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THE CONCEPT AND PHENOMENON OF TOUCH

MASTER'S THESIS

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Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis has been generated by me as the result of my own original research. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the concept and phenomenon of touch. It begins by demonstrating that touch is problematic for a “Science of Touch” and for human beings as well. In this context, the notion of embodiment is re-thought in order to open the discursive space for a study of touch that takes into consideration all the difficulties implied in it. The study identifies in the phenomenon of touch an element that makes the self-identity of a science of touch and of embodiment impossible. This element is the concept of self-difference. The latter conceptualisation enables the author to differentiate between the concept and the phenomenon of touch, through which the acceptance of the notion of the sense is criticised.

The author identifies two different modes of embodiment, which are characterised as the Western embodiment and the Papua New Guinean embodiment. Even if holding the same structure, these two modes of embodiment differ greatly not only on the level of content, but also on that of form. Touch as self-difference, representing the contingent element that embodiment cannot integrate, is veiled and excluded in the process of embodiment. The experiences of naturalness and dearness, which are constitutional for embodiment, are analysed in order to show the mechanism of exclusion and veiling, but also the very prepositions of its functioning.

In order to make visible the self-difference of touch in embodiment, a reading of Freud’s theory of the joke and the technique of touching the forehead of the patient is undertaken. The author demonstrates the homology of the structure of the joke and that of touch, while exploring the dimensions of this homology in anthropology. The research ends with the conclusion that what makes touch problematic is its relation to sexuality.

Keywords: touch, embodiment, senses, tact, joke, sexuality

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PREFACE

My interest in the phenomenon of touch arose during the writing of my bachelor's thesis, entitled *Epilepsy as a Taboo: From Freud to Lacan*, where I dedicated one short chapter to the afore-mentioned object of my present research. However, at the time, I did not sense the importance of the question, but also the paradoxes that the study of touch implied. In fact, I proposed, to the readers of my diploma thesis, a relatively simple theory or rather an explanation of the functions of touch, its prohibitions and other "reactions" to touch, which were implicitly linked to epilepsy. In connecting a general theory of pollution, which argues for a process of identification on the basis of different levels of contacts and the Freudian theory of taboo, I proposed a (far too) simple explanation that suited its purpose at that time – which was to demonstrate the fundamental "obsessive" relation adopted by the biomedical subject towards epilepsy and epileptics.

Only after the thesis was written and only after I had read many books on that matter, did I realise that a theory of pollution has nothing to do with touch. Through various "retrospectives" and self-critiques of my bachelor's thesis, I have come to realise that the part of it that posed the most interesting questions has remained unanswered.

My post-graduate study in anthropology has given me the opportunity to articulate those questions and also to answer them. How the afore-mentioned study was first born is a story in itself. I am obliged to share it with the reader in order for him to better understand the process of writing the study's findings and conclusions.

From the very beginning, I had intended to pursue a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Nova Gorica. I expressed my desire to my mentor, Prof. Borut Telban to conduct fieldwork in Papua New Guinea. Being the only PNG specialist in Slovenia, he advised me to write a theoretical master's thesis at the University of Nova Gorica and enrol in a Ph.D. research programme in Australia, where there are a great many professors who have devoted their careers to the study of small-scale societies in Papua New Guinea.

Following my mentor's advice I have written an entirely theoretical master's thesis, which analyses ethnographic data gathered by other anthropologists. In the second year

of my studies, I spent nine months at the University of Trieste, Italy, at the Department of Philosophy with Prof. Raoul Kirchmayr conducting research entitled *The sense of touch in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, in the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and in anthropology*. The intent of the research, which was made possible with a scholarship from the Italian Government, was to devote a particular amount of time to the theoretical part of my Ph.D. However, Telban's advice has changed my plans in Italy. The accomplished work there, previously intended to represent the theoretical part of my Ph.D., has become the central part or backbone of what is today my master's thesis. Accordingly, I have asked Prof. Raoul Kirchmayr to supervise my thesis, together with Prof. Borut Telban.

However, even though I spent much time reading mainly philosophy, I still had to write an anthropological study. At the beginning of the process of writing, this fact represented a major problem for me, because anthropology beholds a specific scientific discourse of its own, different from that of philosophy. I had to reach a decision whether to introduce philosophical concepts to the anthropological reader or rather develop these same concepts from the anthropological discourse. I chose the second option, because I believe it guarantees for a more apprehensible text, but it also makes the text more fluent, because additional introductions of different philosophical concepts are no longer needed. To the reader, this choice may appear simple and plain. However, I have to emphasise that many pages have been written "in vain" and many times the structure of the thesis has been changed in order to articulate the two possibilities presented above.

Before coming to the introductory part of the study, I would like to argue in defence of a wholly theoretical thesis, which hardly represents an anthropological work. Following the advice of Prof. Telban, it turned out to be absolutely legitimate and particularly thoughtful advice. In fact, through the process of writing my thesis, I have acknowledged the fact that many ethnographic data, especially that of the anthropology of the senses, did not suit my theoretical demands, because they gave emphasis to those parts of the phenomena of touch that I was not interested in. This is partly due to my "unconventional" approach to the question of touch, which requires, in the last instance, unconventional fieldwork. Having said that, it becomes clear that my theoretical master's thesis represents an initial stage in the pursuit of a fieldwork in Papua New Guinea.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE RESEARCH

The sense of touch has been characterised by many authors as the most paradoxical among the other senses. Aristotle was one of the first who in his book *On the Soul* (lat. *De Anima*, gr. *Peri Psyches*) wrote that among the “five senses”¹ touch seems to be the most enigmatic, because the medium, the object and the organ of touch do not correspond to the schema of the other senses. He also affirmed that touch, besides being impossible to categorise, also makes categorisation as such difficult (See Aristotle 2002: 165–171)². Also Kathryn Linn Geurts, who conducted research on sensory experience in Anlo-land among the Anlo-Ewe people³ in Ghana, said that the phenomenon that she considers as “touch” involved many conceptual problems. As she puts it, “there seems to be a profusion of expressions for what all seemed to be ‘tactility’.” (Geurts 2002: 55) Geurts even says that the investigation of touch was so complex that she proposes taking her model as a provisional scheme (Geurts 2002: 55).

Regarding the complex relation between touch and representation, already exposed by Geurts, Mazzi (2006: 92) declares that: “Touch is not only difficult to account for, but it is difficult to count. Touch is a relative insubstantial unit; it is neither a piece, a part, but rather a point, which almost resists quantification.” She adds that: “Although one might think the human hand an easy metonymy for touch, this was not always or even usually the case. [...] This sense without a metonymy itself becomes metonymic in much

¹ Within Western history we find, aside from the customary grouping into five senses, enumerations of four, six or seven senses described at different periods by different persons. Thus, for example, taste and touch are sometimes grouped together as one sense, and touch is sometimes divided into several senses (Classen 1997: 401).

² Aristotle’s investigation of touch must be taken seriously, because it represents the first philosophical enquiry into it. However, Derrida is right in pointing out that Aristotle interrogated and contested the *doxa* of his time only partially. In *On the Soul*, Aristotle still talks about a *unity* of the sense of touch and of its appearance as such (Derrida 2007: 15–16). The latter is what I am pursuing to contest in this study.

³ As Geurts says, the term *Anlo* is not an easy word to translate or define. It identifies a dialect of Ewe, which is a West African language spoken by many of the people who live in southern Togo and the southern eastern corner of Ghana. But for many Ewe speakers in Ghana, Anlo denotes a specific group of Ewe people who inhabit the coastal area of the Volta Region, around the Keta Lagoon, and whose traditions and dialect have unfairly been taken to represent Ewe culture as a whole (Geurts 2002: 21).

Renaissance drama for the psyche's approach to what the psyche cannot precisely locate or measure" (Mazzio 2006: 88).

The French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu⁴ emphasised the centrality of touch and its cognates in the English language as one of the longest entries in the Oxford English Dictionary (Mazzio 2006: 86).

Elisabeth Hsu, while conducting research on tactile experience in Ancient Chinese medicine, came to the conclusion that difficulties with tactile experience are inevitable for anyone wishing to take it as a basis for a descriptive science. She refers to it as "the paradoxes of a science of touch" (Hsu 2000: 320). After presenting different pulse diagnostics defined by the Ancient Chinese medicine, Hsu says that given the present state of the research, it is impossible to draw any conclusion from the observations. She argues that from a philosophical point of view one may, however, be reminded of Merleau-Ponty's comment⁵ on tactile and visual experience, and take the visualisation of the tactile experience as the most radical attempt to objectify it (Hsu 2000: 327). She concludes her investigation by stating that tactile experience would seem quite unsuitable to establishing a descriptive science (Hsu 2000: 330).

All these authors and others, the number and findings of whom cannot be exhausted here, testify for an immanent impossibility that pertains to the scientific investigation of touch. However, I do not consider this fact to be "frustrating", but rather intriguing. The paradoxical nature of touch, its resistance to intelligible and sensual apprehension, in my opinion, makes it an interesting object of anthropological investigation and inquiry. The fact of an immanent impossibility of a science of touch⁶ (Hsu) encourages this study to begin an investigation of touch from this very impossibility. The intent of this research is

⁴ Didier Anzieu is known among psychoanalysts (at least among those of the Kleinian orientation) for the development of the concept of *Moi-peau* or Ego-skin. His book *Le Moi-peau* and the collection of papers devoted to that book *Didier Anzieu: le Moi-peau et la psychanalyse des limites* edited by Chabert et al. deal with an entity between the psychic and corporeal. Anzieu establishes a homology between the functions of the Ego (to limit, to contain and to organize) and those of the corporeal envelope.

⁵ It is interesting to note that Hsu when acknowledging the "impossibility" of a descriptive science of touch turns her attention to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. In her article *Toward a Science of Touch, Part II: representation of the tactile experience of the Seven pulses indicating danger of death in early modern Europe* the point of impossibility marks at the same time the place of supplementation, that is exercised by philosophy. This "pattern" is not rare in other articles on touch as well.

⁶ Even if the phrase "science of touch" belongs to Hsu, I would nevertheless like to present my own understanding and the use of it. In my opinion, a science of touch covers three research levels: description, measuring and meaning. My intent is to demonstrate that a science of touch on every one of these levels fails to adequately "grasp" its object, while engaged with research on touch.

therefore neither to supplant or refute previous theories nor to propose another comprehensive theory of touch, but rather to research the nature of the limits of those theories coping with the phenomena of touch. However, the expectations of this work are not extensive. Its main objective is to propose some initial theoretical orientations that will enable the reader to start considering the question of touch as the internal limit of science.

In the last 30 years,⁷ the questions and problems related to touch were mostly dealt by the anthropology of the senses⁸ (Howes, Classen, Geurts, Plessner⁹, et al.) and Human Geography (Paterson), but there are also several other anthropologists who contributed to the issue. I argue that the anthropologists who made a major contribution to the aforementioned inquiry were those who were not included in the debate, which is “chaired” by authors belonging to the anthropology of the senses. Their exclusion is most probably due to a “narrowing of the research’s field of touch” by the anthropology of senses, which holds the primate in the investigation on touch. With the notion of “narrowing of the research’s field of touch” I refer to the exclusion of relevant issues and themes already studied by a “classical anthropology”. These latter works have the potential to articulate relevant questions, but also to provide answers regarding the paradoxes connected with the phenomena of touch.

I identify also three general modes of approaching the question of touch that represents the internal limit of science. First, the existing theories and approaches are particular,

⁷ The phrase “cultural anthropology of the senses” was coined by the historian Roy Porter in his preface to *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* by Alain Corbin (1986). The anthropology of the senses did not, however, arise as a distinct field until the late 1980s (Robben and Sluka 2007: 438).

⁸ Anthropology of the senses does not represent a unified paradigm in the anthropological inquiry of the senses. In fact, other authors propose different emphases in research relating to the senses. Nichter, for example, denominates his work as sensorial anthropology (Nichter 2008), which implies the relation to sensations or sensory impressions. In contrast, Yolanda van Ede characterizes her work as the sensuous anthropology (van Ede 2009: 61), which consequently implies the relation to the senses or sensible objects, but also the quality of the latter to produce gratification or sensory appeal.

⁹ Plessner’s book *Anthropology of the Senses* (1970) represents an attempt to produce a synthesis of an older book, almost 50 years older, entitled *The Unity of the Senses: Features of an Esthesiology of the Spirit* (*Die Einheit der Sinne. Grundlinien einer Ästhesiologie des Geistes*) from 1923. The former book represents a precursor of the latter institutionalized anthropology of the senses, but interestingly, in modern authors there cannot be found any references to his work. Plessner identified problems that are today still present. He pointed to the problems of body-mind duality, but in contrast with modern authors who proposed to overcome the duality through the notion of *habitus* or embodiment, he did so through his notion of esthesiology of the spirit. Both *habitus* and embodiment as well as esthesiology have many common traits and the sole proceeding of Plessner in his book is vividly similar to those of modern authors.

which derives from the fact that these theories address only a small part of particular phenomena, which most of the time take the form of representative examples.¹⁰

Second, articles usually refer to other theories, in particular philosophies, in a descriptive and explanatory way, without a deep theoretical concern for further development. Those articles concentrate on a review of existing theories beginning with Aristotle and continuing throughout the history of philosophy. While I do absolutely agree with the need for a historical review of theories on touch, it would, however, also be desirable to achieve some developments and critiques of those theories.¹¹

Third, typical research done by an anthropologist of the senses approaches “all five” senses together and because of its interest in the “totality of human experience” does not take into consideration the vast complexity that touch is involved in.¹²

It should be emphasised that my short commentary on the three forms of approach to the question of touch is not intended simply to be a critique of various authors. It rather begins the research by pointing to the *points of impossibility* inherent to an investigation of touch. If a more attentive look is directed towards those three modes of approaching the question of touch, it can be seen that the three modes correspond to: dispersion, historical narrativisation and unification. The dispersion of the object of the research can be seen through many different topics, which are unrelated. “Historisation” of phenomena can be seen in spreading the problems into many epochs and views. Unification of touch is put into the register of other senses in order to achieve a unified totality, in which touch constitutes its part.

It is my opinion that these three modes of approaching the phenomenon of touch are in a very strict sense “three modes of counting” the phenomenon of touch. These “modes of counting” present the phenomenon of touch as something unattainable and therefore impossible. The mode of dispersion works as a boundless counting of short sequences

¹⁰ The perfect example for this assertion is *The Book of Touch* edited by Classen, in which where a total of 42 articles (and 10 introductions) can be found ranging between 2 and 19 pages in length with an average of 6.8 pages per article. See Constance Classen (ed.) 2005. *The Book of Touch*. Oxford, New York: Berg.

¹¹ The example could be found in almost every book or collection of scientific papers dealing with touch. For example see Mark Paterson (2007). *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies*. Oxford: Berg.

¹² For example see Kathryn Linn Geurts (2002). *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(see short articles) to reach the limit of touch or touch itself. The mode of unification, in contrast, tends towards merging into a totality¹³ or a Whole, but which at the same time admits the existence of an immanent lack, as reported by Geurts. Finally, the mode of historical narrativisation installs itself as a “science of philosophy”. In the latter, the position taken by the narrator is a meta-historical one, which produces meta-narrations from different perspectives.

In order to unravel the paradoxes of the above-presented approaches, two steps must be taken. First, the acknowledgement of the fact that in these three approaches touch, as such, is presented as ultimately unattainable in its striving for totalisation through a progress of counting towards an end or limit. This totalisation, which is a process and not a completed state, takes the three forms: of a multiple and partial approach to the phenomenon, of totalisation of history, and of the production of a unity with other senses. Second, what is needed in order to overcome this impossibility is a turn of the previous position, where touch is conceptualised as unattainable for thought. The “fact” that touch is unattainable must be understood as already being a product of an empty abstraction of this very thought – thought itself posits touch beyond its access. The turn from a position that holds touch as unattainable represents the proposition that this research wants to put forward in an investigation on touch. Only by starting from the impossibilities pertaining to the phenomenon of touch and taking those very impossibilities as part of the phenomenon of touch itself, can the study achieve a proper understanding of it.

This is the reason this research takes into consideration the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy. They have dedicated many pages to the question of touch, in particular the former author, who is also called “the philosopher of touch”. It is surprising that many authors¹⁴ call our attention to their work, but none of them actually analyses or interprets their work. Interestingly enough, while one of the modes of approaching the question of touch is represented by a science of philosophy, those two authors are excluded from the historical philosophical review-list.

The cause for the lack of consideration for Derrida’s and Nancy’s work could be found in their complex philosophical language. However, I think that the work of these two

¹³ See the French word *totalization*.

¹⁴ See Constance Classen (ed.) (2005). *The Book of Touch*. Oxford: Berg.; and Mark Paterson (2007). *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies*. Oxford: Berg.

authors should be taken into consideration. I therefore propose an interpretation of their work, which would not only re-articulate their position regarding the question of touch from a historical perspective, but will also provide a critical reading of their work and will introduce it into anthropological discourse.

The proposed two goals are intended to be achieved through the theoretical psychoanalytical apparatus of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. The apparatus of these two authors has the advantage of providing an anthropologist with a more comprehensive language and a critical position towards the two philosophers and to the phenomenon of touch itself. However, psychoanalysis is not meant to be used as a “competing” theory, but rather psychoanalysis should find its place within anthropological discourse itself. One of the goals of this research is to provide the anthropologist, who is perhaps not “on friendly terms” with philosophy and psychoanalysis, with a “readable” text, which would at the same time still retain all of its complexity. In order to accomplish the above-mentioned goal, an “operationalisation” of relevant philosophical and psychoanalytical concepts must be accomplished in order to enable the anthropologist to make valuable use of them.

The introduction of Derrida and Nancy into the debate on touch opens the opportunity to broaden the extent of touch’s implications in and for a society. In doing so, their introduction also works against the tendency of creating another particular subfield of anthropology. In fact, Howes defines the goal of anthropology of the senses in the way that shows how the ‘sensual revolution’ has supplanted both the linguistic and the pictorial shifts in the human sciences to generate a new field — a sensual culture, in which where all manners of disciplines converge (Howes in Bendix 2003: 688). Personally, I share not only Regina Bendix’s conviction of the necessity to expand the ethnographic project to incorporate sensory experience, but also Michael Herzfeld’s concern that the anthropology of the senses would not turn into yet another sub-specialisation (Bendix 2003: 688).

This is the reason this study aims to demonstrate that touch’s implications are far wider than those proposed by the anthropology of the senses. To give just one example, while the objective of anthropology of the senses is to assume how meanings are conveyed and

invested through each of the senses (Classen 1997: 405), one of the objectives of this research is to explicate the role of touch in the reproduction of social reality.

My theoretical position also differs from that of anthropology of the senses in not taking for granted the “fact” that touch is simply a sense. The singular question that continues throughout this research is whether or not touch could be defined only as a sense or is there any other way in which it could be conceptualised. I argue that by defining touch as a sense one does more than simply ascertain a state of reality. This definition excludes from touch a part of its reality.

From this perspective, the notion of sense becomes of the greatest importance for the study. What is touch and how it functions should be deduced from the phenomenology of touch itself and not from some notions, which are posited *a priori*.

At this point, I call for research taking the opposite direction, that is, not any more the direction from sense to touch, but rather from touch to sense. In other words, the question “what is a sense?” should be posed again. It is my thesis that the primacy of the notion of sense over that of touch is one of the causes for the fact that touch reveals itself as a paradoxical sense.

The proposition stated above encourages this study to pose and research the question of touch through a discursive analysis driven by a psychoanalytical theory. The choice for a psychoanalytical theory is made for two reasons. First, the psychoanalytical work is based on the supposition that the human experience extends over the limits of what one is immediately conscious of or what one remembers (Parker 2009: 77). This means that the questions of touch must relate to what has been said or what has not been said and not to the “feelings”, which are supposed to reveal what is happening from the fundamentals or background of the symbolic structure. As proposed by Lacan, any images of the “depths of the Self” must be denied (Parker 2009: 81).

Second, a discursive analysis can achieve a proper demonstration of the extent of touch’s implications in a society and culture, because it takes into consideration a wider frame of social phenomena with which touch can be related. A discourse analysis comes close to Marx’s proposition regarding the scientific analysis of concurrence, for which he said that it is possible only when one acknowledges the internal nature of capital (Marx 1961: 360).

On the level of touch, a similar analysis could be achieved only if a distinction between the notion of sense and the notion of a thought of the sense is made first. Pier Aldo Rovatti (2007: 32) claims that while one speaks about seeing, one continues to speak about a thought of seeing and not about vision¹⁵. Rovatti's argument enables the distinction between a thought of seeing and vision, but it also provides an introduction to a thought of touch, which is to be differentiated from the simple sense of touch. The thesis that motivates this quadruple distinction is the avoidance of the mastery of touch by visual thought,¹⁶ which inevitably masks its functioning. The proposed thesis argues that touch cannot be grasped with a knowledge immanent to the other senses, but through a logic that is proper to touch alone.

The idea of a thought immanent to touch, which is different from a thought of seeing, is not a novelty. This idea was introduced during one of the greatest debates on touch in the history of Western philosophy, which was initiated by the Irish scientist and politician William Molyneux (1656-1698) and his question¹⁷:

“Whether a man who has been born blind and who has learnt to distinguish and name a globe and a cube by touch, would be able to distinguish and name these objects simply by sight, once he had been enabled to see.”

George Berkeley, the empiricist philosopher, “solved” the Molyneux question by stating that there is no visual space, but only a haptic one¹⁸ (Paterson 2007: 41) and thus proposing two different realities, the ocular and the haptic.¹⁹

¹⁵ Rovatti claims that those who were conscious of this were Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger (Rovatti 2007: 32).

¹⁶ See Merleau-Ponty's comment on tactile and visual experience where he says that the visualization of the tactile experience is the most radical attempt to objectify it (Merleau-Ponty in Hsu 2000: 327).

¹⁷ See George Berkeley's *An Essay Toward a New Theory of Vision*, but I also propose to the reader Denis Diderot's *Letter on the Blind For the Use of Those Who See*.

¹⁸ As Berkeley says, for a new theory of vision one has to go back to the sense of touch (Derrida 2000: 116).

¹⁹ What we strictly see are not solids, nor yet planes variously coloured: they are only diversity of colours. And some of these suggest to the mind solids, and other plane figures, just as they have been experienced to be connected with the one or the other: so that we see planes in the same way that we see solids, both being equally suggested by the immediate object of sight, which accordingly are themselves denominated planes and solids. But though they are called the same name with the things marked by them, they are nevertheless of a nature entirely different, as hath been demonstrated (Berkeley 2003: Proposition 158).

While this research does not have any intention to analyse or comment on the mentioned debate, it rather stresses the importance of recognising the existence of two thoughts, one immanent to touch and the other immanent to seeing. When accepting this proposition, what becomes of the greatest interest for the research is the determination or relation between these two thoughts. What has to be avoided, in my opinion, is the conceptualisation of this relation as a dualistic relation. This is because a dualistic relation inevitably leads to a categorisation and a hierarchical organisation. It is precisely this categorisation and hierarchical organisation that opens the possibility of “determining” a culture as ocular-centric as proposed by Jay (In Paterson 2007: 59; Potter in Hsu 2008: 435) or any-other-sense-centric.

