl 2011: 197). Besides the things, there are other factors such as gender, social class, generation, urban development etc. that constitute conjunctive interactional spaces as well. Usually we look at such spaces as if they were merely given; to think e.g. of small children who regard it as normal to travel by train or airplane. Besides that, there are also things that peak into our presence in an extraneous, exotic, out-of-fashioned or foreign and rather unrelated way (Nohl 2011: 198f.). Such things might be a part of our cultural heritage and memory, or they might count for nothing. – Thus, in transactional processes social appreciation plays an important role. On one side the abilities to relate to oneself, to the things and to others in a realistic way, to act competently and to abstract from the own personality are the reasons for social respect and appreciation. On the other side and on the other way round these abilities are based on social respect and appreciation (cp. Stojanov 2010: 561), as the way we deal with things is deeply connected to our social attachments and to our social standing. Thus, things may in fact signify psychological as well as social realities as the two sides of human existence to some degree. By looking at the use of things, we therefore may get a certain basis for the analysis of psychological, in their interrelation with social realities, but such a possibility is as limited as the perspectives on gender, on social class, on life age etc. are. Thus, processes of socializing may be described rather precisely by “contagions” and by “transactional spaces”, but I argue for not to overestimate the significance of these concepts in respect of learning.

In contrary, I will show that in the process of learning “contagions” and “transactional spaces” are surpassed in a way.

I start from the concept that the diverse constitutive processes deriving from the things mainly display in the medium of our bodily practices and knowledge as they derive from adaptations to the surroundings (in imitations, mimetical interpretations and modifications etc.). Thus, our bodiliness, as to say our movements, habits, gestures etc., is to a great deal influenced and formed by the things in the way of answering to material challenges (Leontjew 1973: 292 and Holzkamp 1986: 192). Already in the gaze of very small children and in their first intonations social and cultural influences can be recognized. In short, in our bodiliness we seem to be abandoned to the world, as we are to the others.

Anyway, just by depicting also the potentials of emancipation from socialization, from the given interrelations with others and with the things, we arrive at learning, which I take here, according to the phenomenological approach (cp. Lippitz 2003), as *Bildung*, - and, as Käte Meyer-Drawe (2008: 90) points out: „The How of learning retreats into darkness.” „Just what one wants to see stays invisible [scil. I add: for a direct observance], such as: the beginning of learning, its course, its dramaturgy...”

In the field of phenomenology it is, also empirically, worked out that we are able to develop our knowledge by spontaneously and partly intentionally testing out and developing further our operations and ways of behavior and acting. Here, individuals are seen as *sujet*-subjects (Meyer-Drawe 1990: 151): “The subject is neither subordinated (*sujet*) nor sovereign (subject).”³ “Autonomy and heteronomy are no alternatives”⁴ (ibid.: 152). Our possibility to surpass at least aspects of our heteronomy constitutes a glance of sovereignty and

³ “Das Subjekt ist weder nur Untertan (*Sujet*) noch nur Souverän (*Subjekt*).”

⁴ “Autonomie und Heteronomie existieren niemals als reale Alternative.”

emancipation. In this regard, the potentials of *Bildung* to transform a given constitutive social, institutional, societal frame are at stake. At the same time, a complete autonomy is impossible as it is deeply entangled to our restricted possibilities to reveal and to analyze the diverse layers of our heteronomy. Anyway, that does not mean to give up emancipation at all.

This is a rather abstract argumentation. Therefore I will turn to operative pedagogy to work out some material dimensions of pedagogy.

“Showing” and “it shows” in pedagogy

Materiality in pedagogy respectively in didactics usually refers to “showing” (Prange 2005).

Klaus Prange (2005) interprets “showing” as a pedagogical practice of explaining something definite and distinct to somebody or making somebody understand something (dass er sich etwas selbst erklären kann). - I already pointed out the bodily origin of learning. What does this concept mean for the notion “*it shows*” (in German “es zeigt *sich*”, so to say “it shows *itself*”)? Here it comes into sight that and how verbal-discursive structures are accompanied by non-verbal, structural, imaginary and bodily realities. Thus, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1973) works out also potentials of “showing” that lie beyond language: somebody or *something shows something*, or: I got *something*. Gottfried Böhm (2007) stresses the “surplus of sense(-making)” (“sinnerzeugender Überschuss”) in the “it shows”, and as well Eureka (εὕρηκα) respectively “I got it” is a connotation of “it shows”. “Showing” is in a way the expression for a didactics that reaches its aims.

Thus, by figuring out the different kinds of “showing”, one can expect that some central material dimensions in pedagogy can be explored in an empirical way.

I will give an example of an art performance, *MOMA GOES ON!* (2004) by Ellen Kobe, and I argue that here a sense-making by pre-reflexive processes, merging only partly into reflexivity, become visible.



Ellen Kobe: *MOMA GOES ON!*, Performance in Berlin's New National Gallery, 2004, © Berliner Zeitung / Gerd Engelsmann

Ellen Kobe

*MOMA GOES ON!*⁵

The display of works from New York's MoMA-collection in Berlin's New National Gallery released an enormous public attention in Germany. The MoMA as well as certain particularly well known oil

⁵ The text is translated by Marvin Altner.

paintings became part of the collective (un-) consciousness of people in Germany.