Because I have serious doubts, as Howes does, regarding the possibility of categorising a society on the basis of a presumably emphasised usage of a single sense, the research will rather take into consideration Derrida’s (2000; 2007) thesis which states that every presupposition of an ocular-centrism already presupposes a hidden hapto-centrism. What Derrida’s proposition enables us to think is precisely the inscription of a thought of touch into the thought of seeing and the supplementation of the former by the latter.

Touch is, as pronounced by Thayer (in Finnegan 2005: 18), of all the “communicational channels”²⁰, the most observed and controlled, the most infrequently used, but still the most powerful and direct. It is my hypothesis that because of the danger, immanent to touch or rather immanent to a thought of touch, the thought of seeing strives for controlling the effects produced by touch.

But what exactly does the thought of seeing cover? What is the element of touch that must be masked and thus controlled? One answer to this question could be found in the theory of otherness. And touch, in this regard, represents the means by which it is possible to re-think the other and most of all its otherness, because touch itself poses the question of the “object” and the limit that one touches in the other human being as a body.

The epistemological shift the author is aiming at is the one from knowledge, which demonstrates itself to be “impotent” in relation to touch (Hsu), to ethics, which is precisely how Heidegger and his epoch understood philosophy (Nancy 2005b: 13). It

²⁰ Author’s quotation marks.

should be added, however, that the same epistemological shift is present in Lacan's psychoanalysis, which is first of all an ethic. Alenka Zupančič (1993) denominates the Lacanian ethic as the ethic of the Real. According to Lacan the latter is "a piece of reality" that defies symbolisation and represents its very limit. However, for Nancy the Lacanian ethic is an ethic of the pathetic. This means that the Lacanian ethic is a continuous reopening of the difference, and therefore the relation with the other (Berto 2002: 73). The introduction of the Lacanian ethic into the analysis of touch has another important consequence – it urges for a re-conceptualisation of the body.

A re-conceptualisation of the body in this study takes its initial theoretical inspiration from the work of Borut Telban. He acknowledges that among the Ambonwari people of Papua New Guinea the conception of the body includes a variety of elements that belong to their environment. But the interesting thing is that this inclusion happens in relation to the essence of *kay* (habit).²¹ Telban says that:

"The human 'body' is defined by ways of doing things and as this notion is extended to the objects which a person uses, it is understandable that people do not touch those things that could have undesirable consequences for their 'bodies' or the 'bodies' of those with whom they are in frequent contact (a child, a wife, a husband). Likewise, people do not want others to interfere with their *kay*." (Telban 1998b: 59)

The Ambonwari's conceptualisation of the body raises the question of the place where touch exactly happens and what is the body one touches.²² I argue that a classical Western model of the body cannot give us a satisfying answer, because it excludes the question of what Ambonwari and Telban with them call *kay*.

In this regard, it is of the greatest importance to have in mind the conversation between Maurice Leenhardt and an elderly indigenous philosopher about the impact of European civilisation on the cosmo-centric world of the Canaques. When Leenhardt provoked his old friend Boesoou by saying that foreigners had introduced the notion of spirit to the

²¹ The verb *kay* is probably, Telban says, the most frequently used verb in the language. It captures several meanings: to be, to exist, to live, to remain, and to stay. But *kay* is also used as a noun. It has the following meanings: habit, way, fashion, manner, as well as ritual, custom, law. People speak of the habitus of animals, the manner in which plants blossom, sleeping postures, and eating manners, or the ritual of initiation and the ways of the village (traditions, customs) as *kay*. Every individual in the village has his or her own *kay* which may be either accepted or rejected (Telban 1998a: 52).

²² The same question was also posed by Aristotle, however, in a slightly different manner.

Canaque's way of thinking, Boesoou objected: "We have always acted in accord with the spirit. What you've brought us is the body" (cited in Telban 1998a: 41).²³

This is why the proceeding of this research posits embodiment in the central position and also in relation to touch. I refrain from giving an initial definition of touch, sensation and all the other notions implied in a study on touch. The fact of analysing touch in relation to embodiment makes touch a processual and non-static phenomenon which must be understood in its functioning and not in its static state. The conception of touch will accordingly develop through the chapters.

The notion of embodiment represents a useful theoretical tool with which we can think the question of touch, but in the present state, in my opinion, it lacks some fundamental concepts linked to it. This is why a re-conceptualisation of the notion of embodiment is also one of the main tasks of this study. I will re-think the notion of embodiment through the existent theories and use it as an "initial theoretical map" where an understanding of the implications of touch can be developed. The qualitative advancement in a theory of embodiment will be supplied by the transposition of embodiment from its own natal field of knowledge to – opened, proposed and implied in touch – ethics.²⁴ The qualitative change in such a transposition implies that in an encounter between human beings, the other is not taken simply as an object (of knowledge), but as a subject and therefore as an/other embodiment.

²³ A variation of the same citation can be found in a later article written by Csordas (2000: 174), where the text goes as: "While Leenhardt suggested that the Europeans had introduced the notion of 'spirit' to indigenous thought, his interlocutor said, on the contrary, that they have always acted in accord with the spirit. What the Europeans have brought them was the body."

²⁴ My understanding of the notion of ethic is very simple. In the context of touch it implies the encounter with the other, which is by definition traumatic. The latter produces a suspension of morality, which includes prescriptions, laws etc. In such an encounter, the subject is confronted with himself through the other.

1.2 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

In Chapter 1, I begin with an exposition of the notion of embodiment in anthropology. Its discursive logic and implicit presupposition are analysed in order to achieve a wider and deeper knowledge of this notion. Through a general definition of embodiment provided by Farnell, I introduce other authors dealing with embodiment. I posit at the centre of the analysis the book of Margaret Lock *Encounters with Ageing* which has the advantage of presenting a paradigm of the latest “permutation” of the notion of embodiment and because of that it outlines the implications of the notion of embodiment’s usage. Throughout the reading of her book issues that the notion of embodiment is supposed to solve are analysed and two formulas are proposed: the formula of a dualistic theory, which is supposed to be overcome by embodiment, and the formula of embodiment itself. Through those two formulas, problems and presuppositions of a solution are identified, but also the concepts of Element of Value and Difference are introduced into the notion of embodiment. With the assistance of the latter, two concepts the functioning of embodiment is supplanted. I then turn the attention towards a possible solution of a dualistic theory, and I also expose the consequences of such an endeavour for the research of touch.

Through the reading of Lock’s and Telban’s ethnographies, I identify two modes of embodiment, which bear the same structure. I denominate the first as “Western” embodiment and the second as “Papua New Guinean” embodiment.

In the section *Touch and community*, the latter is analysed. Its peculiar dynamic is exposed through the notion of tact to which Marshal Sahlins devoted his book *Stone Age Economy*. A first differentiation between touch as difference and touch as sense is also accomplished.

In the last section, I analyse the experience and affect of naturalness, which represent constitutional parts of the notion of *habitus* and embodiment. From this effect, the concept of necessity is deduced and its function in a theory of embodiment is explicated.

In Chapter 2, I take the affect of dearness, found in a theory of embodiment and *habitus*, as a starting point to think the phenomena of touch. This affect enables the constitution of a relationship between the subject and embodiment and nonetheless a relation between touch and embodiment.

In the following three sections, I further analyse the concept of the Element of Value in relation to three authors and their fieldwork (Godelier, Geurts and Herdt). In particular, I would like to demonstrate the relation between touch, the Element of Value and the rites of passage. Those relations expose the dangerous nature of touch and consequently the striving of members of particular cultures to control and suppress its “power”.

In Chapter 3, I present the work of Hall and his proxemics theory, which deals with contacts between human beings as bodies. His work represents also the starting point for an analysis of the concept of distance. There, I argue that a quantitative conception of distance cannot apprehend the dimensions that are implied in the phenomenon of touch. However, his linguistic approach to the question of proxemics prompts me to begin the analysis of the relation between body and language. This is done firstly through the reading of Freud’s technique of touching the forehead of the patient, which represented the “mediating” technique between hypnosis and the proper psychoanalytical treatment. I demonstrate that Freud’s technique of touching is structurally homologous with that of the joke, also analysed by him. The relation between touching and joking is further analysed through the reading of available anthropological data. In the last section, I analyse in the context of the joke the relations between touch and meaning on the one hand, and touch and sexuality on the other.

2 FROM EMBODIMENT TO TOUCH

A broad albeit blurred distinction can be made between theorising on embodiment that focuses primarily on bodily and embodied representation using a post-structuralist framework, and theorising that emphasises embodied experience using a phenomenological framework. The post-structuralist framework draws on the work of Foucault and examines the body in relation to the deployment of power and knowledge in social institutions. The other primary dimension of embodiment theorising in medical anthropology has a greater commitment to exploring experiential aspects of embodiment. These theorists are critical of Foucault's lack of interest in the lived embodied experiences of individuals. Medical anthropologists who take this perspective tend to draw on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, which examines processes of objectification through embodied perception, and Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, which refers to cultural influences and patterning of the ways individuals use their bodies (Jaye 2004: 42).

However, the point of departure for all theories of embodiment is an attack on approaches that set off "meaning" from a lived world. Particular antipathy is directed towards Cartesian dichotomies of mind-body, and others such as culture-nature come under assault as well. The human body – simultaneously thinking, feeling, and acting – provides a solution to dichotomous thinking. Central themes include the roles of non-discursive knowledge and bodily action in forming people as subjects. Habit and activity take on creative roles that overturn the inherent posited in mind-body dichotomies and yet help reveal how contingent relations of power are durably reproduced (Lesure 2005: 241).

However, the difficulty of an inquiry into embodiment resides in the fact that there is no univocal theory representing it and that a variety of authors have proposed slightly different definitions in emphasising particular characteristics (see Farnell 1999; Van Wolputte 2004; Lesure 2005; Retsikas 2007; Geurts 2002; Lock 1993; Telban 1998).

The intent of this chapter is to understand the inner logic and implied assumptions of the notion of embodiment and its "pertinence" for today's anthropology. This chapter thus

proposes a reading of the anthropological discourse in which the notion of embodiment takes its central place.

It is Merleau-Ponty's premise that a theory of sense perception must be developed hand in hand with a theory of the body (Retsikas 2007: 186) or as Geurts (2002: 13) puts it, sensing clearly involves something bodily. Geurts also argues that anthropological studies focusing on the body as an object have paid little explicit or systematic attention to sensory processes or to the ways senses serve as culturally constructed orientational processes.²⁵

The chapter starts with an analysis of Geurts's understanding of embodiment in order to demonstrate that what a discourse of embodiment calls "naturalness" is another name for universality. It follows an analysis of Farnell's general and explicit notion of embodiment. His definition has been chosen because of the following objective reasons: (1) Farnell's *general* and *explicit* definition of embodiment; (2) enables the study to discern the *main characteristics*; (3) which make an *analysis* of embodiment's discursive logic and presuppositions possible. Firstly, an enumeration of the characteristics discerned from Farnell's definition will be given; secondly, an analysis of those that reveal most explicitly its inner logic and presuppositions will follow. The main interest of the study lies in the discursive position held by those authors or rather, how they have been positioned by the discourse of embodiment itself.

I am particularly interested in the dynamic of embodiment described as a dialectical harmonious relation between two elements (body-mind, nature-culture, cultural categories-sensory order, etc.) and the question of the cause.

Through the analysis of Lock's book *Encounters with Ageing*, I discern further implications of a particular theory of embodiment, which can be, I argue, generalised to other theories. I propose a formula of embodiment through which it is possible to re-think the problem of the dualistic theory, but also its relation to embodiment, which "argues" to have achieved an overcoming of the former and its implied dualities.

²⁵ A review of some of the works in the field of anthropology of the senses has shown that in the book *The Empire of the Senses*, edited by Howes, and in the *The Book of Touch*, edited by Classen, there is no explicit use of the notion of embodiment, even if implicitly present. The investigation therefore relies on the explicit usage of the notion of embodiment made by Kathryn Linn Geurts in her book *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*.

Besides the differentiation between a dualistic theory and a theory of embodiment, I identify a differentiation between two modes of embodiment. I denominate them as “Western” embodiment and “Papua New Guinean” embodiment. The dynamic of the two embodiments is exposed through the reading of Eliade’s book *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*.

I then concentrate on the Papua New Guinean embodiment. I analyse it through the notion of tact, which was studied by Marshal Sahlins. I argue that the notion of tact is coextensive with the notion of crisis, proposed by Bourdieu. The notions of tact and crisis enable me to create a relationship between embodiment and touch.

The relationship between embodiment and touch opens a variety of question regarding the theme of absolute unity (Telban 1998a: 226) and oneness (Mimica in Telban 1998a: 226). I argue that the accomplishment of the latter two is impossible in itself. However, I demonstrate through the affect of naturalness and the concept deduced from it – necessity – how it is possible anyway. I also show that the conception of necessity represent a constitutional part of a theory of embodiment.

2.1 THE UNIVERSALITY OF MBODIMENT

Geurts’s main gesture is to emphasise the relation between cultural categories and sensory orders. In doing so she excludes the “universal bodily experience and sensing”. Her claim is that in a sensory order we find cultural categories for experience. We find cultural meanings that are embodied and, because they are as much a part of the body as of the mind, they are considered “natural” ways of being, but in fact they are learned or acquired at an early age (Geurts 2002: 231).

Geurts’s thesis also discards the possibility of an immediate relation with the outer object. In fact, she presupposes that the outer object is mediated through the embodied sensual organisation or sensorium. A particular sensorium of a culture represents the particular “universal” form, which not only constitutes the frame for the sensed content of the outer world, but it also affects the very content itself.

However, her theory, as every theory of embodiment, comes dangerously close to a relativistic theory. If, according to Geurts, there is no universal body and sensorium, but only particular ones, the result of this proposition is that there is one outer world and many particular “ways” to sense it. This proposition suggests that every particular sensorium could produce only partial “grasping” of the outer world and thus posing the outer world as the inaccessible dimension, which goes beyond the particular grasping of the sensorium. Every sensorium would therefore presuppose a particular “grasping” of the world.

However, as the reader has probably noticed, I have denominated the particular sensorium defined by Geurts as the particular “universal” sensorium. This gesture is due to the fact that even if Geurts demonstrated that there is no universal sensorium, this does not however prevent subjects of a particular sensorium from thinking (and experiencing) their sensing as universal. This is further demonstrated by Geurts’s assertion that a sensorium of a particular member of a particular cultural group is considered “natural” (Geurts 2002: 231). The thesis that I put forward is that the universal is perceived as the naturalness of one’s own sensing.

By proposing the conception of a particular universal sensorium, it is possible to avoid a relativistic position, because the inaccessible outer world, previously posited in the sensorium, is now transposed into the sensorium itself. The limit of the inaccessible is no longer in the outside reality, but becomes a constitutional part of the sensorium. The particular universal sensorium is no longer particular, because it cannot account for the universal outer world, but because it represents the particular endeavour of a particular culture to totalise experience as universal.

In fact, Bourdieu says that the socially informed body or history turned into nature is subjective, but not individual. It is shared by members of the same *social group* or *class*, and it results in an immediate adhesion (*doxa*) to the world. In his opinion, the unquestioned but not unquestionable acceptance of the world is a state of the body (Bourdieu in Von Wolputte 2004: 256). It is precisely the immediate adhesion to the world that produces the effect of naturalness or universal sensing, but it is also and at the same time an informed body which is shared by social groups and classes. While the informed body is shared and it is therefore particular, it produces, however, an

unquestionable acceptance of the world. To put it in other words, the informed body produces necessity.²⁶

Csordas exemplifies this point further. According to Csordas (1990: 10), embodiment is situated on the level of experience and not on that of discourse. What Csordas means by embodiment being on the level of experience is that there is an immediate “understanding” or “making sense”. In his opinion, this “understanding” and this “making sense” happen in a pre-reflexive or even pre-symbolic, but not pre-cultural, way (Csordas 1990: 10). The immediate understanding and the immediate production of sense have all the appearance of a “natural” and universal disposition, but as already shown by Geurts, this “naturalness” is the very product of history and culture.

Following Derrida, objectification requires a *distancing* with the help of which a subject posits an object in front of himself. If the subject relates to the object in a gnoseologic relation, therefore of the language as language, one cannot have any knowledge. Not being able to have any knowledge of language as language is the possibility of its experience (Derrida 1989: 14). Or to rephrase this proposition into terms of embodiment, in order to objectify an object (adhesion to the world) of embodiment and the *doxa* itself, there must be no knowledge or, as Bourdieu says, *habitus* is unquestioned (Bourdieu in Von Wolputte 2004: 256).

Parsons would agree on this point with Derrida, as he says that it appears that symbols (or rather signifiers) are fundamentally something we directly live or embody more than something we abstractly think. He argues that those symbols are certainly ideal, they are the basis of cognition, but nonetheless empirically real, the substance of experience (Parsons 1988: 6).

Relying explicitly on Merleau-Ponty’s theory, Csordas states that *embodiment precedes objectification and representation* and is intrinsically part of our being-in-the-world. But the important implication of Csordas’s theory is, as he articulates it, the collapse of the difference between subjective and objective, cognition and emotion, or mind and body (Csordas in Von Wolputte 2004: 257–259).

²⁶ The concept of necessity, deduced from the affect and experience of naturalness, is analysed in the section *The Necessity of Embodiment*.

Besides the two concepts of the particular and the universal, Csordas introduces a third one: that of difference. I would like to present the movement of difference in the paradigm of embodiment through the previously introduced concepts.

For this reason, I resort again to the problem of relativity in embodiment. As has already been said, the theory of embodiment holds an immanent danger of slipping into a relativistic view, as a particular embodied orientation towards the universal world. In such circumstances, a particular embodiment of a particular culture would produce a particular immediate adhesion to the world as universal. However, it was demonstrated that every particular embodiment represents a particular approach to the world, and that sensing has the character of universality given by the “feeling” of naturalness. The theorist of embodiment is thus confronted with a choice: either to accept the presupposition that every embodiment is particular and therefore can have only a partial grasp of the world (relativistic view) or to accept the presupposition that every embodiment is particular, but at the same time this very particularity constitutes the coordinates of a universal approach to the world. I argue that a theory of embodiment already presupposes the second choice, i.e., that of accepting the facts that while an embodiment is particular, it nevertheless functions as universal.²⁷

However, such a choice brings a variety of consequences. If, in a relativistic view, a particular approach to the universal world presupposed the impossibility of attaining a complete knowledge of this very world (because the approach is particular), in a theory of embodiment this impossibility is transposed onto embodiment itself. Or to put it in Csordas’s words, if in a dualistic conception of subjectivity and objectivity, the former always fails to grasp the latter in its objectivity, in embodiment the difference between them collapses. The question arises: what happens with difference? Csordas’s argument is that it simply collapses. However, from the above articulation it can be deduced that difference is transposed into embodiment itself. In a dualistic conception, difference is

²⁷ The transcendental, insofar as it refuses all metaphysical dogmatism, remains indissociable from the notion of point of view. A subject without a point of view would have access to the world as a totality, but such a subject would thereby violate the essential finitude of the transcendental subject, that is, the world for it would no longer be a regulatory Idea of knowledge, but rather the transparent object of an immediately achieved and effective knowledge. Objective bodies may not be a sufficient condition for the taking place of the transcendental, but they are certainly a necessary condition for it. What effectively emerged with living bodies were the instantiations of the subject, its characteristic as point-of-view-on-the-world (Meillassoux 2009b: 24–25).

posited between subjectivity and objectivity, which means that it is outside the subject. In a theory of embodiment, the difference between subjectivity and objectivity collapses, but it collapses only as an external difference. To use the concepts of the particular and the universal, the difference involved in a dualistic theory is the difference of the particular in relation to the universal. While the particular constitutes the coordinates of a universal approach to the world, the former is nevertheless always inadequate. This is to say that any particularity can be heightened to the level of universality.

What was described above is a simplistic theory of hegemony. The latter represents the basic thesis with which the analysis begins. However, one thing must be remarked here: universality is not to be understood as the neutral container for particular formations, theories of common measure, or the passive (back)ground on which the particular sensoriums fight their battles, but it should be understood as a battle itself, the struggle leading from one particular formation to another (Žižek 2006: 30). The universal as such is the site of an unbearable antagonism and self-contradiction, where the multitudes of its particular species are ultimately nothing but attempts to obfuscate/reconcile/master this antagonism (Žižek 2006: 35).

There shall be no further investigation of this question in this chapter. Its main objective was to introduce into the notion of embodiment the concepts of the particular and the universal in order to think the “collapse” of difference (Csordas) as transposition.

2.2 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF EMBODIMENT

This chapter discerns the logic of embodiment starting with proposing a definition of embodiment articulated by Farnell, whose definition has the advantage of proposing a general definition of embodiment, which will function as a referential point among other definitions that put their emphasis on particular characteristics. His definition represents the starting ground from where other theories of embodiment will be analysed.

According to Farnell’s definition, which is formulated in the form of the following enumerated characteristics, embodiment is:

- a) A dynamic process;
- b) What is embodied is a signifying act;
- c) Those acts generate an enormous variety of forms of embodied knowledge;
- d) This knowledge is systematised (in various ways and to varying degrees);
- e) This knowledge involves cultural convention as well as creative performativity;
- f) The common denominator is: to know how to use a body;
- g) This knowledge is constitutive of human subjectivity and inter-subjective domains;
- h) Embodiment is actually a “reaction” to older dualistic divisions, which have proved to be unhelpful in understanding the range and complexity of human action (Farnell 1999: 343).

The introduction of embodiment as a dynamic process in anthropology presupposes a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of culture itself. The notion of embodiment implies a dynamic view of culture (Farnell 1999: 344), which is juxtaposed to a rigid and static view. One of the most notable contributors to this shift has been Mauss’s and Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*²⁸, which in the place of structure introduced the notions of process and practice. Mauss articulated the idea that people are identified and distinguished by the way they “use” their bodies. He subsumed this complex of bodily techniques under the notion of *habitus*,²⁹ which was further developed through the phenomenological concept of embodiment (Van Wolputte 2004: 253). Bourdieu’s achievement, on the other side, consists in sensitising and drawing attention to the role of

²⁸ *Habitus* is defined by Bourdieu as an organism, which was appropriated by a group and which is in accordance with the demands of this group. It functions as a materialization of a collective memory, which reproduces, through its successors, the achievements of the predecessors. The aspiration of the group to preserve its being, which is guaranteed in this manner, functions on a deeper level, as it does that of family traditions, the permanence of whose presupposes a consciously maintained loyalty and its guardians. This level is even deeper than that of the conscious strategies, through which factors try to explicitly function on its own future and shape according to the image of the past (Bourdieu 2002: 93).

²⁹ See Marcel Mauss (1996) *Bodily techniques in Esej o daru in drugi spisi*. Ljubljana: ŠKUC Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete.

habitual bodily and spatial practices in social action as ways of moving (stance, gait and posture), ways of making things, but most of all practical taxonomies of sensory experience (Farnell 1999: 347).

One of the consequences of this dynamic paradigm leads to a circular theory of culture implying a relation that I characterise as “harmonious”. One of the most representative examples of this harmonious relation is the theory of Kathryn Linn Geurts. Her theory emphasises the relation between cultural categories and sensory orders. Her claim is that in a sensory order one finds cultural categories for experience (Geurts 2002: 231). Differences in cultures can be thought of as differences in the sensorium, the organisation of which is in part determined by culture, while at the same time this organisation also makes culture (Geurts 2002: 253). She adds that we cannot really separate or distinguish between these two processes or even establish a definitive causal arrow (Geurts 2002: 231).

Her statement implies a structural impossibility. When Bourdieu says that the nature of practice is such that excludes the question of cause (Bourdieu 2002: 155), this means that practice is *structured* as excluding the question of cause. Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s insight gives a clear position regarding this question in précising that what is excluded is not the cause as such, but the question about the cause. It is my thesis that embodiment excludes the question of the cause, because the cause itself is external-internal to the notion of embodiment.

It is external because the cause is of another order, distinct from that of embodiment, but also internal, because embodiment is determined by the agent-cause. The cause placed outside embodiment determines the very functioning of the latter, and this fact makes the cause at the same time external and internal to embodiment. It will be demonstrated later that the question of the cause is actually the question of difference, the difference that Csordas said it collapsed, but which, this is my thesis, has been transposed.

Nevertheless, for now it will suffice to return to Geurts’s theoretical position and propose a comment implying that her position resembles the one of Merleau-Ponty and Csordas³⁰. Their common trait is the presupposition of two substances, which cannot be separated or

³⁰ Geurts says that her use of the notion of embodiment follows that of Csordas to a great extent, while she adds to it a cognitive approach (Geurts 2002: 73).

distinguished or, as Csordas puts it, the difference between them collapses. In order to give a valuable interpretation of the dynamic view of embodiment, a second characteristic must be included: the production of signifying acts. According to Farnell, what is embodied is a signifying act, which also includes spoken language, in symbolically rich spaces. Those acts are the dialogical and inter-subjective means by which persons, social institutions, and cultural knowledge are socially constructed, historically transmitted, and revised and are therefore constitutive of culture and self (Farnell 1999: 344).

The four main terms presented in this articulation are *construction*, *transmission*, *revision* and *constitution*. In order to make this statement more comprehensible, let us rephrase it in a longer form: an embodied signifying act constructs persons, social institutions and cultural knowledge; this *knowledge in general*, comprising the construction of persons, social institutions, and cultural knowledge, is transmitted and, in this very transmission, also revised; finally, the constitution of culture and the self is achieved.

The problem with this proposition is that because “knowledge in general” and embodiment are indistinguishable, the phases of transmission and revision become unanalysable. Knowledge and embodiment could no longer be differentiated and therefore knowledge could appear, in a phenomenological sense, only if embodied. Knowledge and embodiment are *undecidedly the Same*. The same holds with Geurts’s notions of cultural categories and embodied sensorium.

This theoretical model is thus “appropriate” to analyse cultural differences, but not cultural and social change. This fact is nonetheless a remnant of Bourdieu’s legacy. James Collins states that Bourdieu’s critics have characterised Bourdieu as more a theorist of reproduction than of transformation (Collins 1998: 725). However, while Collins (1998: 725) also states that there is an unexplored part of Bourdieu’s theory, what he calls a lesser-known argument about institutional crisis, he only reaffirms the position of those critics. In fact, *habitus* reproduces itself through the crisis. The crisis represents a constitutional part of *habitus*’s functioning. As it will be demonstrated later, an institutional crisis is not the “weak link” of a *habitus* or embodiment, but the very “motor” which makes them function.

If revision represents an immanent moment of transmission, and transmission is no longer possible to be deduced, because the “sender” and the “receiver” of the message are undecidedly the Same, then a deduction of revision is not possible and along with that cultural and social change. This is due to the fact that the theory of embodiment, containing both general knowledge and embodiment, is a close harmonious self-reproducing apparatus. This is why in the final instance Geurts claimed that a causal arrow between cultural categories and embodied sensorium is impossible to determine (Geurts 2002: 231).

The notion of embodiment was meant to assure a means to overcome a dualistic theory. However, as was demonstrated, the “abolition” of a dualistic theory produced new paradoxes and difficulties. Even more, a theory of embodiment presents us with the same problems, but on another level. This is the thesis that I would like to put forward. The classical dualistic relation was not negated, but a new relation was established between the two notions or substances. In a theory of embodiment, the body becomes the ground where this duality can be thought in a different form.

2.3 LOCK’S PARADIGM

The demonstration of an unsuccessful endeavour to solve the problem of a dualistic theory will take Margaret Lock’s book *Encounters with Ageing: Mythologies of Menopause in Japan and North America* (1993) as a paradigmatic example. Lock, while concentrating on menopause and *konenki*, is concerned with questions related to medicine, biology, culture and embodiment. Her book has been chosen because a variety of wider influences and consequences of her theory of embodiment could be clearly discerned. The analysis of the book will start with a summary of her goals in order to inform readers who are not acquainted with her research, followed by a contextualisation of Lock’s theoretical position.

The intention of Lock’s research is to demonstrate that there is no common language with which it would be possible to access the phenomenon of menopause and therefore

realising that a dualistic-relativistic approach is insufficient. She understands menopause neither as a fact nor as an epistemological limited concept, nor as a meaning that would change according to the position taken by the speaker or listener (Lock 1993: xviii).

The theoretical position taken by Lock is similar to that of Hsu regarding sensory experience. Hsu says that sensory experience is socially made and mediated. In her opinion it would be wrong to say that it is culturally constructed and thereupon inscribed in the body, because that would presuppose the primacy of the mental over the physical. Also, the opposite viewpoint that bodily experience is translated into culturally recognisable forms is unsatisfactory, because it presupposes that primordial bodily experience can be unconnected to cultural form (Hsu 2008: 433).

Lock's theoretical position is grounded on the presupposition that the physical changes at the end of menstruation are so diverse that they have already relevant consequences for society and politics. This is why she develops the notion of *social biology*, which is represented by an endless dialectics between biology and culture, in which both are to be understood as contingent (Lock 1993: xx–xxi)

The notion of “social biology” enables Lock to surmount the biomedical discourse grounded in biology. For the latter, she says that it has a “morbid” interest for pathologies with a special fixation on states of deterioration, because of ageing (Lock 1993: xxviii). In her opinion anatomical changes are not a result of a slow biological adaptation of an organism to its environment, but a product of human imagination and activity (Lock 1993: 372).

The interest in her fieldwork lies primary in menopause (*konenki*) in Japan, which has different physical, psychic and social characteristics than those found in Canada and the US.³¹ The comparative study made by Lock et al. enabled her to state the fundamental differences between *konenki* and menopause in Canada and the US. She identifies the fundamental difference between them through a temporal determination. While menopause “appears” with the end of the menstruation cycle, *konenki* appears before and after the end of it (Lock 1993: 9). Lock also found out that only 12 of the 105 Japanese women encountered similar problems linked to menopause as did the women in North

³¹ Lock made comparative research based on her own fieldwork in Japan and quantitative data from Massachusetts (USA) in Manitoba (Canada) with co-authors.

America (Lock 1993: 13). The occurrence of hot flashes, “one of the most stereotyped symptoms”³², was only 9.5% in Japan (N=1141) and it is placed only at the 13th place. However, the occurrence of shoulder stiffness was very high 51.7% (Lock 1993: 33). Lock’s intention was to demonstrate that *konenki* is, as she put it, a “normal experience” (Lock 1993: 31) and consequently that menopause in the West should and must be understood as a “normal” experience as well.

Lock’s theoretical position is grounded in the tradition of the notion of *habitus*, developed by Bourdieu and Mauss, which was further developed through the notion of embodiment. As has already been stated, the concept of embodiment represents the answer, or rather the re-action to all theoretical models based on dualistic prepositions. It is of the greatest importance to read Lock’s book as a further development of the notion of embodiment, for which she claims that it has “finally enabled to overcome the old dualities”.³³ However, I will demonstrate that Lock not only did not solve the problem of duality, but that her theory is actually grounded in this very duality. It will be demonstrated that one of the ways to “start thinking” the duality could be found in psychoanalysis, a theory that is heavily criticised, mainly from a moral position, by Lock in her book.

In one of the last chapters of her book, entitled *Against Nature*, Lock discusses various psychoanalytical theories that deal with menopause. There she demonstrates a negative moral attitude towards psychoanalysis, because of its development of the theory of symbolic loss³⁴ in relation to menopause. However, instead of analysing the theory of symbolic loss, Lock only presents its presumable negative approach to menopause. It is crucial to read Lock’s book in accordance with her relation to the theory of symbolic loss. However, I have decided not to analyse the theory of symbolic loss itself, because it would not bring any pertinent knowledge for the study of touch. What is important is to acknowledge the existence of a relationship between Lock and the loss, because a more attentive reading shows that the question of loss is implicitly present throughout the book.

³² The quotation marks indicate the subjective observation of the author.

³³ Personal correspondence with Margaret Lock.

³⁴ The symbolic loss in menopause was not developed by Sigmund Freud, but by Hellene Deutsch (Lock 1993: 334).

As Lock does not approach the question of loss in the form of an analysis, the latter appears in different forms throughout the book as a “phantom”. This is why I propose to take Lock’s relation with the loss or lack as a key with which her book should be interpreted and read.

In fact, the psychoanalytical approach to menopause is not the only one that understands menopause as loss. Every characterisation of menopause as loss is by Lock represented as morally negative. For example, Lock approaches biomedicine with a morally negative attitude, because of its definition of menopause as loss in the form of a deficiency disease (Lock 1993: 278). Thus we should understand Lock’s fieldwork in Japan as an “escape” from a negative formulation of menopause, because as she says, *konenki* is defined as a “natural” process through which women as well as men go through (Lock 1993: 293).

I argue that in Lock’s reading of different theories on menopause (in particular theories that in one form or another define menopause as loss) all converge into the psychoanalytic theory of symbolic loss. The latter, in Lock’s opinion, gives the women the perspective of misery and an emotionally disturbed time in their lives (Lock 1993: 329).

It is important to stress the interesting “rhythmic style-form” of the chapter in which psychoanalytic theories are dealt with by Lock. After every theory that presents menopause as loss and is thus morally characterised by Lock as negative, a contrapuntal positive position emerges.³⁵ The sole reading works as a dualistic exchange of negatively and positively morally characterised theories. Lock also presents theories in positive contrapuntal positions that are irrelevant for her research and which she does not mention later on in her book.

I argue that Lock’s moral position is structurally determined by her theoretical position. Contrary to the common-sense understanding, according to which her moral position implicitly or explicitly influences her theoretical position, I demonstrate that it is

³⁵ A rhythmical contrapuntal movement is provided by Maudsley and Kraepelin who say that menopause does not represent a negative spiral, which is inevitable for women, but that only some of them are liable for the “crisis” (Lock 1993: 333). Another example comes from Erikson, which research on woman’s and man’s spaces provides a more positive moral position (Lock 1993: 335). Yet another example comes from Benedek who tries to bridge the gap between mind and body through defining the majority of symptoms to the work of the autonomous nervous system (Lock 1993: 336). A new rhythmic turn is presented through the work of Jules Henry, who argues against the over-valuation of fecundity, which is driven from its dual relation with the metaphysical youth, beauty and romantic love (Lock 1993: 338).

precisely the other way around. Only by starting from her theoretical position is it possible to understand her moral position.

2.3.1 THE PROBLEM OF DUALISM

In order to accomplish the analysis of Lock's moral position, an exposition of the dualistic theory is needed first. It is my thesis that Lock's and other theories of embodiment are based on a dualistic theory. Therefore, I claim not only that the theory of embodiment cannot overcome the dualistic theory, but it cannot do so, because it does not recognise that it is grounded in this very dualistic theory. For this reason, I present the theory of duality, which will be followed by an exposition of the theory of embodiment.

The first thing to do in order to understand the "desire to overcome the dualistic principle", embodied in the notion of embodiment, is to locate the problematic core of a dualistic theory itself. I argue that the problem related to duality lies in the fact that one of the two terms has greater value than the other. There is a structural impossibility of defining the two terms in a neutral way. Therefore, the definition of both terms is only possible through the assignment of a specific value to each of the terms; however, one of them will gain greater value than the other. Taking the examples of the mind-body duality given by Lock, it could be said that biology gives greater value to the body, while the mind has a lesser value. In contrast, a constructivist theory gives greater value to the mind (culture), while the body has a lesser value.

Or to restate Hsu's position regarding this matter:

"It would be wrong to say it (sensory experience) is culturally constructed and thereupon inscribed in the body, because that would presuppose the primacy of the mental over the physical. Also, the opposite viewpoint that bodily experience is translated into culturally recognisable forms is unsatisfactory because presupposes that primordial bodily experience can be unconnected to cultural form." (Hsu 2008: 433)

An analysis of the dualistic theory should not begin with an overcoming of this very duality before understanding the functioning that it presents. The first question to pose is how value is established in a dualistic theory. As proposed by Lacan, the answer to this question could be given by Marx and his theory of value.³⁶ Marx says that there cannot be any quantitative relation of value without a preceding establishment of a general value. It is not a question of equal values between the quantities of goods, but the structuration of equivalence between them (Lacan 2004: 80). In order to provide an accurate evaluation of the theory of value I will resort to Marx's first chapter of *Das Kapital*.

Marx noticed that for two different goods to be interchangeable, both of them must express something equal. He gives an example of wheat and iron. These are two absolutely different goods, but in both of them there is something equally commonly big. Marx further proposes to think these two goods to be equal to the third, which is neither the first nor the second. In order for goods to be exchangeable, they must be reduced to the third (Marx 1961: 45).

From this fact, Marx discerns a double nature of the good. The latter is a *useful object* and, at the same time, the *carrier of value*. However, while the objectivity of the good's body is sensually tangible, there is no objectivity of value (Marx 1961: 57).

He further introduces the distinction between the *relative form of value* and the *equivalent form of value*. These are two moments that belong to each other and are the condition of each other, but at the same time they exclude each other (Marx 1961: 58–59). That is to say that iron has a value only in relation (relative form of value) to wheat (1 ton of iron = 2 tons of wheat), but wheat itself cannot acknowledge its own value, because it is in the position of the equivalent form of value, or in other words, it holds the position of the third good.

The value of a good can be expressed only through the other good. The relative form of value of wheat presupposes that any other kind of good is posited on the opposite side in the form of the equivalent. On the other side, the other good, which figures as equivalent,

³⁶ Classen and Nichter demonstrate that the question of the senses in anthropology is always-already a question of value. Classen (1997: 402–403) says that: “The anthropology of the sense must *understand the value of the senses within the context of culture* under study.” Nichter (2008: 166) says, in contrast, that: “Sensorial anthropology examines which sensations are treated as *important/relatively unimportant* in particular sociocultural contexts by both the primary party experiencing them and significant others. It requires an appreciation of those sensations deemed normative and to be expected, positive, and culturally valued; and negative and devalued, yet salient.”

cannot figure in the relative form of value, that is to say that it cannot express its value. This good (wheat) gives the material to express the value of the other good (iron). The same good cannot be in the same expression of form of value at the same time (Marx 1961: 59), that is to say, a good cannot be at the same time in the position of a relative and equivalent form of value.

Applying this theory to all goods, Marx demonstrates that all individual kinds of goods represent their value, first, simply, because they represent it in one kind of good, and second, unitarily, because they represent it in one kind of goods. Their value form is simple and unitary, that is general (Marx 1961: 77).

The equivalent form of value expresses the value of every good through the one and the only good that takes the position of the general equivalent form of value. This kind of good is an excluded good, which only by being excluded represents the value of the other goods in their equality (Marx 1961: 78). The general relative value form of all other goods imprints to the equivalent good, which was excluded (wheat), the character of general equivalence (Marx 1961: 79). Some kind of good receives the form of general equivalence, where all other kinds of goods make of it the material of their unitary, general form of value (Marx 1961: 80).

With only one exception, all goods are excluded from the general equivalent form (Marx 1961: 80). On the other side, the good that functions as a general equivalent is excluded from the unitary and therefore the general relative form of value of the trade world. If not being excluded the good functioning as an equivalent form of value would have the form of a tautology: 20 units of wheat = 20 units of wheat, where neither value nor largeness or magnitude is given. The general equivalent does not have the form of relative of value, which would be common to the other goods, but its value relatively expresses in the infinite kinds of other goods (Marx 1961: 81). The function of the equivalent form of value is generally taken by money (Marx 1961: 82).

Having said that, it is finally possible to discern the problems implied in a dualistic theory. According to Marx, in a dualistic theory the element that gives value is neither of the elements involved in a dualistic relation, but a third one. In the example of biology, the term biology in itself does not mean anything, however, precisely because of that it can give a higher value and meaning to the body and a minor one to the mind. This

proposition could be articulated through the following formula: EV (Element of Value) is the element that gives value³⁷; the dualistic couple mind-body (M; B) come into a relation, each of them gains meaning, but one of them gains a higher value than the other one. The Element of Value does not give any positive value, but adds an element that produces order and harmony (M; B)³⁸. Therefore we have:

$$EV \rightarrow (M; B)$$

Figure 1: Upper part of formula of duality

Now, the question of the subject can be posed. In this formula, the subject does not have any problems with its identity, because the EV clearly defines his position. In an already-constituted duality, for example, the dualistic couple of Man-Woman, where the former one holds greater value than the latter, an identity is simple to discern. The subject is either a Man or a Woman.

But the most intriguing thing about duality is the fact that, we have seen this already, it is not primordial, which means that it is impossible to define both terms in a neutral way. The duality and its two notions that are governed by the Element of Value are ontologically posterior. What comes before this structure is the pure difference between the two terms. In a duality, where the values are already constituted, what is obfuscated is the “existence” of a pure difference.

To put it in other words, there are two kinds of difference involved in a dualistic theory. First, there is the difference between the two terms, which is dictated and superseded by the Element of Value. Of course, this kind of difference is not (value) neutral, which represents also the main problem with all dualistic theories.

³⁷ The Element of Value should not be understood only through the perspective of value. I preserve the name Element of Value throughout the study, because I have introduced it through Marx’s theory of value. As the reader proceeds through the study, he/she will notice an enrichment of this concept.

³⁸ What has been accomplished in this paragraph is simply a deduction from Marx’s theory of value to Lacan’s logic of the signifier. Even if I cannot prove that the theory of the latter was developed on the basis of the former, I speculate that this was the case. But even if this was not the case, I argue that it would be possible to demonstrate their relation. However, I have proposed this thesis of a possible development from Marx’s theory of value to Lacan’s logic of the signifier, because Lacan mentions Marx and his theory of value in his 5th *Seminar* (see Lacan 2004).

I take the duality of cold-hot to illustrate this point. This is one of the most common dualities and, at the same time, it is related to the question of touch. At the same time, I anticipate my thesis, which will become intelligible through this illustration. My thesis is that this duality represents a mode of erasing the gap or difference represented in touch. The cold-hot duality is homologous with other dualities, which represent the means of mastering the difference through two substances or signifiers (cold-hot).

Interestingly enough, according to Thompson, well-being is not understood as the equilibrium of the two substances, cold and hot, but as he suggests, it rather refers to an aesthetic of the cool (Thompson in Geurts 2002: 199). Verena Keck also agrees that the ideal state is not the equilibrium between the two substances, but that the ideal state is coolness (Keck 2005: 60)³⁹ itself, that is, one of the two terms. As Thompson and Keck before, Geurts also asserts an aesthetic of the cool. She says that among the Anlo people the equilibrium and poetic structure of traditional dancers' (as well as the frozen facial) expressions worn by those who perform these dances, expresses a philosophy of the cool, an ancient, indigenous ideal: patience and collectedness of mind (Geurts 2002: 63). Godelier also says that the gesture of positing menstruation inside the cold-hot duality reveals that what is regarded as dangerous is not only menstrual blood *per se*, but the woman's excessive "heat" of their sex (Godelier 1986: 235).

While the heat in the above-stated examples persists inside the duality itself, thus meaning that what we are dealing with here is a heat that can be regulated with the cool, Classen gives a paradoxical example of how this very duality could be destabilised by what I have called a pure difference. It is important to note that, until now, one of the terms of the duality (hot) did not destabilise this duality, but worked as a means to it. Classen, in contrast, presents an example where the duality is put under question.

She says that one of the most dangerous senses of the woman, conceived through the figure of the witch, was touch. The woman's touch was understood as capable of destabilising man's body and mind (Classen 2006: 71). It is important to note that Classen says that woman's touch destabilises the duality, even more the classical duality, of mind and body. The woman's touch is inscribed in the duality twice: first as one of the

³⁹ It is important to emphasise that knowledge of those "hot" and "cold" qualities of objects varies widely (Keck 2005: 61), but, of course, that does not imply that their primary function is omitted.

terms (as woman's touch in contrast to the man's touch), and second as being outside this very duality (as the destabilising woman's touch). The introduction of the woman's touch reverses the duality and makes it inoperable. The woman accompanied by touch does not enter the man's duality, order and hierarchy, but also represents the very dangerous element which has the potentiality to destabilise the order and form of duality. This potentially destructive and destabilising touch does not aim to man directly, but to his very identity constituted by the order of duality.

I resorted to the example given by Classen in order to propose an initial conceptualisation of the pure difference. The latter is important for the understanding of a dualistic theory, which is, as it was proposed, the ground on which a theory of embodiment has been built. In order to continue the conceptualisation of the pure difference, I resort to the work of Tsobanopoulou. It is my opinion that through the below-mentioned notions it is possible to attain at least a partial understanding of touch as pure difference.

Tsobanopoulou devotes some pages to the question of Otherness and pain. The understanding of Otherness is usually posited inside the dualistic theory. In analysing the doctor-patient relationship, Tsobanopoulou (2009: 102) says that being situated in semiotic jargon on the *marked* sides of these bipolar relations, the patient is treated as the Other, both in terms of his/her alienation from the healthy majority and of being considered the second pole in binary pairs.

However, a few pages later in the same article, he changes his position. In following Ricoeur, he affirms that identity is constructed through narration and narratives. Otherness is seen as the part of the Self, both as defining it by contrast as well as existing inside the Self. As Tsobanopoulou says, after all, anyone is a potential patient (Tsobanopoulou 2009: 103).

He therefore posits the Other on the other pole of the Self, but also inside the Self itself. It is interesting to note that he even establishes a criterion for the identification and consequent categorisation of the patient as Other. He says that the criterion is pain and quotes Wittgenstein, who refers to pain as being a sensation (*Empfindung*), which he characterises together with pleasure, which is not a sensation. The reason is that both pleasure and pain are depicted on our face, our eyes, and our body postures (Tsobanopoulou 2009: 103).

In his opinion, incidents of unbelievable cruelty and violence, which have caused indescribable pain, cannot even be uttered as there is a deep moral energy in the refusal to represent some *violation of the human body*, for these violations are seen as being against nature, as defining the limits of life itself being almost beyond recognisable life forms (Tsobanopoulou 2009: 105). His statement relies mainly on Venna Das and her article *Wittgenstein and Anthropology*, where she writes that:

“Some forms of life are seen as not belonging to life proper. Was it a man or a machine that plunged a knife into the private parts of a woman after raping her? Were those men or animals who went around killing and collecting penises as signs of their prowess?” (Das in Tsobanopoulou 2009: 105).

The articulation made by Tsobanopoulou that cruelty and violence produce indescribable pain, which cannot be uttered, because of the refusal to represent some violation of the human body, perfectly resembles the nature of the pure difference. The latter cannot be reduced to neither of the dualistic position of culture (man) and of nature (animal).