After having worked as a tour guide in the MoMA-exhibition for six months, finding myself in between the stream of visitors and the works of art almost daily I have developed the idea for an art project called MOMA GOES ON!.

It consists out of a video-work and a series of colour-photographies.

When the exhibition closes the 19th of September, there will be a gap between the lively memories of over a million visitors and the expectations of many who did not have the chance to see it.

In the video MOMA GOES ON! I will continue my tour in front of the empty white walls of the New National Gallery. After over 300 tours through the exhibition the talking about art has become independent from the paintings. As if sleeping I am finding words about works, which are no longer present.

My aim is to question, how spoken language might evoke the missing pictures from collective memory into concrete observation and imagination.

In MOMA GOES ON! photographies are supposed to represent the originals and serve as hints, which might be the works I am commenting on in the video.

Before the exhibition ends I wish to photograph some of the MoMA-paintings – those I am regularly commenting on in my tours – in such a way, that a fragment of my body appears in front of each picture, so that it seems as if the person speaking becomes part of the picture. The works of modern art thus become animated through the photographic cut out.

Conception: Ellen Kobe

Kamera: Axel Gerke

Sound: Andreas Prescher

Cutting: Maude Fornaro Jouck

Music: Modest Mussorgsky—Pictures Bilder einer Ausstellung

In *MOMA GOES ON!* it is not only the spoken, performative and pantomimic, all to say deictic mode of presenting something (here, theories about art and art history), but the whole situation that comes to expression: the societal significance of the extremely popular, but finished exhibition of master works of art from New York's MoMA-collection in Berlin's New National Gallery; the empty rooms; the mental states of a museum guide (the artist); the typical gestures and habits connected to a guidance in the museum etc. Supposedly all these factors of sense-making arise, because the material object of *MOMA GOES ON!*, the *thing*, is actually missing. The spectators, without already having a concept of this thing at hand, interpret their aesthetical responses to the whole situation to get a feeling of it respectively to learn from the situation. They also have to emancipate from the bizarre and weird situation to reflect on it by bringing the things they already know and their own expectations into a new order, which makes it possible for new things to emerge.

According to the phenomenological approach a cognitive grasping of sense cannot be abstracted from experiences in the real world. The experience of sense is moreover a complex mesh of borders, contrasts and metonymies characterised by ambiguities and simulations that derive, as Waldenfels (2002: 165) points out, from an abundance of colour, sound, light, space, language, etc. Gernot Boehme (1986: 293) describes this point as follows: "Our eyes are not opposite to the things, they are not only scanning them with the eyeshot, but our eyes are in the things as well as the things are in them. Images not only sketch a world of objects in distance, but also a world, in which the emerging of reality becomes visible; defining itself as a kind of subject. [...] We live *in* the world and not *before* the world". We cannot position

ourselves outside our bodies, and “[...] the distinction between subject and object is blurred in my body” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 167). In the process of experiencing, our position is not in front of the objects, as our view *on* the objects suggests, but *within* them (feeling the warmth of the sun etc.). Our body is undercutting the dichotomy between the transparency of consciousness and the opacity of the objective reality, as the measures, meanings, coherences, as well as the qualities and values of given facts derive from the coordination of internal and external realities. That means, if a perception makes sense to an individual, cognitive elements are included (only) as certain aspects of this perception. This corresponds with the transactional perspective that according to John Dewey & Arthur F. Bentley (1989: 101f.) does not start from a “fundamental difference of subject vs. object” and concentrates on the reconstruction of a praxis by human beings and things not as “independent `entities’”, “essences” or “realities”.

We cannot reflect on our living body as such, neither we can grasp nor express it. It is a point zero for us. Although cultural, social, societal and individual compartments are in a way (pre)reflected in the body, it itself remains beyond theory. “Insofar as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object, ever being *completely constituted*, is that it is the instance by which there are objects.” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 92)

In *MOMA GOES ON!* the missing object or thing is constituted in the perceptive field of the spectator in a decelerated way, he or she witnesses this as a gradual constitution of sense (and nonsense) in his or her mind and gets aware of the process of sense making. Thus, in *MOMA GOES ON!* making sense turns out to be a competence itself.⁶

So to say, by behaving as an ordinary audience the spectators answer to the performance in a *communicative* way; in this regard the situation makes a kind of common sense. The *material* rationality makes out the actual importance of the procedures at hand, which are obviously lacking the thing at hand. Therefor significance can be constituted here only by reacting *responsively* to the actual situation, to *the missing thing* (cp. Waldenfels 1998). That is to say, by taking the whole site into account, by trying to get the intentions of the artist, own associations etc., we may learn from it. Then, our *formal* rationality decodes the universal sense of the happening for example by associatively transferring the happening to the social critique in “The Emperor’s New Clothes” by H.C. Andersen and maybe gets also the differences to this critique. Besides that, there is also a rationality of consistency and provability, of instrumental or strategical reasons, a rationality focussing on ethical values etc. (cp Lenk 1988). These forms of rationality can take place when one reflects on the artistic happening afterwards.

This analysis outlines the different layers of the significance of materiality for education and learning, besides that, I want to accentuate its result that making sense is a competence itself that has to be studied as a practice.

In methodological regards I plead for process analysis and for a growing sensitivity for the quality of data in social sciences as an important side of materiality in scientific pedagogy.

⁶ This implies that artworks can serve as empirical data in social sciences, but I will not go deeper into that.

Acknowledgements

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