The theme of cruelty and violence is present also in Classen’s comment on the woman’s touch. She (2006: 72) says that:

“The woman’s constructive and de-constructive nature of touch was dramatically illustrated with a spider – the zoological emblem of touch. The spider represented the good housewife, when usefully spreading its nets, but when catching and killing its kill meant an evil seductress.”

This example emphatically represents the dual nature of the woman. On one side, it is caught by the dualistic mastery of the man (recall that the woman’s touch destabilises the man’s body and mind, therefore the harmonious duality). On the other side, woman’s touch appears outside this duality as the element that could destabilise it. This double nature of touch was perceived also by Puchelle. He proposes to think of touch in relation to the injection, which is in his view an armed touch, at the same time invasive and rescuing (Puchelle 2007: 11).⁴⁰

The most elegant articulation of difference could be found, according to Žižek, in Kant’s differentiation between the positive, negative and infinitive judgement. In a positive

⁴⁰ Derrida is well aware of the “double nature” of touch. Relating to Plato’s poison and cure in one, he even proposes to think of touch as *Pharmakon* (see Derrida 2000; 2007). Mladen Dolar agrees on that point saying that touch has all the making of *Pharmakon* (Dolar 2008: 81).

judgement, the status of a human being is simply positivised as in the example of “I am human.” This judgement poses the subject on the side of culture. On the other side, the negative judgement negates the predicate of a subject as for example, “I am not human” and thus positing the subject on the other side of duality, i.e., nature. The latter example presupposes that if the subject is not human he must be an animal or a rock. Finally, the infinitive judgement is affirmative in “infinity-sizing” the predicate of the subject as in the example, “I am inhuman”. This third judgement presupposes that “I am neither of the order of humans, nor that of nature.” The subject is presented as un-dead or life is presented as death. Accordingly, touch presented above should be posited in this experience of the “neither-nor” (Žižek 2006: 21; see Kant 2001: 96–98; A 96, B 71).

The main lesson is that what culture in reality regulates is not nature, but the excess of inhumanity, which is inherent to humanity. Pure difference has the form of the “neither nature nor culture”. To this excess, it is impossible to impose the regulatory principle, which has the form of duality (Žižek).

Having said that, I would like to present the complete formula, which implies also the Subject (S) and Difference (D)⁴¹:

$$\frac{EV \rightarrow (M; B)}{S \quad D}$$

Figure 2: Complete formula of duality

It is not by chance that the position of the subject and difference is under the bar. If Ev is situated above the subject it is because his identity resides in this element. However, the obfuscation of difference (D) is represented by its position under the bar of the set of all possible dualities.

Only in this moment, when we have already analysed the structure of duality, is it possible to discern the structure of the notion of embodiment. I will take the theory

⁴¹ I am presenting here the well-known discourse of the Master conceptualized by Jacques Lacan. The structure of the discourse represents an invaluable tool in the investigation of the logic of embodiment. I introduced a minor change in the formula. The master-signifier (S₁) in Lacan, is here renamed as Element of Value (EV). However, the act of renaming the master-signifier does not in any way change its function. For the discourse of the Master and for the discourse of the University see Lacan’s *Seminar XVII: The other side of psychoanalysis, 1969–1970*.

provided by Lock, which will enable the reader to apprehend the dimension of the produced effects by the structure.

Lock's theory of embodiment does not overcome, contrary to what she thinks, the problems implied in dualistic theories. The problems were rather transposed. She argues that biology and culture are in a relationship of mutual influence. Culture is influenced by biology, which in turn influences culture and so on *ad infinitum*.

Nevertheless, what is of major importance for her theory is that pure difference becomes the motor and cause of the process of embodiment. Any difference can be reduced in a phenomenal world to the process of mutual influencing of body and mind, culture and biology, etc. While in a dualistic theory difference was accustomed by the Element of Value through the two terms, in a theory of embodiment the difference is constantly called up, but only in order to be incorporated in the mutual influence of body and mind. The formula of a theory of embodiment is thus the following:

$$(M; B) \rightarrow D$$

Figure 3: Upper part of formula of embodiment

The position of difference (D) and the arrow pointed towards the mind-body duality indicates that every pure difference can be levelled by the process of embodiment of the infinite dialectics.

I would like to conclude this chapter with a short remark regarding the formula of embodiment presented here and Lock's conception of this notion. In a theory of embodiment, Lock finds an objective and scientific approach to the question of menopause. In her opinion, her theory of embodiment overcomes previous theories and approaches that designated and understood menopause in a negative way. In this overcoming, she also recognises the proof of an overcoming of the paradoxes and difficulties of the dualistic theory by a theory of embodiment. It seems that the Element of Value, initially introduced in the dualistic theory, does not exercise its function of the production of value in a theory of embodiment. However, this is so only in appearance, because Ev still exercises its function, but in a rather "masked way". In a theory of embodiment, value is not given any more to one of the two terms, but to embodiment as a

whole, which comprises both elements at once. The thesis proposed above will be further evaluated in the next chapter.

2.3.2 TOWARDS A SOLUTION

I have already argued that Lock’s moral position does not influence her theory, but that the former is the very product of her own theory. In fact, Lock’s intention is to demonstrate that menopause is a “natural” and neutral phenomenon. In her analysis, she is confronted with theories that define menopause as loss. She characterises these theories as (morally) negative, while presenting the Japanese *konenki* (menopause) as a positive one.⁴² While she argues that menopause should be understood in a neutral way, her proceeding is pointed towards a construction of a positive moral view of the phenomenon of menopause. This is because in a theory of embodiment, there could be no neutral position, but only (and again) only a positive and a negative or with more or less value. Therefore the formula of a theory of embodiment must be completed:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{(M; B)} & \rightarrow & \underline{D} \\ EV & & S \end{array}$$

Figure 4: Complete formula of embodiment

The position of Element of Value (EV) is now under the bar of the mind-body infinite dialectical movement. The functioning of the EV is obfuscated by its very position. Even if a theory of embodiment claims to be a value-free model, it nonetheless relies on the element that produces value – EV.

⁴² In these few phrases, I have articulated a paradoxical position taken by Lock. I said first that her intention is to show how menopause is a “natural” and neutral phenomenon. Then I said that she presents the Japanese *konenki* (menopause) as a positive counterpart to other theories on menopause. This “inconsistency” is due to the theory of embodiment itself. For now, it will suffice to say that on the abstract level a theory of embodiment affirms objectivity and neutrality, but on the actual level it cannot bridge “the problem of valorisation”. The problem of valorisation in embodiment is analysed in this section.

The position of the subject in a theory of embodiment is posited under the bar of difference. If in a dualistic theory the subject's identity relied on EV, which represented a stable form of identity, in a theory of embodiment the identity of the subject is grounded in the very difference of all possible identities.

The difference of all possible identities aims at a singular conception of difference. This difference is a difference that cannot be reduced to any cultural or social identity. However, this does not mean that it is of the transcendental order, but rather that it is there, even if it is not factual. For Boothby (2001:160), difference (D) is linked to bodily structures, but is also crucially distinct from all embodiments. It is the ingredient of every act of signification precisely to the extent that it marks a "beyond of all signifying".

In order to make the notion of difference (D) more palpable to the reader, I propose to present some of Lock's definitions of the subject. She says that new discourses (morally positively oriented) on menopause emphasise the possibility of a "further psychological development through the life cycle" (Lock 1993: 340). She talks about an identity that is not fully constituted, but it is still in a process of constituting itself. The emphasis is not given to a positive identity, but to the sole possibility of developing a multitude of identities. Another definition could be found in what she calls "modern interpretations" of menopause, which approach women as a subject, who are able to gain new forms of freedom (Lock 1993: 329). In her articulation, a clear definition of what an identity should be is never given. All the emphasis is given to the possibility of gaining numerous different identities.

The function of difference (D) is to provide as many differences as possible in order to embody them and enable a development in a life cycle as already pronounced by Lock. It could be said that Lock agrees with the proposed thesis, because she says that women create for themselves and their life in an *abundance* of identities and spaces, through the acceptance or rejection of a multitude of ideologies (Lock 1993: 383).

Weiss understands the question of identity and the subject in a similar way. She conceptualises different embodiments as "the fundamental exchange between bodies" (in Van Wolputte 2004: 252). The most interesting part in her articulation is that the possibility of moving from one body (or body-image) to another may *cause a more-or-less coherent sense of self to develop*. What is the logic of this assumption? She argues

that flexibility and fluidity, this indeterminacy or metaphoric character of embodiment, enable the self to engage in a wide variety of contexts and relationships (in Van Wolputte 2004: 260).

Weiss argues that the lack of a stable identity and starting only from it, allows us not simply to gain a self, which is already developed, produced, if I may say, but this “flexibility” also allows us to achieve a self, which we have not yet developed, but we have the preconditions to do so. The self that Weiss talks about is a self lacking firmness and solidity. It could be said that *the self’s potential to realise itself is its mode of being*.

The paradoxical nature of the self in a theory of embodiment is due to the specific relation between the two terms implied (culture-nature, body-mind, etc.). We should understand how and, more precisely, what one overcomes through a theory of embodiment. In a dualistic theory, either substances or terms did not relate to each other, which represented the main object of critiques. While in a theory of embodiment the unrelatedness is supposed to be solved; actually, a new relation is established in embodiment. However, this new relation does not resemble the Unity of the substances as foretold by theorists of embodiment.

Even if both terms are in a relation of dialectical mutual influence, they are still not in *direct contact*. That means that in their relation of mutual influence one substance does not directly *affect* the other. Culture cannot directly affect biology, but has to be first “translated” into biology itself. Only then is the influence effective. And *vice versa*, biology cannot affect culture directly, but only once it is “culturalised”, transformed into something other than itself. For culture to affect biology, it must first become of the order of biology. This is because there is a structural gap between the two substances, which cannot be simply overcome as proposed by the theory of embodiment.

I propose to take under further analysis the nature of the relation of the two terms involved in a theory of embodiment and to study the gap or difference through a reading of Žižek.

I will start from two findings stated above: first, the two notions implied in a theory of embodiment are incompatible; second, a final mediation is never achieved, because of the nature of the gap, which makes a self-identity impossible. From these two findings, two other relevant consequences arise. If the two notions are fundamentally incompatible,

then that implies that there is no common ground for a “real” or rather actualised mediation between them. The impossibility of achieving an actualised mediation is coextensive with the impossibility of a self-identity. The gap does not allow self-identity and this is why this gap is a self-difference, i.e., a difference that does not allow the coincidence with itself. No actual mediation is possible, because what remains is only a perpetual shifting of perspectives between the two notions.

Žižek emphasises the importance of the relation between the two notions for the determination of the position the subject takes in it. The struggle of opposites, traditionally understood as the basic law of dialectical materialism, is here, in the example of the theory of embodiment, colonised and obfuscated at the same time by the New Age notion of the polarity of opposites (Yin-Yang and so on) (Žižek 2006: 7). The difference between a position akin to dialectical materialism and one akin to a theory of embodiment (Yin-Yang body)⁴³ resides in the nature of the relation between the two notions. While a theory of embodiment strives for an overcoming of duality, i.e., for a final mediation between the two terms and firmly believes in it, the position of dialectical materialism acknowledges the impossibility of mediation between the two terms. In Žižek’s opinion, the first move to do in order to remain faithful to the position of the dialectical materialism is: “...to replace this topic of the polarity of opposites with the concept of the inherent “tension”, gap, non-coincidence, of the One itself” (Žižek 2006: 7).

However, the most interesting part regarding the gap that separates the two notions is that the latter generates the infinite alteration. Contrary to the position taken by a theory of embodiment, what should be done, according to Žižek, is to renounce all attempts to reduce one notion (nature) to the other (culture) or *vice versa*, but to assert antinomy as irreducible (Žižek 2006: 20). The gesture of a theory of embodiment to *bridge the gap*

⁴³ I do not argue that a theory of embodiment is another New Age theory. However, the existence of two realities or levels, where a theory of embodiment is established, should be acknowledged. On the one side: a theory of embodiment – let’s take Lock’s position for example – affirms the final overcoming of old dualistic theories. She presupposes a transformation from Two to One substance, but which implies actually two substances that in a theory of embodiment become the Same. On the other side, a few authors have explicitly shown that there is no Oneness, but only a *concern with absolute unity* (Telban 1998a: 226). Many authors implicitly show to this *concern with absolute unity* through their analysis of the Self. This is to say that a theory of embodiment *affirms* Oneness, but *demonstrates* self-difference. To use a Hegelian vocabulary, it could be said that the theory of embodiment on the abstract level affirms Oneness, but on the level of actuality demonstrates self-difference.

between nature and culture, between “blind” biological (chemical, neuronal etc.) processes and the experience of awareness and sense could be the wrong task. Žižek proposes accepting that the actual problem is not to bridge the gap, but, rather, to formulate it as such, to conceive it properly (Žižek 2006: 214).

My intention in this study is precisely the one articulated by Žižek; to formulate touch as gap, or rather, difference. There is only one way to bridge the gap, but only at the expense of effacing the gap for an “illusory moment”. The element that bridges the gap between the two substances or notions is the Element of Value, which installs itself in the place of the gap. In the old dualistic theory, one of the terms held greater value than the other and this represented a modus of bridging the gap. In a theory of embodiment, self-difference is called up only in order to be levelled and given social value as a whole. The agent of valuing, perhaps the main problem of the old paradigm, is not abolished, but transposed onto another form. Inside the discourse of embodiment everybody is free to enjoy in his own way, or to use Mauss’s words, to “use” their bodies, but only if one accepts the value of its own usage and with that the equivalence with other usages of the body, i.e., if we accept the general form of value represented by the Element of Value.

In the dualistic paradigm there was repetition (*ad infinitum*) of dualities (every object can be posed in opposition and valued accordingly); in the paradigm of embodiment there is no repetition, but eternal movement (of difference into the eternal dialectics). The dualistic theory cannot be simply negated and supplemented by a new paradigm, because self-difference cannot be negated. In fact, the latter perpetually reappears in the new paradigm in another form. The alternative proposed by the notion of embodiment does not represent a real alternative. Even more, the very alternative proposed by the notion of embodiment already presupposes a classical dualistic paradigm.

The key to understand the impossibility of the alternative proposed by the notion of embodiment resides in the notion of *fidelity*. The notion of fidelity does not imply that we are too faithful. Fidelity means quite the opposite – that we are not faithful enough. What does that mean? It means that one has to again repeat the dualistic conception, because only in repetition does the possibility of inventing the New arise. If we just criticise an author or a theory, if we just twist them and turn them around, this means that in an unconscious way we stay in the interior of their horizon and of their conceptual field. The

distinction between the Spirit and the Letter is here very exemplary. If we choose the Letter, we will just further elaborate or change some of the propositions given by a specific theory. However, if we choose the Spirit, described as the creative impulse of an author or a theory, we already choose something more than he/she said, did or thought. The lesson is that if we really want to surpass the “old dualistic conception”, we have to begin from it (See Žižek 2009: 178–179).

It seems that anthropologists that make use of a theory of embodiment are unconsciously aware of this fact as long as in their opinion the notion of embodiment represents a “re-action” to the dualistic paradigm. Accordingly, a re-action presupposes a previous paradigm as a ground from which a re-action can be possible. A re-action is not a gesture of power, but rather a gesture of impotency. A new paradigm should firstly overcome the very “reactionary relation” with the old paradigm and not only the paradigm itself.

2.4 TWO MODES OF EMBODIMENT

From the beginning of the analysis of embodiment, my discourse has shifted constantly between what I am inclined to call the two modes of embodiment. As the reader has probably noticed, one was presented through the reading of Lock’s book *Encounters with Ageing*, while the other was introduced with Telban’s analysis of *kay*. We have, therefore, two kinds of embodiment that have the same structure, but their functioning is singular. In order to elucidate the differences between the two, I propose a reading of Eliade’s differentiation between the religious and the non-religious man that has been elaborated in his book *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*.

His differentiation is an absolute one and it is based on religiosity. This absolutisation should be taken reservedly and with caution, because many societies did not have any knowledge of religion before the arrival of Westerners. To define those societies on the basis of religiosity is somewhat questionable.

I think that Eliade’s differentiation is more valuable on a conceptual level in indentifying the distinctions between the embodiment described by Lock on the one hand, and the

embodiment described by Telban on the other. In fact, Eliade's differentiation is only indirectly grounded on religiosity. His goal is to define two subjectivities in the context of space, or more accurately, through the relation between homogeneous space and rupture. I propose changing Eliade's notions of religious and non-religious man with "Papua New Guinean embodiment" and "Western embodiment", accordingly.

Before presenting Eliade's distinction between the religious and the non-religious man, I would first like to expose a feature of the Western embodiment. I have shown in the first chapter that in order to understand the functioning and dynamic of embodiment, the notion of the Element of Value should be introduced in it. At first, I understood the lack of such a notion in a theory of embodiment as an "imperfection of the theory". Of course, there are authors who have included it in the theory.

The theory of embodiment thus posited its emphasis on the question of the collapse of the difference (Csordas in Von Wolputte 2004: 257–259) between the two terms, while leaving aside the question of the Element of Value. As I have already said in the Introduction on the Ambonwari's concept of *kay*, I have sought the empirical counterpart of the generalised notion of the Element of Value, which I have introduced in the theory of embodiment. At this stage of the study, I am no longer inclined to understand the "omission" of an element that resembles the Element of Value in the theory of embodiment as an imperfection or as an error. I rather understand this fact as the marker of the difference between the two modes of embodiment. I argue that the emphasis given either to difference in the Western embodiment or to the Element of Value (or *kay*) in Papua New Guinean embodiment is a structural necessity and indicator of the difference between them.

This is also the reason Eliade's analysis of the sacred and the profane is so meaningful for this study. His analysis is, in fact, concentrated on demonstrating precisely the point that I have just presented above: that a discourse of a non-religious man is centred on difference and a discourse of the religious man is centred on the Element of Value.

In contrast, the extent of his analysis is so elementary that it can be applied to other domains, which are not necessary related to religion. Eliade's distinction between the religious and the non-religious man is, more than an analysis of religion itself, an ontology of experience. In fact, his main concern is the homogeneity of space and the

interruptions and breaks in it. This is why I think this author and his work should and could be introduced into another theoretical context.

Eliade's definition of the sacred is, in his own words, very simple. He says that the sacred is the opposite of the profane (Eliade 1987: 10). The only real disadvantage of his book is that Eliade chooses not to deal with the profane, but only with the sacred. This might sound a little odd, if we recall that the sole definition of the sacred was structured as the negation of the profane.

Eliade says that for the religious man, space is not homogeneous, but he experiences interruptions, breaks in it (Eliade 1987: 20). At the same time, he says that the religious experience of the non-homogeneity of space is a primordial experience, homologisable to a founding of the world (Eliade 1987: 20–21). What Eliade implicitly says is that the religious and non-religious man in the final instance both experience space as homologous, but that religious man has an experience (primordial) of the breaks and interruptions. In fact, Eliade continues, stating, "For it is the break affected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation" (Eliade 1987: 21).

He continues his argumentation by stating, in a rather mysterious way, that a non-religious man rejects sacrality of the world, yet he also asserts that even in the most desacralised existence, the human being still preserves traces of a religious valorisation (Eliade 1987: 23).

Eliade says that for a religious man, "[t]he revelation of a sacred space makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity, to "found the world" and to live in a real sense"⁴⁴ (Eliade 1987: 23).

On the other side for the non-religious man:

"No true orientation is now possible, for the fixed point no longer enjoys a unique ontological status; it appears and disappears in accordance with the needs of the day. Properly speaking, there is no longer any world, there are only fragments of a shattered universe, an amorphous mass consisting of an infinite number of more or less neutral places in which man moves, governed and driven by the

⁴⁴ Author's italics.

obligations of an existence incorporated into an industrial society.” (Eliade 1987: 23–24)

In Papua New Guinean embodiment, there is still present a fixed point, which enables an orientation in the world. In Western embodiment, the fixed point no longer enjoys a unique ontological status.

Similar to Eliade, Žižek also proposes two forms of experiencing the break. However, if Eliade’s differentiation is grounded in the relation between homogenous space and breaks, Žižek’s is grounded in the otherness of the other. The latter differentiates between the Judeo-Christian openness to the Other and the pagan tribal hospitality. I introduced Žižek’s differentiation for the following reasons, first, the comparison between the grounds on which both differentiations are based: space (religion) and community, enables the generalisation and abstraction of these very grounds; second, the references to religiosity in both differentiations could be questioned.

In Žižek’s opinion, the “pagans” still retain a clear line of demarcation between the community and the Other outside of it; meanwhile the Judeo-Christian openness includes the logic of the postulation of presupposition of the Other. The latter encourages us to remain open to the Otherness, which could be experienced only inside its own horizon (in Parker 2009: 71).

The Judeo-Christian openness to the Other, described by Žižek, corresponds to what I have presented as the Western embodiment, while the pagan tribe hospitality corresponds to the Papua New Guinean embodiment. The reader has probably noted that the mode of religious man and the mode of Judeo-Christian openness to the Other are posited on non-symmetrical positions. In fact, Eliade’s religious man does not correspond to the Judeo-Christian openness to the Other, as one might presume, but rather to the pagan tribal hospitality. This non-symmetrical relation would suggest some confusion into the conceptualisation of the two modes of embodiment. The element that brings confusion in this relation is actually their common denominator: religion.

This is why in order to solve this problem, I argue for a process of abstraction of the conceptualisations proposed by Eliade and Žižek from the terrain of religion. The reasons for such a decision are at least two. First, the process of abstraction would retain the

“theoretical richness” of the conceptualisation proposed by these two authors. Second, the process of abstraction enables the application of these conceptualisations to “non-religious” cultures and societies.

The main point of Eliade’s differentiation is that in the mode of the religious man or in the embodiment of a small-scale society, the Element of Value still persists in exercising the delimitation of community, i.e., between the inside and the outside. In the mode of the non-religious or the embodiment of Western society, embodiment itself is driven by the difference, which incessantly seeks for delimitation, but which seems to be impossible to be achieved.

Eliade says that the sacred space is simultaneously a rupture into the continuity of the homogeneity of the world and the possibility of an order. Therefore, when Eliade speaks about the revelation of a sacred space, the rupture and the ordering element must be thought together. On the phenomenological level, the rupture is “visible” or accountable for only because of the ordering element.

In the formula of embodiment, the rupture corresponds with the difference, while the ordering element corresponds to the Element of Value. The ordering element (EV) represents the fixed point, which enables an orientation in the chaos of homogeneity. The subject has no difficulties of identification, because the EV provides it with a stable identity. The emergence of the EV accordingly “founds the world”, as proposed by Eliade, which means that the order of the world relies on the EV.

On the other side, Eliade says, regarding the non-religious man, that there is no true orientation possible, because the fixed point no longer enjoys a unique ontological status. He says that the fixed point appears and disappears in accordance with the needs of the day. This point is extremely interesting, because it shows the movement of difference, which in the formula of embodiment is incessantly evoked only in order to be levelled through the process of embodiment. Eliade is right in stating that, properly speaking, there is no longer any world, but only fragments of a shattered universe, an amorphous mass consisting of an infinite number of more or less neutral places in which man moves. Beside the ideological position taken by Eliade, the theory of embodiment appears rather as a discourse of Western capitalist societies. It could be said that the theory of

embodiment is ideological as well. Eliade perceived the danger that represents this discourse and accordingly proposed an answer to it: “the return to the truthful roots”.

The Element of Value and difference are connected by a paradoxical link. While difference represents the rupture in reality, the Element of Value represents the closure of this very rupture, but also “holds the place” of the rupture. Their relationship is analysed further in the next section, where the mode of embodiment denominated as Papua New Guinean embodiment approached through the reading of Sahlins’s book *Stone Age Economy*.

2.5 TOUCH AND COMMUNITY

The present section takes as its central place, once again, the relationship between the Element of Value and difference in relation to touch. This is done in the context of one of the modes of embodiment introduced in the previous section – the Papua New Guinean embodiment. I propose the following thesis: the experience of touch as breaks, exemplified by Telban (vulnerability) and Classen (the figure of the witch), is marked by a tension of forces that tends towards “normalisation”. Or to put in other words, the experience of touch as breaks tends towards a homogenisation (Eliade) or absolute unity (Telban).

In this section, I analyse the notion of crisis (difference as touch) introduced by Bourdieu through a reading of the notion of tact, which was analysed by Marshal Sahlins. The latter devoted his book *Stone Age Economy* to the question of tact in the context of economy. I argue that both crisis and tact represent the dynamic of the relation between the Element of Value and difference in the process of embodiment. However, I would like to add that tact holds a specific characteristic that consists of conserving the acknowledgement of the fundamental singularity of the openness of difference; to put it in other words, through the analysis of tact it is possible to demonstrate the inherent impossibility to integrate touch as difference.

My intent is to continue and broaden the conceptualisation of crisis elaborated by Bourdieu through the notion of tact analysed by Sahlins. The latter is defined by Sahlins as a strategy of exchange with enemies and strangers. The enemy and the stranger are defined through the relation between community and kinship, which makes of the former the constitutional moment of the latter. On the ground of the constitutional moment of a society, which includes also its embodiment, the genesis of the Papua New Guinean embodiment is explored. The fact that tact is posited in an economical dimension is not, I argue, a coincidence. Its function in the economic process of exchange is identified, from which the differentiation between touch as difference and touch as sense is accomplished. I show that touch as difference represents the antagonistic core pertaining in a society and that the senses (embodied sensorium) are strategies to cope with it. This is why my analysis begins with the notion of crisis developed by Bourdieu.

The main critique oriented towards Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is that it acknowledges social reproduction, but not social change. James Collins states that Bourdieu's critics have characterised Bourdieu as more of a theorist of reproduction than of transformation (Collins 1998: 725). While Collins (1998: 725) argues that there is an unexplored part of Bourdieu's theory, what he calls a lesser-known argument about institutional crisis, he only reaffirms the position of those critics. In fact, *habitus* reproduces itself through the crisis, the crisis that was denominated as difference in the proposed formula of embodiment. Crisis does not represent the "weak link" of a *habitus* and embodiment, but the very motor of their functioning.

My thesis is as follows: *habitus* and embodiment are constituted through a perpetual genesis, which is determined by difference, or what Bourdieu calls crisis. Crisis or difference is therefore a constitutional element of embodiment itself. To put it in other words, there is no *habitus* or embodiment without a crisis or difference. This supposition also implies that touch is structurally destabilising and its effects must be "re-mastered" perpetually in the process of embodiment. Touch represents a danger that is inherent to the functioning of *habitus* and embodiment.

The notion of crisis is best described by Bourdieu when he speaks about honour, which is, according to the study, another name for the Element of Value. He says that the exchange of honour, as any other form of exchange, implies the possibility of a

succession, return, response, reflexive gift. The challenge as such demands an instant reaction and that is why it is addressed to a man, for whom it is supposed that he can handle it. Honour is “produced” through the challenge (Bourdieu 2002: 173). Challenge is the momentarily intrusion of the crisis. For a moment, social reality is in suspension. However, I should emphasise that the challenge is directed to the one who is supposed to handle it. This fact, in the end, characterises the choice of the person as “tactful”⁴⁵.

The initial and important theoretical gesture made by Sahlins’s anthropology of economy is represented by the shift of the analysis’ emphasis from intra-communal to inter-communal relations. Besides taking into consideration relations in the community, Sahlins in his analysis concentrated on relations between communities as well.

Novaković, a Slovene author who wrote an accompanying study to the translation of Sahlins’s book, noted that Sahlins’s whole endeavour consisted of finding an answer to the following question: what is a “normal”⁴⁶ exchange rate? The problem of the “normal” exchange rate arises due to the lack of what is called, in economic theory, the forces of supply and demand. Sahlins’s investigation is centred on the modes in which an exchange tariff is determined. He found the answer to that question in the concept of tact.

Following Novaković, the concept of tact⁴⁷ appears in Sahlins’s book as *a function of diplomacy of good measure and safety in Hobbes’s circumstances*. Novaković says that tact and diplomacy are not the same, but nevertheless, tact is a subcategory of diplomacy and converts in itself the faculty of an economic *good measure* (Novaković 1999: 438).

The economic *good measure* consists of the fact that in an exchange, a commodity is exchanged, but also “something more”. This “something more” refers to the part of the exchange that is not reducible to the unity of the commodity. When using the words “something more”, I am pointing to the fact that the economic *good measure* presupposes the fact that to the initial commodity implied in an exchange, there is a quantity added to it. However, this quantitative addition is quantitative only in appearance. This is because, we do not know how much must be added to the basic quantity of the commodity and,

⁴⁵ Tactfulness does not imply only the right choice of the person, but also of the place and time.

⁴⁶ Author’s quotation marks.

⁴⁷ The notion of tact (*tact* in French) was developed in France in the 18th century. It was understood as the affinity of the senses as an obligatory passage to the mastering of oneself, and which implicated the relation with the dimension of the divine (De Grave 2007: 77).

therefore, the addition always works as incalculable and incommensurable. In other words, the “something more” takes the figure of a surplus over the basic quantity.

There is another reason this quantity has a qualitative character. The qualitative character here implied represents the determination of one’s relation towards the human being, with whom the exchange is accomplished. As Sahlins says, the tact is appropriate for the confrontation with comparable strangers (Sahlins 1999: 377). Precisely in this context, Sahlins’s invocation of Hobbes’s circumstances should be read. Two questions should be pointed out here. First, how a *stranger* is defined and structured and second, what the role of Hobbes’s circumstances is in Sahlins’s theory.

Sahlins emphasises in his book the importance that a community has, besides kinship, for the economy. He maintains that community and kinship are posited in a mutual dialectic relation that determines the economy. Not only the so-called kinship distance intervenes and forms the economic reality, but also the community has a major role in forming it. The two terms are therefore posited in a never-ending dialectic of mutual-influence. And what this theory “produces” is the inability to answer the question of the cause, since both terms function at the same level. In other words, these two terms are two terms of the same process.

Nevertheless, Sahlins is able to avoid this theoretical position, which represents the *aporia* of embodiment. In fact, a few pages later in his book (Sahlins 1999: 384) he gives priority to one of the terms. He says that in primitive societies kinship is more important than community. The reason for his theoretical decision could be found in kinship’s ability to produce an immanent definition of the category of “non-kinship”. The notion of non-kinship stands for the negation of the community, and it is usually a synonym for the enemy or foreigner. It must be noted that for Sahlins every relation with a human being that does not belong to one’s community is dangerous and can potentially escalate into violence. Exactly from this violence inherent to the encounter with the enemy or foreigner, Sahlins deduces the notion of Hobbes’s circumstances. As Sahlins (1999: 377) says, “We have to understand that trade between primitive communities or tribes are very delicate, potentially a very explosive enterprise.”

Sahlins defines foreigners or enemies as “non-members of a community”, but he also adds that they are represented as “non-existence as condition of existence”⁴⁸ (Sahlins 1999: 241–242). His statement implies two important things. First, that the enemy and foreigner are defined in a negative way as non-existence. Second, this non-existence is the very condition of existence. From these two insights, a third one can be drawn. The fact that the enemy and foreigner are defined in a negative form would logically imply that they are posited in a dualistic relation with community. That is to say that there are two clearly determined categories, one which is internal to community and the other which is external to it. However, the second point does not enable us to make such a conclusion. The second point rather implies that the negative form with which the stranger and foreigner are defined is not to be posited outside the community, but in the community itself, because it represents the fundamental moment of the constitution of community. The negativity of the stranger is placed outside the community, but because this is done by the community itself, it represents a constitutional part of it. The enemy and foreigner are inherent to the community. They disturb the unity of a community, but this disturbance is the very motor of communality and nonetheless of embodiment itself. It is the motor of embodiment and communality at the same time, because, as was shown in the previous section, a “Papua New Guinean” embodiment still retains the power to delimitate between the outside and the inside.

Sahlins’s definition of the foreigner or enemy as “non-member of a community” is not structured as a simple negative judgement. The articulation of the prefix *non-* implicates that it is a Kantian infinitive judgement.⁴⁹ The infinitive judgement is affirmative in infinity-sizing the predicate of the subject as in the example, “I am inhuman”. This judgement presupposes that “I am neither of the order of humans, nor that of nature” (Žižek 2006: 21; see Kant 2001: 96–98; A 96, B 71).

As Telban suggests, the differentiation of people living inside or outside a community or village is determined not by the mere fact of a physical presence in a particular place. The differentiation is achieved according to the ways or manners in which they perform their activities (Telban 1998b: 58), which already presupposes a place, where the activities are

⁴⁸ Author’s quotation marks.

⁴⁹ See section 2.3.1 *The Problem of Dualism*.

exercised. As Telban would say, *kay* comes together with the place. They are interdependent and they even merge⁵⁰. For example, Ambonwari remark on differences between themselves and neighbouring Imanmeri concerning canoe-making and fishing, arguing that because Imanmeri are hill people (*kambo*) they do not make good canoes. Ambonwari think that especially the final shaping of a canoe is done better in their villages (Telban 1998b: 58).

In other words, what determines the category of “inside a community” and “outside a community” is the accordance with the notion of *kay*; however, this “outside a community” category must not be understood simply being in a dualistic relation with the “inside a community” one. The differentiation of people, as proposed by Telban, must be taken extremely seriously. Telban, in fact, implicitly proposes that the difference is irreducible, because one’s *kay* is always potentially endangered by the *kay* of another person or community. This is why the enemy and foreigner are not just categories, which stand in opposition to that of community. Enemy and foreigner on one side and community on the other side are not in a relation of duality, which presupposes a common ground of mediation. It is precisely because the enemy and foreigner are not mediated that the need for tact arises.

Let us analyse again the definition of the “body” among the Ambonwari provided by Telban. He says that:

“The human ‘body’ is defined by ways of doing things and, as this notion is extended to the objects that a person uses, it is understandable that people do not touch those things that could have undesirable consequences for their ‘bodies’ or the ‘bodies’ of those with whom they are in frequent contact (a child, a wife, a husband). Likewise, people do not want others to interfere with their *kay*” (Telban 1998b: 59).

The “body” is defined through its activity. Without activity there is no “body”. There are several objects and other “bodies” that a subject does not touch, because that would lead to “undesirable consequences” for their “body”. I argue that the avoidance of touch is correlative with the “avoidance” of interference with their *kay*. *Kay* represents the

⁵⁰ Personal consultations.

moment of mediation of actions, manners, encounters, activities etc. However, there are some things that *kay* or the Element of Value, if we use its generalised equivalent, cannot mediate.

The acknowledgement of the concern with absolute unity (Telban 1998a: 226) or oneness (Mimica in Telban 1998a: 226) and its irreducibility, gives the emphasis to the motor of embodiment, i.e., difference. The non-integration of difference, which takes figure in the enemy and foreigner, is constitutional for the Element of Value and embodiment as a whole. The enemy and foreigner cannot be integrated in the symbolic universe through the Element of Value. This impossibility has, however, a positive side, because the limit of the Element of Value is exposed by difference. Difference is the internal limit that makes a whole or “absolute” unity possible, but at the same time it makes it impossible to be achieved. It makes unity possible, because the prerequisite of a whole or unity is a limit, which would stop the dialectical process ad infinitum. However, difference makes this unity impossible, because it functions as a remainder that has not been included or integrated into the totality. Difference is the limit that has not been included in that All.

The “strangeness” or the otherness of the stranger, posited in the context of embodiment, is grounded in the body itself. As Nancy, the philosopher who amply dealt with touch argues: “The ‘alien body’ (strange) shows us the consistency of the stranger. It is not only its difference, but most of all the fact that difference has a body. /.../ Every body is alien (strange) to other bodies: being-alien is inherent to its corporeality.” (Nancy 2009: 149).

Nancy does not talk about the differences between two subjects, i.e., a difference that would “appear” in a relation between the two. It is not that one’s body is different from the other. It is not a difference between me and you, i.e., a relational difference, but rather the difference as such. A difference that cannot be reduced to the relation is a difference that traverses the relation. The relation as such is something that “appears” as an answer to the problem of difference as a body. It is not the case that the relation with the enemy or foreigner described by Sahlins takes an economical form. Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalyst who laid great emphasis on ethics, was well aware of the function of economy in the psychic and social reality. In fact, he said, “There is always a minimum of anxiety in every encounter. Economy, in this respect arises as an adding, as a supplement that makes the world work” (Lacan 2006: 225).

Lacan's understanding of the encounter implies two things. First, that in every encounter there is something disturbing the symmetry of the former. Second, economy is one of the strategies of coping with it, which works as an "adding" to the dissymmetrical relation in order to make it work.

From the encounter with the enemy and foreigner, described by Sahlins, it is possible to deduce two structural moments. The first is the encounter of the difference as body or as Lacan would put it, the moment of anxiety. The encounter is experienced "too directly". In the second moment, economy as a bond intervenes in the encounter. The initial anxiety of the alien body is mediated through economy. However, the alien body is never mastered or integrated, because it "appears" as something incommensurable. This is how the qualitative addition to the basic commodity should be read. Integration would presuppose the establishment of the *equivalent*. However, Sahlins shows that in the encounter with a stranger or enemy, there is no possibility for such an equivalent. This is why the subject in Sahlins's book adds a quantity to the basic commodity of exchange. And why something such as the tact exists.

On this point, I would like to turn the reader's attention to Sahlins's articulation of the relation between kinship and community in order to articulate the ontogenesis of a Papua New Guinean embodiment. The latter can be deduced from Sahlins's conceptualisation of community and kinship.

Sahlins first says that community and kinship are in a mutual-influencing relationship. But later on he says that kinship is more important. Why is that? As it has been shown, kinship "has the ability" to define the enemy or foreigner. However, it is not only a matter of definition. The radical difference or excess represented in the enemy and foreigner is not posited outside the relation between community and kinship, but it is internal to one of the two terms. In this case, as Sahlins argues, kinship is more important than community, because it retains the excess and difference of the enemy or foreigner⁵¹. Sahlins starts his argumentation regarding kinship and community with an assertion, which is in accordance with a theory of embodiment. The relation between the two

⁵¹ In a theory of the forces of supply and demand, what is abstract is not the law itself, but rather the supplier and the demander as such. Those two figures are presented through the process of abstraction as two mere "distant" figures. The abstraction introduces the distance that neutralizes their otherness to each other.

emphasises the exclusion of the question of the cause. He says that community and kinship are in a mutual-influencing relation or in other terms, that they are two elements of the Same. In a second moment, he inverts his theoretical position from a theory of embodiment to “a dualistic theory”. He says that kinship is more important than community. However, there is a fundamental difference between his statement and a simple dualistic theory. While in a dualistic theory, one of the terms has greater value than the other; in Sahlins’s theory, kinship has no priority over community because of its value, but because of the difference inscribed in it.

Sahlins’s proceedings show the dialectical movement that characterises the difference between the two embodiments presented in the previous section. I am going to recapitulate his articulation in order to expose the differences between the two embodiments. The theory of embodiment perceives itself as a re-action to all dualistic conceptions. Therefore we have to introduce the dualistic conception between community and kinship. As we know, one of the two notions will gain greater value than the other and will therefore determine the other one. The theory of embodiment does not accept such a “non-democratic” dualistic conception.⁵² Sahlins introduces an understanding of the relation between community and kinship as an infinite mutual-influencing relationship. This position coincides with the Western embodiment as conceived by Lock. However, Sahlins introduces a further position. It seems at first sight, that his next step is to “regress” from the logic of a theory of embodiment to a “dualistic logic”. Sahlins decides, in a “theoretical position that does not allow a decision” (theory of embodiment), that the most important between the two terms is kinship, because it “has the ability” to define the enemy or foreigner. In this way, Sahlins does not “regress”, but rather “progresses” to a theory of embodiment that emphasises the Element of Value and not difference. His theory of embodiment is therefore based on the work of the Element of Value or in the example of Ambonwari, on *kay*⁵³.

To show that tact exceeds the limits of economy, it is enough to listen to Sahlins. He reveals that tact is not the only mechanism for the determination of an exchange rate, but

⁵² It is my thesis that the advent of the theory of embodiment coincides with the “movement” of the democratisation of the senses in anthropology. However, I do not have the intention to test this thesis in the present study.

⁵³ However, such a statement is far too simplistic, because of the relation between difference and the Element of Value. In fact, it is impossible to “think” one without the other.

he says that it is the most effective (Sahlins 1999: 379). Involving the other in its radical otherness, he implicitly presupposes that tact is not only a matter of economy, of exchange rate, but a matter of the problem of otherness that is implied in every encounter between human beings. Or in other words, Sahlins implies that economy is already related to the question of ethics or to the one of the encounter with the other.

On this point, I continue the analysis of tact through Derrida's thought. He says that, "[T]he measure or the moderation of tact is at the service of life only if there is a reserve, which retains and limits itself from exaggeration or excess." (Derrida 2007: 69). How are we to read this statement? First of all, Derrida says that tact brings a measure or moderation, which is exactly the function of tact identified by Sahlins. Then he adds that the introduction of measure and moderation (into Hobbes's circumstances) is at the service of life. And finally, he introduces a requirement for the second point: a limit from exaggeration or excess.

The tact described by Sahlins provides the possibility of an exchange between the enemy and foreigner. This exchange should not be understood as an exchange between equivalents. I have proposed earlier and Derrida proposes it as well, that there is no possibility of equivalence. What brings the possibility of an exchange is only tact, which introduces a measure of what Derrida calls "more or less" (Derrida 2007: 145). The "more or less" points to the quantity that is added to the basic commodity of exchange described by Sahlins. However, this addition does not represent a paradigm of balance and equilibrium, but rather the fact that something such as equilibrium does not exist⁵⁴. The addition described by Sahlins is not a means to establish equilibrium. Equilibrium presupposes the equivalence between the two terms: right/left, down/up, you/me, subject/other, etc. The figures of the enemy and foreigner are the figures of the impossibility of the equilibrium. However, as Derrida and Sahlins both say, tact provides a measure or moderation, which enables the exchange with the other. This measure is a measure of a "more or less", an approximation that cannot be measured itself. As it was said earlier, the quantity that is added to the original good of exchange is uncountable. If it is uncountable, that presupposes that it is infinite and boundless. Here we come to the final point presented by Derrida: a requirement for moderation and measure is a limit

⁵⁴ Regarding the theme of equilibrium and self-difference, see 3.3 *Geurts's touch*.

from exaggeration or excess. The limit here implied is the limit represented by difference itself. The difference or otherness of the alien body represents the limit itself. The limit is contained in the “more or less” that cannot account for the measure of difference. Difference must retain its incommensurability in order for the exchange to take place. On this point, the notion of exchange should be understood as Lévi-Strauss understood it. For him, the exchange implies, besides the exchange of things, also the one of words.

Derrida establishes a link between tact and touching. He says that this tact is a particular one, because it says that one is not allowed to touch too much. One has to refrain from touching too much or to intensively (Derrida 2007: 69). Or in other words, exaggeration and excess must be limited. Tact is the name given by Derrida to the limitation of this excess that is inherent to every kind of touching. As Dolar (2008: 86) puts it:

“Touch is traumatic itself and it is also marked by an antagonism. Touch is characterised by an impossibility to touch, that is, the inability to touch properly, which accompanies touching as its shadow.”

Then Derrida establishes a relation between touch as difference and the Element of Value. He says tact itself represents the law of tact, consideration and suitability. He also adds that: “The law as such is always given by tact that no one would imagine what would happen, if there would be only the law in general, without something as tact.” (Derrida 2000: 81–82)

Derrida implies with his statement that in order for the Element of Value to function and work properly a limitation of the excess represented by difference must be achieved first. He establishes the inherent relation between difference and the Element of Value, which was characterised by Bourdieu as crisis. As the latter has shown, the crisis represents the constitutional moment of *habitus*. Derrida’s articulation is of the greatest importance, because it makes palpable the fact that the law is not absolute. It is not absolute, because it is not established from itself, but in relation to difference. This is why Derrida says that tact gives us the law. In the community, the subject is free for the unexpected. This is why Wurzer says that “...what we share is exactly what divides us” (Wurzer 1997: 98).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ The theme of necessity in embodiment, with which the notion of an absolute law is related, is analysed in the next section.

Derrida, some pages later in his book *Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy*, poses the following question. What if touch and caress could not find their appropriate measure or their own law in a “more or less” of touch. His answer is that perhaps they (touch and caress) have nothing to do with the experience of touch or with all the figures of touch (Derrida 2007: 145).

Derrida posits in his answer the differentiation between touch as such on the one side and experience and figures of touch on the other. For Derrida and Nancy, touch is incommensurable. There is no adequate equivalence for it. No representations entirely account for it. These are only approximations, but approximations that move towards touch. This is to say towards infinity. In Nancy’s philosophy of art, touch holds the place of the origin of art. Because we are dealing with a touch that could not touch the untouchable (infinity), Nancy concludes that there exists only the figure of touch. He says that one touches only through the figure. In his opinion, the impossibility of touch, because one touches only through the figure, introduces the history of this figure (Derrida 2007: 122).

Carla Mazzio, who is a specialist in Renaissance literature and culture and contributed an article to *The Book of Touch* edited by Classen, would agree with Nancy. In *The Senses Divided: Organs, Objects, and Media in Early Modern England*,⁵⁶ she states that touch resists representation (Mazzio 2006: 87). In her opinion, touch resists both the operations of synecdoche and metonymy. Even if one thinks, she argues, that a hand is a good representation of touch, this was not always the case. On the contrary, touch represented touch. This sense, which is not a metonymy, becomes a metonymy in most of the Renaissance dramas for the psyche, which approaches “entities” that cannot be located or measured (Mazzio 2006: 88).

Or as Dolar (2008b: 84) puts it, there is a threshold of touch, of too little or too much and it is precisely that threshold that is impossible to sustain. Dolar’s point is that touch is characterised by this “too little or too much” or “more or less”, which is impossible to sustain. And this impossibility is actually touch itself. The tact is there in order to make a relation work, but which is marked by the inherent impossibility of attaining harmony

⁵⁶ Mazzio’s article is one of the most revealing studies that could be found in *The Book of Touch*, because it acknowledges the inherent impossibility of a representation of touch.

and equilibrium, the latter being the names for what Telban (1998a: 226) calls absolute unity and Mimica (in Telban 1998a: 226) oneness.

Derrida says that touch breaks the process of homeostasis and normalisation exercised by the Element of Value through tact. He proposes to understand touch as a surplus, as in the example given by Classen (2006: 71) of the witch's touch that could not be integrated into a dualistic conception. However, Classen's example proposes to us, again, a figure of touch, but not touch itself.

In order to elaborate this point, Derrida's argumentation must be followed further. He says that all our senses are comparable with touch. This is not because, he adds, our eyes would touch someone or our ears would hear rough and smooth sounds, etc., but rather because tact is the common point of those senses (Derrida 2000: 164).

Derrida introduces a differentiation between the touch and the sense (of touch). When Derrida says that all our senses are comparable with that of touch, the sense of touch itself must be included in that "all". But then touch is present two times, once as a sense among other senses and once as touch as difference or excess. When Derrida says that tact is the common point of all senses (touch included) this means that there is a touch that is not of the order of the senses.

It is essential to read also Freud's short allusion regarding touch; he stated that "seeing is an activity that is ultimately *derived* from touching" (in Telban 2004: 14; in Morin 2007: 111). A logical reading would presuppose that Freud's allusion means that if, for example, one is looking at someone that would correspond to one touching the other. But Derrida has already shown that this is not the case. I argue that Freud must be read quite literally on this point – in the sense that seeing and touching are not in a relationship of equivalence,⁵⁷ but rather that touch is the very possibility of seeing.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ This is a position that Descartes took in his theory as he says that it is possible "to see with the hands". Descartes' conception of vision is therefore formed on the basis of touch. The faculty to see with the hands implicitly touches on tactility and acts less as a substitute for vision (Paterson 2007: 45). Descartes' position and theory were of great importance for the education of blind people, who were "deprived" of the originality and mastery over their most important sense: touch. Touching was reduced to a mere figure of seeing.

⁵⁸ Despite a theoretical paucity of treatments, there is a philosophy and a historical tradition that emphasizes the primacy of touch, where touch is understood as the first sense before differentiation. This tradition that runs from the ancient Greeks to contemporary Russian linguists, classifies all the senses as variations of touch (Paterson 2007: 4). Other research shows that touch is the first to develop in the embryo, but it is not a model for the other senses (Rice 2000 and Montagu 1986 in Paterson 2007:5).

Here, I would like to again present the formula of embodiment. The formula is changed accordingly to the seeing-touching duality (S; T).

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{(S; T)} & \rightarrow & \underline{D} \\ EV & & S \end{array}$$

Figure 5: Complete formula of embodiment (seeing and touching)

The whole endeavour of this demonstration consists in showing how touch is of the order of the senses and also of the order of difference. Touch is twofold: on the one hand, it is a sense and it is therefore of the order of the senses among other senses as well. On the other hand, touch is also what comes before the senses. Touch as difference (D) never appears as such directly and in a transparent way. In other words, pure touch never appears as a reduction to a contact, it never takes place, but is always mediated by other means – sight, hearing etc. Pure touch does not appear directly, but is always displaced and distorted through other senses, the sense of touch included. As Žižek proposes, if everything can become touch, this does not indicate the power of touch, but rather its radical impotence. We should therefore insist on the difference between touch as the absolute point of reference of all senses and touch as one of the senses (“sub-systems”) of the social sensorium’s totality in action.⁵⁹

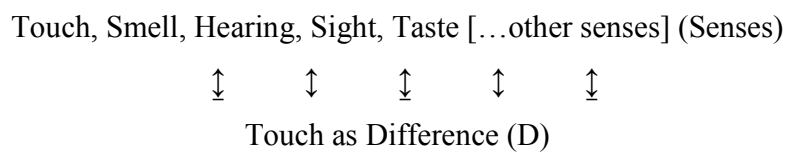


Figure 6: Touch and touching

Although those theories do not really explicate why and how a hierarchy is organized, they – more than anything else – emphasize other types of classification and hierarchical organization.

⁵⁹ The idea for the production of the distinction between the two touches has taken inspiration from Žižek’s articulation of Marx’s understanding of the notion of economy (see Žižek 2009: 355–358, 366).

My intention is to demonstrate the relevance of the proposed thesis firstly through an example of touching, where the constitutional possibility of touching is analysed and secondly, through the reading of Lévi-Strauss's article *Do Dual Organizations Exist?*

In order for touching to accomplish itself (touch in the upper position in the schema), a part of this phenomenon must be omitted or veiled. It is enough to think about the "structural possibilities" of a handshake. Usually, there is an image or figure of the handshake, i.e., of two hands that touch each other and end up in a handshake. However, psychoanalysis adds an important feature to this image. The image has the quality of leaving out a part of this reality. Thus, an image of the hand that we shake is already deprived of its disgusting, frustrating and traumatic part. When shaking a hand, one has the image of this hand, but deprived of the possibility that this hand some time ago touched the interior of the nose, the genitals, was not washed after that, etc. The part which was left out in the image is precisely the difference, which at the same time represents the limit of the image itself. Whenever there is a handshake, there is a part of it left out from this very act.

I would like to define difference and its effects also through the reading of the example given by Lévi-Strauss, which was also commented on by Žižek. In *Structural Anthropology* in the article *Do Dual Organizations Exist?* Lévi-Strauss talks about Paul Radin's book on the *Winnebago* and the spatial disposition of buildings of their tribe. The *Winnebago* were formerly divided into two moieties, the *wangeregi* or "those who are above" and the *manegi* or "those who are on earth", which Lévi-Strauss for greater convenience calls "those who are below". When Radin asked an individual to draw on a piece of paper or in the sand the map of the village (the spatial disposition of huts) he received two different responses: regarding his relation with one or the other moiety. Both perceived their village as a circle; but for one moiety, inside this circle there was another circle with its central huts and therefore two concentric circles. But for the other moiety, the circle was divided into two halves by a clear line (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 133–135).

Žižek proposes calling the members of the first moiety conservative-corporatists, because they perceive the map of the village as a ring of huts disposed more or less around the central temple, and the members of the second moiety, in his opinion, should be called

revolutionary-antagonists, because they perceive the village as two distinct groups separated by a visible frontier (Žižek 2009: 358).

Regarding these two groups, Lévi-Strauss emphasises the importance of not being too quickly attracted to cultural relativism, following which a perception of space depends on the group that one is part of. The division into two “relative” perceptions implies a hidden reference to a constant, not the objective disposition, “the reality” of the buildings, but a traumatic nucleus, a fundamental antagonism that the habitants of the village were not capable of symbolising, explaining, “internalising”, accepting, i.e., a dis-equilibrium in the social relations. These two perceptions are just two ways in which the two moieties attempt to confront the traumatic antagonism, to cure its wound through an imposition of a symbolic equilibrated structure, which nonetheless excludes one another (Žižek 2009: 358).

The traumatic antagonism presented by Lévi-Strauss and Žižek corresponds to touch as difference and the “solution” to the former corresponds to the embodied sensorium. The sense of touch (but also other senses) is a “solution” to touch understood as difference. The distinction between the two touches is exemplified by Dolar in his statement that was presented earlier. He says, “Touch is traumatic itself and it is also marked by an antagonism. Touch is characterised by an impossibility to touch, that is, the inability to touch properly, which accompanies touching as its shadow” (Dolar 2008: 86).

Dolar defines difference as touch and the embodied sensorium pertaining to touch as touching. It is my opinion that his categorisation quite appropriately apprehends the phenomena of touch. On the one side, touch is defined by its inability to touch properly and is presented as something inherently problematic. On the other side, touch always accompanies touching as its shadow, as its internal limit.

2.6 THE NECESSITY OF EMBODIMENT

In this section I discuss the issue of change in the theory of embodiment. The “return” to the question of reproduction and “revolution” in embodiment and *habitus* will serve as a theoretical ground for the analysis of necessity. I argue that the latter is inherent to the process of *habitus* and embodiment. However, a “solution” to the problem of radical change in *habitus* and embodiment is not proposed due to theoretical and practical difficulties that the former implies, but most of all because it transcends the goals of this study.

This section takes its ground in the experience, given through embodiment, of naturalness that was already exposed in Chapter 1. There, I deduced from the experience of naturalness the conception of universality in embodiment. Here, I deduce from the same experience of naturalness the conception of necessity. Naturalness is, I argue, another name for necessity. The experience of naturalness in embodiment marks the inherent imperative of a reality, constituted through the process of embodiment, to be so and not otherwise. The embodiment of a particular cultural category is in retrospect always necessary. The notion of necessity that I would like to expose is already implicit in the functioning of *habitus* and embodiment. What I intend to do is to make this notion explicit in order to show its consequences in the context of touch.

If we recall the main critique oriented towards Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, it was said that it acknowledges social reproduction, but not social change. James Collins also states that Bourdieu’s critics have characterised Bourdieu as more a theorist of reproduction than one of transformation (Collins 1998: 725). But while Collins (1998: 725) also states that there is an unexplored part of Bourdieu’s theory, what he calls a lesser-known argument about institutional crisis, he only reaffirms the position of those critics. In fact *habitus* reproduces itself through the crisis, the crisis which was denominated as difference in our previous formulas. However, as it was already demonstrated, crisis is not the “weak link” of *habitus* and embodiment, but the very motor of their functioning. This is the reason the concept of crisis cannot account for social change in its radical meaning.

Bourdieu’s *habitus* and embodiment are constituted, in a perpetual genesis, and determined by the difference, which could take the figure of a crisis (Collins), of a

challenge (Bourdieu), or a vulnerability (Telban). However, these perpetuations do not imply the possibility of change in the social structure and embodiment or *habitus*. They rather reaffirm *habitus*'s and embodiment's conservative position. Other authors, who criticised Bourdieu for his "inability" to conceive social change, however do not propose a solution themselves.

Criticising Bourdieu personally is a futile endeavour for the following reason. It should be acknowledged that the conservative position is not taken by Bourdieu himself, but it rather makes part of the "nature" of *habitus*. Bourdieu's *habitus* is by definition, as any other, conservative. The term "inability" that I used to represent the critiques oriented towards Bourdieu is rather the "inability" of *habitus* itself. It should not be forgotten that the fact that we all (professors, students etc.) function according to our *habitus*. This fact proposes two conclusions. First, it is not Bourdieu himself, as an individual, that could not think social change, but his *habitus* itself made it impossible for him to acknowledge it. Second, the position of the author who criticises Bourdieu directly misses the point of his teaching, because it does not take into consideration the nature of *habitus*. This is why all the critiques oriented towards Bourdieu are means by which it is possible not to solve the problem of social change.

The questions that should be pointed out in this regard are: How is change possible? How can we think about change in the context of embodiment? How can radical novelty emerge in the social reality?

I argue that the impossibility to think change in *habitus* and embodiment resides in a specific and implicit presupposition of its functioning. I will expose this implicit assumption through the reading of Hinton's conceptualisation of sensation schemas, sensation interpretant and sensation script, supplanted, of course, with a reading of Bourdieu's *habitus*. My philosophical reference in this section is represented by Quentin Meillassoux, who wrote amply on the questions of contingency and potentiality.

I propose to read a longer excerpt from Hinton's article, where he defines the three concepts mentioned above. Hinton says that:

Members of a particular culture may have multiple sensation schemas or conceptual models available to them. Sensation schemas can include such

information as ideas of causality, common metaphors and idioms, ethno-physiologically based models of process, and associated memories. Cultural schemas are configured and used by individuals in a dynamic process of interpretation. To emphasise this ever-shifting structure of sensation meaning, we suggest the term “sensation interpretant”. We suggest the term “sensation script” to emphasise that the sensation schema activated (chosen) upon having a sensation will commonly identify specific social context or scenarios and lead to certain actions. Such scripts may have multiple other effects, such as serving to construct and position the self in terms of specific forms of (bodily) experience and identity (Hinton et al. 2008: 152–153).

I will resume the most important points of Hinton’s articulation. First, Hinton says that a subject has multiple sensation schemas available to him. Second, these are used in a dynamic process of interpretation, which stage is denominated as sensation interpretant. Third, the sensation schema activated or chosen is denominated as sensation script.

Now that we have re-articulated the important three steps that correspond to the three concepts, I will show the implication involved in such a reasoning, which in my opinion represents the problem of thinking radical change in the notion of embodiment.

The fact that a multiplicity of the sensation schema is “available” to the subject, implies that sensation schemas are always already there in their potentiality, from which one of them will be “chosen”, or in other words, actualised. Hinton presupposes that there is a set of imaginable sensation schemas among which the subject can choose. The problem with that presupposition is that all elements of the set (sensation schemas) hold the characteristic of potentiality, which implies that nothing really new can ever happen. Why is that so?

The result of choosing one of the sensation schemas – the end product being the sensation script – is always the same. This implies that there is a *hidden necessity*, which produces the constancy of observable laws. Firstly, Hinton posits a set of all possible events: sensation schemas, of which every one represents *an imaginable world* or what he calls “sensation interpretant”, which has an *even chance* as the others that are that is chosen in the end. Secondly, we can conclude from this fact that it is absolutely

unimaginable that our universe is chosen from such a set every time by chance, except if there was a hidden necessity that would secretly govern the results (Meillassoux 2009a: 44).

Bourdieu holds a similar position to that of Hinton. He says that *habitus* functions as a materialisation of the *collective memory*, which reproduces, through its successors, the achievements of the predecessors (Bourdieu 2002: 93). Therefore, he also presupposes a set of possibilities among which one comes to be actualised. He also says that factors try to explicitly function on its own future and shape according to the image of the past (Bourdieu 2002: 93). Here, Bourdieu implies an explicit relation between the past and the future, which emphasises the conservative characteristic of *habitus*, but which denies any possibility for radical change.

He further proposes an explanation of this functioning. He says that the generation of the system of actions or practices, which were formed by the same *habitus*, can be described neither as independent progress, unique and always with itself identical essence, nor as continuous creation of something new, because it actualises itself in a *necessary*⁶⁰ and at the same time an unpredictable encounter between the *habitus* and the event and beyond it. This event can properly challenge the *habitus* only if it is removed from the contingency of chance and posed as a problem, under the condition that it uses the principles of its own solution (Bourdieu 2002: 95).

In fact, Bourdieu says that the socially informed body results in an immediate adhesion (*doxa*) to the world. In his opinion, the unquestioned but not unquestionable acceptance of the world is a state of the body (Bourdieu in Von Wolputte 2004: 256). Here, the unquestioned acceptance of the world clearly points towards a necessity, which makes of acceptance the inherent imperative of *habitus*. Even if Bourdieu says that this acceptance is not unquestionable, this does not imply that the socially informed body is the right address for an answer. In fact, if we accept the proposition that a necessity is underlying the process of *habitus* (and embodiment), then the latter's only possible answer to the question, "Why is that so and not otherwise?" is simply, "Just because it is necessary."

A more appropriate question should relate to the *modus operandi* of necessity. The problem of a conceptualisation of change in *habitus* and embodiment relates, as

⁶⁰ Author's italics.

Meillassoux proposes in another context, to Hume's problem of the relation between cause and effect. This is articulated as follows: it is possible to demonstrate that the same effects will always follow from the same causes *ceteris paribus*, i.e., all other things being equal? In other words, can one establish that in even circumstances, future successions of phenomena will always be identical to previous successions (Meillassoux 2009b: 85)?

On this point, Meillassoux would argue for a theory of contingency and radical change. However, I would rather leave philosophy apart for the moment and analyse *habitus* and embodiment through Hume's solution to his question.

As Meillassoux shows, Hume modifies the question itself in such a way as to replace it with a problem which admits a solution. Hume argues that since we cannot demonstrate the necessity of the causal connection, we should stop asking ourselves why the laws are necessary and consider instead the question of *the origin of our belief in their necessity*. This amounts to a relocation of the problem which replaces a question about *the nature of things* with a question about *our relation to things*. Hume's answer to this question can be summed up as habit or custom (Meillassoux 2009b: 88).

I will rearticulate the steps taken by Hume and present them in the context of *habitus* and embodiment. Hume asks himself whether it is possible to affirm the existence of a necessity between two connected events (he proposes the example of the billiard balls). He acknowledges that it is impossible to affirm such an existence and proposes an answer to the problem, which re-articulates the original question. The new question is no longer the one pertaining to the necessity between two objects, but to the belief of the human being in such a necessity. Therefore, habit or custom is his answer to the question, "Why does one believe in necessity?"

I do not want to make absolute distinctions between philosophy and anthropology, but Hume has come closer to an anthropological position in this matter. However, Hume's solution does not propose a final answer, because we still do not know why it is a habit or custom to believe in necessity. Or to rephrase it: what in habit or custom makes someone believe in necessity?

But perhaps Hume's "short answer" is already an efficient one. With Bourdieu, the habit becomes *habitus*, which implies a socially informed body or in other words, history

turned into nature (Bourdieu in Von Wolputte 2004: 256). To the historical, cultural and social is given the “solidity” and the sustainability of the natural. Through the experience of naturalness, the social and cultural, which is viable to change, becomes necessary. There are many names for necessity. Naturalness is only one of them and differentiates itself for being characteristic for *habitus* and embodiment. For example, in the context of an interpretative theory, the name for necessity is context. In order to demonstrate the latter, I take the example of touching provided by Gabriela Alex, who conducted research on touch in India.

Alex tries to define who in India is actually untouchable and finds herself in a rather ambiguous situation. She says that those who are impure are “untouchable”, but those who are of a relatively higher purity are also, either untouchable or touchable. But, as she adds, the latter depends on the context. However, she does not define her usage of the notion of context,⁶¹ but she ends the phrase with the following words which might elucidate her proposition. She says that, “those who are of a relatively higher purity are either untouchable or touchable *only under certain fixed rules*”⁶² (Alex 2008: 523).

Now, it becomes clear that the notion of context and the group of words “only under certain fixed rules” are interchangeable. For Alex, the context coincides with the words “only under certain fixed rules”. She uses a word (context) and a group of words (only under certain fixed rules) for the same thing in a single phrase. Let us analyse the group of words, which is richer than the relatively empty word “context”. The first word “only” seems to imply the exclusive nature of the rules to which the untouchable and the touchable are subordinated. This word makes of these rules the only actual reality or in other words, there is nothing else beside those rules. The word “certain” in this group of words presupposes a high level of certainty if not even absoluteness. On the other side, Alex is not in possession of the knowledge of those rules. However, even if she cannot tell what those rules are, or at least cannot acknowledge for every one of them, she is certain that those are nonetheless “fixed”, i.e., immutable and permanent.

Returning to Hinton, he presupposes that there is a law which governs the world – that is to say that there exists a world which is All or One – a closed set of potentialities and

⁶¹ In Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1 *Meaning and Difference*, the question of the context in Alex’s theory is analysed again from another perspective.

⁶² Author’s italics.

possibilities in which time is subordinated to the multitude of that which is possible. The concept of time in his theory can only actualise those possibilities, but it cannot change them (Meillassoux 2009a: 49). That means that from a set of sensation schema must emerge the usage of the concept of probability in order for account for the contingency of laws. But Meillassoux argues on that point for a negation of the principle of probability, which enables the creation of, as he says, a *precious conceptual difference* between contingency, understood in its radical meaning and the common concept of contingency, understood as coincidence or chance, which is relative to the laws of probability (Meillassoux 2009a: 43).

Meillassoux aims, with the concept of radical contingency, at an idea of a possible change that can be differentiated from the idea of frequent change (Meillassoux 2009a: 46). From that follows the understanding that time has the ability to produce new laws, which were not “potentially” included in an invariable set of what is possible – sensation schema. To the concept of time, the ability to produce situations that were not included in previous situations is ascribed. For Hinton, time actualises potentialities; for Meillassoux, time creates new events, which did not exist (potentially) before their own appearing (Meillassoux 2009a: 50). Therefore, for Hinton and his theory of “potentialism” (the doctrine that in any possibility sees only a potentiality), time is only a means with which that which was already the possible event becomes a real event (Meillassoux 2009a: 52). In contrast, for Meillassoux time produces the possible in the moment that it happens. Time produces the possible at the same time with the real, it introduces itself into the movement to produce the event which is not included in the potential set and which is in its principle unpredictable and which interrupts the permanence of potentiality (Meillassoux 2009a: 52).

What would be something that is not included in the set of potentialities? Where these events come from, if they are not part of the closed set? Meillassoux argues that, such events intrude from *nothingness* because no structure includes them as infinite potentiality before their appearance (Meillassoux 2009a: 50).

This is why I propose to approach the phenomenon of touch in the manner proposed by Telban. He explicitly and implicitly criticises anthropology of the senses to be metaphysical in giving exclusive priority to presence. In fact, Telban cites Poole, who

noted that any unusual sound or movement, a change in the density of forest, a change of light, even as an unusual smell, can surprise a child who may then feel scared and panic. Poole maintains that, “*Such fear is not predicated on past experience and memory of some specific misfortune that is again recognised by environmental cues of some kind, but rather on a lack of familiarity and experience with some entity nearby.*” (Poole in Telban 2004: 13).

What Poole aims at is precisely an “experience of the contingent”, which is by definition not determined by *habitus* or embodiment, because it is an event that goes beyond all possibilities implied in “past experiences and memory”. Telban ends the critique with Bowlby’s words, who rightly argues that what is feared includes not only the presence, actual or imminent, of certain sorts of situations, but absence, actual or imminent, of certain other sorts of situations (in Telban 2004: 13).

What touch and Poole’s experiences have in common is the fact that they “do not make part” of embodiment. They are external to it for a simple reason, which was explored in this section. They are not part of embodiment, because are not integrated into the set of possibilities from which embodiment can actualise itself.

3 ANALYSING TOUCH THROUGH EMBODIMENT

In this chapter I analyse the phenomenon of touch through the notion of embodiment. In the first section, I analyse the notion of dearness, which is present in Geurts's conception of embodiment and Bourdieu's conception of *habitus*. Through this analysis, I further develop the implications of the relation between the avoidance to touch, due to the "undesirable consequences" for one's body and the interference with the Element of Value.

In the second, third and fourth sections, I analyse three rituals of passage and the role of touch in these circumstances. I begin the analysis on the ground of Finnegan's (2005: 21) assertion that touch often forms a significant part of rites of passage in the process of the achievement of a new status in a person's life. Finnegan's assertion, however, more than pointing towards the qualitative characteristic of touch, points to its quantitative counterpart. Finnegan provides some examples, but nothing is said about the "nature" of touch in the mentioned rituals.

However, I argue that Finnegan proposes an interesting starting point for a study of touch. I pose the question of whether touch appears only on a quantitative level in rituals of transition and holds no important function or whether it holds an important function in rituals of transition and bears a singular position in its structure. I will look at the rituals of transition described by Godelier among the Baruya, Geurts among the Anlo and Herdt among the Sambia. I have chosen these authors and their ethnographic data, because they explicitly and implicitly address the question of touch. This data is then supplemented with Telban's analysis of the concept of *kay*. The aim of these sections is to emphasise the role that touch holds in rituals of transition and to demonstrate its implications and consequences for a theory of embodiment.

3.1 THE NOTION OF DEARNESS

In this section, I take Kathryn Linn Geurts's conceptualisation of embodiment as a basis for an identification of the object of touch. Her conceptualisation of embodiment is pertinent for the analysis of touch, because it is employed in the investigation of sensory orders or sensoriums in a particular culture with rich fieldwork documentation. In the previous chapter, I introduced the notion of Element of Value into the conceptualisation of embodiment. This was done on the basis of Ambonwari's concept of *kay* described by Telban. I have argued that in order to comprehend a theory of embodiment (and duality), what should be acknowledged is the function of the Element of Value. The latter was introduced through Marx's notion of the general equivalent on the background of the problem of duality.

In this chapter, I introduce the Element of Value into the conceptualisation of embodiment from another perspective or more accurately, from Geurts's conceptualisation of embodiment. Her exposition of the notion of dearness provides the theoretical ground from which I analyse further the notion of the Element of Value in embodiment.

I also argue that the Element of Value and the "feeling" of dearness described by Geurts, is the prohibited object of touch. The prohibition implied in this object is coextensive with the "danger", articulated by Telban, to interfere with one's *kay* (Telban 1998b: 59) and therefore with one's concern for absolute unity (Telban 1998a: 226) and oneness (Mimica in Telban 1998a: 226). As Telban noticed, the interference with one's *kay* also implies "[...] undesirable consequences for their "bodies" or the "bodies" of those with whom they are in frequent contact" (Telban 1998b: 59).

Geurts' conceptualisation of embodiment is based both on cognitive and phenomenological theory. Her research represents a rich and valuable insight into the question of senses, because it is devoted exclusively to this issue. I analyse the part of her theory that contains a paradox, but which is at the same time the most revealing for the study of touch.

Geurts defines sensing as "bodily ways of gathering information". Sensing is, in her opinion, profoundly involved with a society's epistemology, the development of its cultural identity, and its forms of being-in-the-world (Geurts 2002: 3). She defines the

senses as ways of embodying cultural categories or making into the body certain cultural values or aspects of being that a particular cultural community has historically deemed *precious* and *dear* (Geurts 2002: 10).

The ultimate goal of her research is to fill in the gap between cognitive models of perception and the phenomenal level of sensation, experience, and bodily existence by first examining how culture affects the very basic, fundamental stages of this whole process and by then using the analytic categories of practice, embodiment, sensibility, and identity to trace how these fundamentals affect more abstract processes (Geurts 2002: 6).

However, Geurts is confronted in her endeavour with a paradox, which she presents to the reader of her book as unsolvable. She asks herself whether a sensorium is embodied and, hence, very dear (to the members of a cultural group) or whether a sensorium and sensory orientation are so dear (i.e., they reflect values that are precious to the cultural group) that they therefore become embodied (during processes of child socialisation) (Geurts 2002: 231).

The question posed by Geurts is one about the cause in the theory of embodiment. I re-articulate her question in the form of two theses:

1. Embodiment makes a sensorium dear for a member of a cultural group;
2. A member of a cultural group embodies a sensorium and sensory orientation because it is so dear.

In the first thesis the cause is placed in embodiment. Only after embodied, does a sensorium become dear to the member of a cultural group. Therefore, embodiment itself produces the effect of dearness. In the second thesis, the cause is placed in the sensorium and therefore pre-exists embodiment.

The paradox articulated by Geurts is the logical consequence of her position as a theorist of embodiment. In the first moment, the theory of embodiment implies the question of cause, but in the second moment the cause is equally distributed among the two terms (sensorium and embodiment). Ascribing the cause to one of the two terms would lead to accepting the presuppositions of a dualistic theory and therefore adhering to it. This is

why for a theory of embodiment this is not an option. If Geurts had accepted the fact that the cause is placed in one of the two terms, she would then “regress” to the position of a dualistic theory and would endanger the project of overcoming old dualistic theories. In order to remain faithful to the theory of embodiment, this paradox can be articulated, but not solved. In fact, Geurts argues that a solution is not conceivable. As in Lock’s theory of embodiment, there is only a mutual-dialectical-influencing between the two terms, which she repeats *ad infinitum*.

What is striking is that in the question articulated by Geurts, the notion of dearness “takes the place” of the cause. When Geurts posits the question in terms of dearness, she actually posits the question of the cause. Her real question is why someone embodies a particular sensorium. She also proposes two possible answers: embodiment makes a sensorium dear and the sensorium is so dear.

I present the question articulated by Geurts, which involved the notion of dearness, as being on the same level of the one that implies the notion of cause. However, I argue that on a structural level the question proposed by Geurts should not be generalised to both levels. This is because the level of dearness, where Geurts’s question has been originally articulated, cannot be equated with that of the cause. My thesis is that the question that implies the notion of dearness should be posited on the level of the Element of Value, while the question of the cause should be posited on the level of difference.

Geurts does not herself speak about value while relating to the notion of dearness. Nonetheless, she cites Bourdieu, on which her theory is based, who says that *there is nothing more precious than the values given body* (Bourdieu in Geurts 2002: 85).

Bourdieu, with his articulation, provides a certain level of certitude regarding the introduction of the notion of value into the question of sensorium and embodiment. A further clue regarding Geurts’s hypothesis is given again by Bourdieu. He says that embodied phenomena are some of the most ineffable, incommunicable and inimitable *aspects of being* (Bourdieu in Geurts 2002: 85). This implies that the notion of dearness is incapable of being expressed, incapable of being communicated and incapable of being imitated. The notion of dearness therefore cannot be “reduced” to an expression, to a sign and to an image. It could be said that it is all that, but at the same time it is something that “exceeds” all of these characterisations.

I would like to analyse these three characteristics and their relation to the notion of dearness through what Geurts calls the quality of Being Anlo. The quality of Being Anlo means to embody the sensorium of the Anlo – a sensorium that is expressible, communicable and perceptible.

These three characteristics also represent the prerequisites for an anthropological research. The anthropologist studies embodiment precisely through expression, communication and imitation. Nonetheless, the point that I would like to make here is that if the anthropologist wants to account for the quality of Being Anlo, one way to start is to enumerate the particular characteristics of the Anlo sensorium. However, the sole enumeration of all possible qualities does not tell us anything about the meaning of “being Anlo”. This is because, as proposed by Bourdieu, embodied phenomena are some of the most ineffable, incommunicable and inimitable aspects of being (Bourdieu in Geurts 2002: 85).

The quality of being Anlo, perceived through the “affect” of dearness of one’s own embodiment or sensorium, is deprived of its meaning. It is possible to describe it through the variety of observable embodiments of a particular culture, but in the final instance it is impossible to define it in itself. However, it is precisely because of the “affect” of dearness that something as an embodiment can exist. This is because the “affect” of dearness or its conceptual counterpart, i.e., the quality of being Anlo provides a coherent stable and unitary aggregate of particular Anlo embodiments. To put it in other words, these have the function to close a set of particular embodied characteristics. I therefore propose the following formula:

$$\text{“Being Anlo”} \rightarrow (\text{AE1, AE2, AE3 ...})$$

Figure 7: The element of value and the closing of the set

“Being Anlo” represents the closed set of “Anlo Embodiments” (AE). It was said that Anlo Embodiments are expressible, communicable and perceptible and therefore represent the elements studied by an anthropologist. On the other side, I have shown that the “affect” of dearness is irreducible and is therefore deprived of its own meaning. Even

the enumeration of embodiment's characteristics would not account for it. Being Anlo is *all* of these Anlo Embodiments, but at the same time *none* of them.

The particular status of the quality of being Anlo and its accompanying "affect" of dearness would stimulate us to define the latter with the well-known anthropological concept of the *empty sign*. Lock defines it as a phenomenon that is open to various interpretations (Lock 1993: xxxviii). However, such a denomination produces methodological problems and paradoxes for the anthropologist. If the quality of being Anlo is an empty sign open to various interpretations, then the work of the anthropologist is to find the right one. Of course, he is aware of the danger that such an argument implies. The anthropologist is thrown into a "vortex of relativity". In order to escape it, he/she must resort to its counterpart – to the native's view. Through it, the anthropologist regains a stable ground for interpretation and analysis. At the same time, both of these theoretical and practical options bring us to the question of authority in anthropology.⁶³

Personally, I have some doubt regarding these positions. The first implies the authority of the anthropologist over the studied culture. The second implies not so much that the native is the one who "knows", but rather that he/she is the one "who is supposed to know". Regarding this matter, I propose Bourdieu's articulation of the relation between embodied phenomena and consciousness. He says that embodied phenomena or made body are not conscious. They are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation and cannot even be made explicit (in Geurts 2002: 85).

We could say that the "mystery" of the quality of being Anlo is not a "mystery" only for the anthropologist, but also for the Anlo itself. This is why I define "being Anlo" as the *empty signifier*, which is defined as the signifier that represents the subject for another signifier. Contrary to the conception of the empty sign, where the question is reducible to the presentation of what it means to be Anlo to the anthropologist, the empty signifier represents the set of embodied signifiers. The definition of the signifier implies that the signifier "being Anlo" represents the subjects for all the Anlo embodiments (AE). It is important to acknowledge that embodiment must know what is needed to be an Anlo and

⁶³ Regarding the problems of authority in anthropology see James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988).

not the subject itself. Embodiment has knowledge of its own of what it means to be Anlo and this knowledge is encapsulated in the “quality of Being Anlo” or in its general counterpart, the Element of Value, accompanied by the “affect” of dearness.

The “affect” of dearness, which is a valuation of one’s embodiment, is closely related to respect, which should be, according to Derrida, thought as a Kantian respect. This is because respect is always a respect of the “law” and never of the person (Derrida 2000: 82). Godelier would agree with the proposition stated above because he states that what is respected in a human being is a name. Godelier says that there are many forms of bringing prestige and respect, but the important thing is that prestige is brought to the name of the man and not to man himself (Godelier 1986: 94).⁶⁴ In the respect towards the other or towards oneself, one actually respects the empty signifier that makes sense of the “meaningless” embodiments understood as a set of particular embodiments. Not to touch somebody would therefore imply not to touch the singularity of a human being, that is, not to touch the untouchable, the respectful Element of Value. Even if the respectful Element of Value is untouchable, because being a signifier, it is nonetheless tangible, because, as Telban suggests in the context of Ambonwari, *kay* is in a *state of becoming* and therefore *vulnerable to the influences of the habits and manners of some other “body”* (Telban 1998b: 60). Touch therefore “appears” through the endangerment of the consistency and coherency provided by the Element of Value.

⁶⁴ Of course it is possible that a man could “take seriously” his name and equate himself with it. However, a differentiation between three subjective positions related to this question should be introduced. These could be generally presented as: The genuinely psychotic subject, who believes that he is what he says he is; The “ironic subject”, who “knows” that he is not what he says he is, but nevertheless he acts “as if” he was; The “moral subject”, who acts and acknowledges himself as what he says he is, but only as far as he has the possibility to escape the Word understood as imperative through minor and illicit deviations from the Word. While the first subjective position is marked by the overlapping of the Word over the subject, in the two other positions a minimal gap between the name and the person is maintained.

3.2 GODELIER'S TOUCH

Godelier has acknowledged that in order for a boy to grow up⁶⁵ it is essential that transmission occurs by means of *direct contact* between the *kwaimatnie*⁶⁶ and the initiate's body (Godelier 1986: 90). He reports the ritual's stages as follows:

The initiates from different stages line up standing shoulder to shoulder. The master of the ritual strikes violently in the chest with the base of the *kwaimatnie*, once on the right and once on the left, while uttering secret names of the Sun to himself. Then he squeezes his weak points (joints) in the initiates' body. He repeats those gestures with each initiate in turn. Then with his hands he squeezes weak points in the initiates' bodies, their leg joints and their arm joints and ends by sharply stretching their arms above their heads in order to lengthen them and to make their bodies grow, to lift up their skin. To mark the change brought about in their bodies, the change of skin, he daubs them with red and yellow clay, which makes them glow and embellishes them. Next, he adorns each of them with feathers, wickerwork or cowrie necklaces. Lastly, he gives to each initiate a mouthful of magic food. (Godelier 1986: 90)

Godelier also provides a comment regarding the status of touch in the ritual. He says that:

It would be a mistake to view the touching of the initiates' bodies merely as symbolic gestures. They are that indeed, but not in the sense of simply symbolising reality that exist elsewhere and is merely suggested by these signs. For the Baruya, the fact of putting on the arms or pressing the weak points on the limbs, of giving secret food to eat and trying the *ypmoulie*, red like the Sun, about

⁶⁵ The process of growing up among the Baruya is not understood as a "natural" process, but a cultural one. Moreover, it is not a quantitative process of growing, but rather a "qualitative jump". In fact a boy growing up would be more accurately described as the passage from childhood to manhood through ritual transformation.

⁶⁶ The word *kwaimatnie* derives from a combination of *kwala* 'man' and *yimatnia* 'to lift the skin, grow'. The *kwaimatnie* is an object that makes boys grow, lengthen their bodies and turns them into men. The *kwaimatnie* are made of hard material, they are oblong parcels, about twenty centimetres long, wrapped in a strip of bark cloak and tied up with an *ypmoulie*, the headband that man alone wear, made of tree-bark and painted red, the colour of the Sun (Godelier 1986: 80–81).

the brow – these gestures are not symbolic in that sense of the term; they really do pass the powers of the *kwaimatnie* into the initiates' bodies, turning the officiant into the mediator between men and the superhuman powers that govern the universe. (Godelier 1986: 90–91)

Godelier's short comment ascribes to touch in the ritual of transition the greatest importance. He also points to the paradoxical status of touch as a symbolic gesture. He argues that touch works as a symbol, but it also produces social change: a change in reality exemplified by the child becoming a man. The touches in the mentioned ritual of transition, as Godelier says, are not merely symbolic gestures. Touch is presented as a symbolic gesture and something more than that. What interests me here is precisely this "something more" than the symbolic gesture itself.

Godelier defines the symbolic gesture as a simple symbolisation of reality that exists elsewhere, introducing a differentiation between the real world and the symbolic world. However, he adds that these symbolic gestures really do what they say they do. Godelier asserts that the role played by touch in these rituals is of course symbolic, but that at the same time it (this role) produces real effects. As he says: "They [symbolic gestures] really do pass the powers of the *kwaimatnie* into the initiates' bodies." (Godelier 1986: 90)

The "coordinates of reality" have changed, not only for the initiates' but for everyone as well. A new reality is introduced, while the previous one has been "abolished".

The touch of the *kwaimatnie* marks the place of rupture into reality, which is then re-established in a second moment. Reality is suspended for a moment in a liminal state. I am not arguing that only the initiates are in a liminal state, but rather that the whole reality is marked by it. To provide a counter-argument to the claim that the initiates are the only ones residing in the liminal space, I urge the reader to think about the figure of the witch analysed by Classen. She says that the witch's touch was understood as capable of destabilising man's body and mind (Classen 2006: 71). What is actually destabilised is the "principal relation" that guarantees a coherent reality – the relation between body and mind. However, it should be added that this "break in the coherency of reality" is at the same time the constitutional part of its coherency. The localisation and identification of

ruptures in the “figures” of the witch and initiates is already a mechanism to control these very ruptures and with these the constitution of (a new) reality itself.

In the ritual presented by Godelier, the problem of duality emerges once more. He shows that the ritual works on the basis of a dualistic organisation between men’s and women’s world. The boys are in fact initially posited on the side of the women. Strictly speaking, until the ritual is over they hold the position of the women. The ritual makes the transition of boys from the position of the women to that of the men possible. This fact will later reveal some implications of the *kwaimatnie* itself.

Besides the importance of touch in the rituals of transitions, we should also mention the prohibition from touching the objects is what makes the very transition possible. Godelier states that prohibitions refer mainly to women. In the context of the ritual of passage, the objects that women are prohibited to touch are of major importance. Among them there is the men’s head-feather. Godelier states that the equivalent for a woman to touch the man’s head-feather is to wear it (Godelier 1986: 10). In other words, if a woman would touch a man’s head-feather that would mean that she has become a man or that she entered into men’s world. Another object bearing the prohibition to touch is represented by the man’s face, especially the nose. The importance of the nose is due to its piercing during initiation, and to pig’s teeth or other ornaments threaded into the opening in the septum indicating his social status (Godelier 1986: 152). And, of course, the prohibition to touch is applied also to the *kwaimatnie* itself. For that object, the prohibition of touch is even stricter. Godelier says that the man in possession of *kwaimatnie* was the only one allowed to touch it. Neither Godelier himself, nor the possessor’s son, who will eventually become its possessor by inheritance, were not allowed to touch the *kwaimatnie* (Godelier 1986: 82–83).⁶⁷

What these three objects (head-feathers, face-nose, and *kwaimatnie*) have in common is, following Godelier, the *insignia* (Godelier 1986: 90). An insignia is first of all an insignia of differentiation. It does not determine a particular identity (that of the man for example), but functions as the differentiator between a man and a woman. In strict terms,

⁶⁷ The theme of respect is analysed by Godelier in the context of the *kwaimatnie*. He says that the *kwaimatnie*-man as stage manager, a mediator between men and gods, is respected. Godelier adds that this respect is due more to his functions and to the powers of the *kwaimatnie*, than to himself. The respect for him is even enhanced, if he inherited the *kwaimatnie* while still young and began to exercise his functions a little earlier (Godelier 1986: 92).

the insignia does not posit any positive value, but introduces the possibility of differentiation as such. It is precisely that characteristic that makes it identifiable with the Element of Value.

Godelier provides the proof for this assertion. He says that there is a further complication related to the *kwaimatnie*, which pertains (again) to the problem of duality between a man and a woman. Godelier says that there is an indication of a fundamental fact present in all of this – a fact that reaches the heart of social power among the Baruya. All *kwaimatnie* exist in pairs and operate as couples, one is male and the other is female, and the more powerful amongst the two is always the female *kwaimatnie*. Godelier’s explanation of this fact is very instructive. He says that in order to dominate, the masculine must contain the feminine power, and to do so, it must first seize that power by expropriating it from the women in whom it originally resides. Godelier continues, arguing that in order to dominate, it is not enough for men to be themselves.⁶⁸ They must also turn the power of the women into an attribute of their own power, into a male attribute (Godelier 1986: 94). This is to say that male potency derives from its very impotence – not having functions as a prerequisite to have. Male power is therefore acquired through rituals of transition and derivable through the appropriation and domestication of female power. Female power is understood as dangerous, because it is unstable. There is always an ongoing effort to domesticate it. The male power appears in the moment of disavowal of the female power. This also means that the *kwaimatnie* cannot be understood simply as the Element of Value. The Element of Value resides in the relation of power between the male and female *kwaimatnie*. Godelier’s proposition regarding the status of touch in the ritual of passage as the symbolic gesture plus *something more* should be read through the relation between the male and female *kwaimatnie*. According to this reading, the “power” of the *kwaimatnie* to change reality would be in the last instance the stolen and controlled power of the female *kwaimatnie*. Nevertheless, I do intend to analyse this phenomena further. I would prefer to present more accurately the relation between the rupture into reality (difference) and the Element of Value in the next section.

⁶⁸ See also previous section where I discussed the distinction between the name and the person.

3.3 GEURTS'S TOUCH

Geurts reports two occurrences regarding touch from her fieldwork that I consider pertinent for this study. The first is the ritual object called *legba*, whose meaning has a tactile ground and invokes the question of the intrusion of evil spirits. The second is the process by which the Anlo become human. The later is called *agbagbaḏoḏo*. Geurts argues that in order for an Anlo to become human, the balancing of the body is essential. However, I argue that the balancing aspect is only of secondary importance, while the most important is the non-contact established between the human being and the object (usually a pot) which is held on the top of the head.

In Geurts's observations, five root words appears in *Anlo*-land regarding touch. They are arranged phenomenologically into a kind of continuum of intensity. The continuum consists of *li* (caress), *ka* (contact), *le* (seize), *ɬ* (push), and *fo* (strike) (Geurts 2002: 55). Of those five, *le* is the most interesting, because it is used to denote "keeping" and "holding". But besides holding an idea, a sensory experience, and certain sicknesses, the most interesting feature is the implication of containing harmful spirits. The same tactility-oriented *le* was contained in the term *legba*, which stands for ritual objects that served as guardians of thresholds (Geurts 2002: 57).

Geurts says that whatever thresholds existed in *Anlo*-land, one was likely to find *legbawo*. At the entrances of towns, villages, compounds, houses and to a certain extent "thresholds of the human body" one found what Blier (in Geurts 2002: 186) described as "empowerment objects". Literally, the meaning of *legba* is "to seize and collect at one place", where *le* stands for 'to⁶⁹ seize, catch, hold, and grasp' and *gba* for 'to⁷⁰ collect or keep at a place' (Geurts 2002: 187).

An interesting feature of *legba* is represented by the fact that when an evil spirit wishes to enter the community, *legba* reportedly invites it (the evil spirit) to be a guest and then subverts the spirit's plans by manipulating its movements (Geurts 2002: 187).

In this example, the evil spirit represents a rupture in reality. The homogeneous space is broken for a moment, but *legba* appears in the very space of the rupture and manipulates the effects of the rupture, i.e., "the evil spirit's plans". Again, the power of *legba* is to be

⁶⁹ Preposition in original.

⁷⁰ Preposition in original.

ascribed to the moment of the rupture and not to the object itself. In a parallel reading referring to Godelier, it could be said that *legba* is the equivalent of the *kwaimatnie*, on a certain level at least, as long as, considering that the male power consists in the domination of the female power.

Geurts' research also concentrates on the prerequisites of becoming a human being among the *Anlo* people. The latter is of special interest for the study on touch. She argues that a culture's sensory order is one of the first and most basic elements of making ourselves human (Geurts 2002: 5).

Geurts says that the most important characteristics of a human being for the *Anlo* people are balance and walking. These two characteristics make the human human. But while Geurts treats the intertwined senses of hearing and balance as the keystone of the *Anlo-Ewe* sensory model (Hinton et al. 2008: 145); I would rather propose that the keystone of the *Anlo-Ewe* sensory model is actually touch.

The making of a human being is known by the *Anlo* people by a specific word, which denotes a state in which a whole imaginary and sensual experience is involved. This word is *agbagbaḍoḍo*, and it means balancing a load and a sense of balance. In his dictionary, Westermann says that it also means, "to carry something on the head *without touching it* with the hands or to balance⁷¹"; the second meaning would be, "the first attempt to walk" (Geurts 2002: 49). Here, touch does not imply a prohibition from touching, but a non-touching as a possibility to walk. I argue in the following pages that this touch, which bears the form of non-touching or non-contact, produces self-difference or self-distancing.

As we can see, the word *agbagbaḍoḍo* implies balancing while walking, and it also implies the first attempt to walk, which of course requires the balance of a body. But the most interesting feature is the "prohibition" from touching an object, which is usually a pot on the top of the head. Geurts says that a member of the *Anlo* people would find it cumbersome to hold the thing with his/her hands on top of his/her head (Geurts 2002: 105).

As Geurts states, this skill is *acquired* in infancy and is so important that, to never *learn* how to do it, indicates that an individual was an animal – continuing to crawl or move on

⁷¹ Author's italics.

four legs. *Agbagbađođo* is therefore, she says, that which separates humans from animals (Geurts 2002: 50).

I propose to think the “function” of *agbagbađođo* as the creator of human beings. I am pointing to the fact that *agbagbađođo* produces difference. *Agbagbađođo* produces the possibility of the differentiation between human beings and animals, between the human and the animal world, and also between two and four (legs), down and up, earth and sky, etc. *Agbagbađođo* should be understood as the very space where this difference becomes possible and also the difference that enacts all forms of dualities.

Geurts understands *agbagbađođo* as the product of what it produces: balance. The balance that Geurts has in mind is the balance between the left and right, up and down, and also between nature and culture, etc. From this point of view, balance is the means by which it is possible to “control” the primordial loss of unity or oneness. The balancing, which is always reducible to the balancing between two terms or substances, represents an attempt to achieve unity and oneness once again. However, the latter cannot be achieved, because of the irreducible difference that made the opening to the world possible.

When and where has difference made its appearance? I argue that difference presents itself through the un-touchable pot that is placed on the top of the head, while walking. I argue that it is not a coincidence that “usually” what is put on the top of the head is a pot.⁷² I claim that the pot has a specific function in the constitution of the human being, called *agbagbađođo*.

Raoul Kirchmayr, a philosopher specialised, among others, in Heidegger and Lacan,⁷³ says that in order to understand the implications related to the pot we should differentiate between the pot as an instrument and a tool on one hand and the pot as a thing on the other (Kirchmayr 2002: 153). While the reality of the pot as an instrument and tool is well known, at least at the elementary level, I am more interested in the pot as a thing in *agbagbađođo*. Kirchmayr, following the thought of Lacan, states that the pot as thing is a signifier. However, he adds that this signifier does not take part in the symbolic field with

⁷² The prefix *nu-* indicates a thing in the Anlo-Ewe language. Beside that *Nulele* means also touching. But the interesting part is that the prefix appears on many vocational descriptions: *nufiala* (teacher) *nutula* (blacksmith), *nutɔla* (tailor), *numela* (potter) (Geurts 2002: 44).

⁷³ Both Heidegger and Lacan had taken the vase and the pot respectively as a means to develop their ideas. See Kirchmayr (2002) for their relation to this matter.

other signifiers (Kirchmayr 2002: 153). It is common knowledge from Saussure onwards that the symbolic field is a system of differentiated elements. This definition situates the symbolic field in the upper left position of the formula of embodiment. In that position, all differentiated elements are gathered (left-right, nature-culture, etc.), except for one – the signifier (pot) exposed by Kirchmayr. The latter should be therefore situated in the position of the Element of Value (on the left side down of the formula of embodiment). The pot, according to Kirchmayr, refers to the *thing itself*, i.e., the pot indicates a lack. The pot is the indicator of this lack, an indicator of nothingness. The pot represents the difference and that is why Kirchmayr says that the pot does not signify anything in particular and that the pot as a thing in itself has no significance (Kirchmayr 2002: 153). As it was demonstrated in Chapter 1, the Element of Value confers value to other signifiers and with it, confers meaning. In order for the Element of Value to “appear”, one of the elements (signifiers) must be excluded from the series.⁷⁴ The act of exclusion coincides with the “appearance” of difference. Or as Lacan (2006: 15) would say: “This pot is made in order to produce this hole, in order for this hole to be produced.”⁷⁵

Lacan’s assertion implies that in order for the human being to become human, a pot must be made in order to produce the hole (difference), which later on breaks the “eternal unity and oneness” that is experienced as loss and where “a concern for absolute unity” (Telban 1998a: 226) takes the form of balancing analysed by Geurts.

In order to strengthen the argument regarding the pot and the loss of absolute unity, I propose to take into consideration the theme of clay consumption as a pregnancy practice among the Anlo-Ewe. The latter is known in the Ewe language as *eʎe*. Pregnant women often ingest these substances as a way of coping with nausea, heartburn, excess saliva, and vomiting. Geurts says that she never observed or heard that in Anlo-land a male or a non-pregnant woman would consume *eʎe* (Geurts 2002: 87–88). In the village, *vixelawo* (traditional birth attendants) consistently told Geurts, that excessive ingestion resulted in a build-up of the substance covering the baby’s skin (Geurts 2002: 89).

Geurts illustrates the above argument with an interview with a traditional birth attendant in Tegbi Ashiata.

⁷⁴ See the introduction of the Element of Value through Marx’s theory of value in the first chapter.

⁷⁵ Lacan also adds that the structure of the pot is correlative to the function of the tube and the drum (Lacan 2006: 16).

BA: The women just feel they must eat it. I don't care whether or not they eat it. It's up to them.

G: Do you notice any effect it has?

BA: Yes, it sticks to the baby's skin.

G: So when the baby is born you can actually see it?

BA: Yes, the baby comes with eYe on it. Then we have to use soap and akutsa [a sponge made from locally grown creeper] to push it off during the first bath. When they eat a little, it doesn't show. But when they eat plenty, it shows. It covers the whole body of the baby. It doesn't affect the baby, as such, but it sticks on the baby for a long time. You wash the baby and it still does not come off. It takes several days, weeks, even months before it finally comes off. And if it doesn't come off, then it leaves an everlasting scent on the baby.

G: You mean it is in the skin? And you can smell it on the baby?

BA: Yes.

G: When you say "everlasting", what do you mean?

BA: For years – if you don't give a good bath. You have to scrape it all during infancy. When it [the baby] is growing and does not get a good bath, it [the eYe, the scent] stays. So, it's not good for them. (Geurts 2002: 89–90).

As Šumah proposes in another context, *agbagbaḍoḍo* should be understood as the problem of separation between the human being and the finished image of the pot (Šumah 2006: 128). *Agbagbaḍoḍo* represents the moment of the introduction of division. The "introduction of division" coincides with the introduction of difference, where the transition from "being One (oneness) with the pot" to "having a pot" (concern with oneness) (Šumah 2006: 128) is achieved.

3.4 HERDT'S TOUCH

In Herdt's research of Sambia, the continuation punch line initiated already by Godelier's research regarding the prohibition to touch men's *insignias* could be clearly discerned. Besides that, Herdt's analysis provides also a further clue related to the status of activity in relation to touch, which will be later elaborated through the work of Borut Telban.

Herdt says, in accordance with Godelier's research, that men could not allow women to touch the initiates for fear of pollution, or allow the women into the cult house for the same reason (Herdt 1986: 62). The pre-initiated boy is seen as a small person with a penis that is polluted, weak, and not yet manly. This is because the boy has been *constantly in touch* with the contaminated skin of the woman's breasts and body (Herdt 1986: 103).

In the rituals of initiation, *physical contact* and mutual experience of emotionally dramatic events create a bond between them which lasts throughout their lives (Herdt 1986: 115). They are detached from their mothers, with whom they can never again be with – touch, hold, talk to, eat with, or look at directly. The mother is off-limits. And what this taboo of detachment represents symbolically is the way the female world becomes generally forbidden. Once told the ritual secrets, a boy can never be trusted to be close to his mother again because of the fear that he might reveal those secrets to her (Herdt 1986: 112).

Herdt affirms that Sambia children receive a powerful message about the quality of gender relationships concerning the avoidance of touching members of the opposite sex. Kissing is unknown and considered shocking; the thought of mixing saliva is utterly disgusting to men. Though men walk hand in hand as an expression of friendship, and woman do the same with each other, it is unthinkable for the sexes to do so together (Herdt 1986: 91).

The importance of Herdt's findings for research on touch lies in his emphasis of the importance of avoidance. As he says, this is a result of sexual antagonism and men's aloofness (Herdt 1986: 91). His thesis thus proposes a non-static relationship between a man and a woman, which rather implies a perpetuating activity. While women are of course forbidden from touching men's heads, weapons, and ritual ornaments, they should not interfere with *men's activity* either (Herdt 1986: 27). Touching is here presented as

the interference in men's activity, which is an activity that is based on sexual antagonism that perpetuates every moment in this very activity.

With this proposition we come closer to Telban's definition of the human "body" among the Ambonwari. As Telban says, the "body" is defined by ways of doing things and includes also the objects that a person uses. He says that it is therefore understandable that people do not touch the things that could have undesirable consequences for their "bodies" or the "bodies" of those with whom they are in frequent contact (a child, a wife, a husband). I argue that the most important feature of the body described by Telban is the fact that people do not want others to interfere with their *kay* (Telban 1998b: 59). Touching the untouchable here corresponds with the danger to interfere with *kay*. Telban would agree on this point as he suggests that to disregard these prohibitions would be to interfere with the *kay* of the owner (Telban 1998b: 59).

He emphasises that in *kay* there is no dichotomy between nature and culture. He also adds that following Merleau-Ponty, Csordas rightly argues that the body is always already cultural (Telban 1998b: 65–66). However, here we find an interesting paradox.

In *kay*, there is no distinction between nature and culture, but according to Csordas the body is always already cultural. The paradox resides in the fact that the second statement is not a consequence of the first, but it exists on its own. This fact brings some consequences for the first statement as well. The second statement implies that the distinction of nature and culture as a non-dichotomous relation is a product of one of the terms, i.e., culture is that which produces the distinction. This is what Luhman calls the "blind spot" of observation: the paradoxical identity of both sides of the distinction that grounds observation to which an observer must remain blind, if the observer is to use that distinction to carry out his/her operations (Luhman in Wolfe 2007: xxiii).

In the present study, the blind spot exposed by Luhman corresponds to the one of difference. Luhman says that the mentioned spot must remain blind in order to operate, that means that it must remain un-acknowledged. This demand is implicitly present in every dualistic theory, and also in the theory of embodiment. In the moment that the spot "is not blind" any more, something does not function or operate properly and "breaks are felt".

This is why it is intriguing to analyse how the negation of this dichotomy is achieved and structured in a theory of embodiment. Telban says that in the Ambonwari the “psychological” and “physical” aspects are merged into “oneness”;⁷⁶ thus, he proposes, one thinks and feels with flesh and one materialises thoughts and feelings (Telban 1998b: 66). The interesting thing in Telban’s articulation is that the word “oneness” is put into quotation marks by Telban himself, almost as if those quotation marks would represent the very questionable reality of oneness.

There is another proposition made by Telban in which the suspicion of the questionable reality of oneness takes place. He affirms that *kay* is in a *state of becoming* and therefore *vulnerable to the influences of the habits and manners of some other “body”*. The *kay* that has a negative influence must be avoided (Telban 1998b: 60). However, this also implies that what Telban calls, in the conclusion of his book, a concern with absolute unity (Telban 1998a: 226) corresponds to the work and function of the Element of Value. To summarise: the avoidance of particular forms of touch corresponds to the defence of the endangered Element of Value; the impotency (to achieve oneness) of the latter is marked by difference.

First, Telban asserts that *kay* is in a state of becoming and therefore presupposes that it is not achieved in itself. Secondly, because of its state of becoming, *kay* is vulnerable to the influences of other habits and manners. The important thing, which Telban does not forget to emphasise, is the fact that those habits and manners belong to the “body” and therefore constitute it.

This is why Telban says that the Ambonwari people refer to the “body” in its active, behavioural state by *kay* and by *arim* (skin). The body has meaning for the Ambonwari people only through the external appearance of skin and the way it is observed to act (Telban 1998b: 62).

⁷⁶ Original quotation marks.

4 TOUCH AND JOKE

This chapter takes Edward T. Hall's proxemics theory as a theoretical ground for a study of distance between human beings. Distance represents one of the constitutional aspects of touch. The present study identifies the paradoxical points in Hall's theory. On the grounds of these points, assuming a critical, but not criticising position, I propose an approach to the question of touch and distance based on the inter-relation between language and body. While Csordas argues, regarding Hall's work, that a theory modelled on the grounds of linguistic theory does not represent a wise step, I demonstrate how Hall's ideas could be pushed further. In particular, I take into consideration Hall's residual comment on the Arabs, whom he says that they are "difficult to touch", because their egos (persons) are situated deep into their bodies. He adds, however, that their egos (persons) could be "touched" by insults (Hall 1969: 157).

Hall's insight does not limit the analysis only to insults, but it establishes a relation between the body, language and touching. This fact enables me to investigate this relation from the point of any linguist phenomena. Therefore, I chose to do so through the analysis of jokes. The argument for the choice of the latter will be exposed throughout the chapter.

Through a reading of the history of psychoanalysis, I identify Freud's technique of touch, which in the past represented the mediating technique between hypnosis and the psychoanalytical technique as it is known today. In it, Freud implicitly analyses the dynamics of touching his patients. The interesting point for the present study is that the technique of touching the forehead of the patient, which allowed Freud to reach unconscious thoughts, has a structure that is homologous to that of the joke.

Besides Freud, there are a few other anthropologists who acknowledged the homology between the joke and touch. Among them are Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michael Jackson and Gabriela Alex. In the third section, I present anthropological data that establishes a relation between touch and joke.

4.1 DISTANCE AND TOUCH

In the section *Touch and Community*, I presented the twofold nature of touch – first touch as one of the senses and second touch as a pure difference. Following Dolar, (2008: 86) I denominated the first as touching and the second as touch. With the identification of the object of touch as difference, it is finally possible to pose questions regarding the distance between subjects. The concept of distance represents one of the fundamental aspects of touch. This chapter proposes the task of elucidating the status of distance among human beings as bodies.

It should be remembered, however, that with the introduction of touch as difference, any definition of distance through the duality of far and near would not adequately approach the phenomena that are dealt with here. This is because this duality still retains a quantitative characteristic, which does not tell us anything about the quality of the relationship. This is why this research argues against a reduction of distance to a measured physical distance. Distance or nearness, in fact, are not the measures that quantitatively separate one human being from another, but it is a qualitative incommensurable distance from one's "inhumanity", which, as Žižek (2009b: 66) says, even if faraway, it is by definition too close by.

In order to introduce the above-proposed conceptualisation of distance, the analysis takes into consideration the work of Edward T. Hall, an anthropologist of space who developed the proxemics theory. "Proxemics" is the term that Hall joined together for the purpose of interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialised elaboration of culture (Hall 1969: 1). His theory is based on the work of ethologists,⁷⁷ the scientists studying animal behaviour and the relation of organisms to their environment (Hall 1969:4). His aim is to identify, beside physical boundaries such as skin, body etc., a non-physical boundary, which appears to be harder to delimit than the first one. However, Hall argues that the latter is just as real as a physical boundary. He calls it "organism's territory" and in humans it becomes highly elaborated as well as being very greatly differentiated from culture to culture (Hall 1990: 158).

⁷⁷ The author refrains from proposing a critique of Hall's behaviourist, evolutionist and pattern oriented approach, but an interesting critique could be found in Donna J. Haraway *Opice, kiborgi in ženske: reinvenčija narave* [a Slovene translation of "Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature"] (see Haraway 1999).

My interest in Hall's work lies in what Hall calls intimate and personal space. The example of intimate and personal space is taken in order to demonstrate the presupposition of Hall's theory and to give some interesting clues regarding the conceptualisation of touch. Some of the paradoxes that are explicitly visible in Hall's dictum will try to be considered again in the context of the investigation of touch proposed by this study.

Regarding the intimate space, Hall tells us that it is represented by the presence of the other person, which may at times be overwhelming (Hall 1969: 116). From Hall's definition, it is possible to articulate the conception of space according to the proxemics theory. This enterprise is driven by the fact that in the two books⁷⁸ dealing explicitly with proxemics theory, a definition of space cannot be found. However, a definition of space can be discerned from Hall's articulation alone.

Hall defines space as something that is not given *a priori*, but something that takes place between two "persons". It appears in the encounter with the other, whose presence is felt as overwhelming. Space does not exist prior to the appearance or arrival of the other and it is therefore something that happens in the guise of the process of the practice. The other and the intimate space are deeply interrelated in two ways: both appear at the same moment or more accurately, intimate space appears at the exact moment that the other appears; and secondly, the other appears as space or to put it differently as distance, which is said to be a part of the "Self". The second proposed interrelation brings further consequences. The other does not appear only as space, but also through and as an overwhelming feeling. Hall ascribes the cause of this overwhelming feeling to the "greatly stepped-up sensory inputs"⁷⁹ (Hall 1969: 116).

This articulation and the above-proposed comments bring two consequences. The first is that the other as other is presented as such only if perceived through the feeling of the "arrival of the overwhelming". If there would be no overwhelming feeling, the other would not preserve its otherness and therefore would not be "other" in the strict sense of the term. The other without the overwhelming feeling is a domesticated other and

⁷⁸ See Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* and *The Hidden Dimension*.

⁷⁹ Author's quotation marks.

therefore is no other at all. The otherness of the other, its essence – the overwhelming feeling which accompanies it, is the condition of the otherness as such.

Interestingly enough, the verb used by Hall to articulate the specific status of the sensory inputs is “stepped-up”, which implies an increase in tempo or acceleration of the sensory inputs. The chosen verb presupposes a qualitative determination of the sensory inputs. The other is thus characterised with the ability to break the “normal tempo” of the human being.

However, Hall’s notion of personal distance implies a distance that consistently separates the members of non-contact species. It might be thought of as a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others (Hall 1969: 119). What is striking in this definition is the metaphor of the sphere or bubble, which delimits the personal space surrounding the person. The sphere, besides representing harmony and totality in the time of the ancient Greeks, also represented *accord* (Russell 1977). The latter implies an ethical conduct or an aggregate of actions that are in accord with a higher principle. It is my opinion that the accord and the bubble are highly correlative with the Element of Value.

Hall’s research involves the presupposition of a differentiated sensory world (Hall 1969: 3) or in Geurts’s vocabulary, differentiated sensoriums. Hall preserves a constructivist view, in which perceiving the world differently leads to different definitions of what constitutes crowded living, different interpersonal relations, and a different approach to both local and international politics (Hall 1969: 164). This view was explicitly rejected by Lock and Hsu. The latter says that it is wrong to use the notion of construction because it implies and presupposes the primacy of the mental over the physical (Hsu 2008: 433).

In fact Hall’s hypothesis behind proxemics classification is the following one: “It is in the nature of animals, including man, to exhibit behaviour which we call territoriality. In so doing, they use the senses to distinguish between one space or distance and another” (Hall 1969: 127–128).

The reference to the nature of animals, which is transferred by Hall to the nature of man, is representative enough to confirm the thesis of constructivism. Even though his constructivist position does not prevent his theory from providing us with interesting

findings regarding touch. One of those findings is the difference between what Hall calls the Arab's and Westerners location of the person in the body. Hall noted that:

“The Arab's location of the person in relation to the body is quite different than that of the Westerners. The person exists somewhere down inside the body. The ego is not completely hidden, however, because it can be reached very easily with an insult. It is protected from touch, but not from words.” (Hall 1969: 157)

Hall makes a clear differentiation between the person and the body. The person is understood as an entity “living” in the body. Accordingly, in his opinion, touching somebody does not mean touching him/her on the surface of the body, but touching the very person who resides in the body, i.e., the ego. The body has a function of defence. In the given example he says that the Arabs have their persons located deep in their bodies and are therefore less susceptible to touching in common places. However, Hall admits that the Arabs are not “immune” to words, especially if they come in the form of an insult.

The notion of intrusion remains the key point of Hall's investigation, but it also represents the main paradox. One of these paradoxes is quite evident in Hall's work with/on his students. Hall himself in fact argues that when conducting an interview with them, they said that they knew and could tell when they were being intruded upon, but they could not define this intrusion or tell how they knew that it had occurred and when it had occurred (Hall 1969: 137). It was Hall's work to define it and tell when it occurred.

Bourdieu's critique on that point would be that Hall's objectivistic view makes him “blind” to the fact that a scientific construction cannot acknowledge the principles of practical logics in other way than in changing their nature in every possible manner. Hall's explication turns around the practical sequence into an imagined (presented) sequence. The latter is an act that is directed according to space and is objectively constructed as a structure of demands into a reversible operation, exercised in a continued and homogenised space (Bourdieu 2002: 154).

A second critique, this time proposed by Heidegger, is also in place. He says that in reality, the way of description is transcended by experimentation. Nature is said to be described when a mathematical form is introduced in it, which has the goal of experimentation, i.e., to approach the exactness. But Heidegger asks himself what is

exactness? His answer is that exactness is the possibility of repeating (in a totally coinciding way) an experiment in the scheme (Heidegger 2003: 125).

Hall's proxemics theory therefore reduces touch as the radical otherness to a physical distance⁸⁰. His reduction should be read as a defence towards otherness. As Hall has noticed himself, this defence always comes too late. When someone is touched, the precise time of touch itself has already gone, and what is left is a reconstruction of the event, the localisation in space and time.

Csordas criticises Hall, because his interest in the body has been subordinated to the interest in communication as a cultural process. The body serves Hall only as the means or medium of communication. Csordas says that Hall, rather than beginning with a concern of bodiliness *per se*, took language as its model, using linguistic analogy to study various types of languages of the body (Csordas 2000: 176).

While I absolutely agree with Csordas and his critique, I would nevertheless argue for an analysis of language and the body. I argue that instead of dismissing Hall's theory as irrelevant, it would be more revealing to push it further to its extremes.

Let us concentrate for a moment on Csordas's words. He says that Hall's analysis took language as its model, using linguistic analogy to study various types of languages of the body (Csordas 2000: 176). This is to say that Hall did not explicate the "effects" of language. He did not analyse language, because language has always been already "present" in the body. For Hall, language is always already implicit in the body.

In order to "push" Hall's theory to its limits, this "implicit language of and in the body" should be re-externalised. In other words, the implicit language must become explicit. In order to do so, I will again turn to his assertion regarding the Arabs. He says that the Arabs are protected from touch, but not from words (Hall 1969: 157) especially if the latter come in the form of an insult. Hall implicitly accepts the fact that an insult "has

⁸⁰ It is interesting to note Lock's understanding of distance in the example of symptoms regarding the "empty nest", the relevance of which she tries to deny, because it defines menopause as loss. Even though the term was adopted by Japanese psychologists, she argues that this symptom does not explain *konenki*. Her argumentation of this negation alone is in itself interesting. She says that children leave their parents only after marriage and contacts between the family members are also maintained afterward. Another very surprising argument that she makes refers to the public transport system. In Japan, she says, there is a very efficient public transport system, which would (she presupposes) enable contacts among siblings and make any "feeling of loss" bearable for the woman, inasmuch her children would leave home (Lock 1993: 226). It is quite clear that Lock's logic of argumentation consists in the reduction of the phenomenon of the empty nest and loss in general to a kind of "vulgar materialism".

something bodily”. This argument already proposes the point of interception between language and body.

Fortunately, I do not need to develop the above-mentioned “externalisation of language”, because William Ian Miller, the author of the book *The Anatomy of Disgust*, has already done so. Miller shares similar ideas to those of Hall, but at the same time he distinguishes himself from Hall due to the fact that he is a professor of law. His profession is of great importance for the “externalisation of language” from the body. Contrary to Hall who establishes the human nature through deduction from animal nature, Miller proposes a human nature that is based on language and law. What was implicit in Hall becomes explicit in Miller.

Hall’s theoretical conceptions emerge from the work of ethologists, the scientists studying animal behaviour and the relation of organisms to their environment (Hall 1969: 4). Besides physical boundaries as skin, body etc., he is also interested in non-physical boundary. Hall calls it “organism’s territory” (Hall 1990: 158).

Miller acknowledges the limits of the self, which expand beyond the body as well. However, contrary to Hall’s “organism’s territory”, Miller defines it as the *territory of jurisdiction*. Miller follows Ervin Goffman’s conceptualisation of this space, which is defined in terms of law and language. In fact, Goffman says that if the limits of this space are not *respected*, that can produce a *legitimate* outrage and disgust. Within this space it is possible to perceive an insult (Goffman in Miller 2006: 88).

It could be noted that Erwin Goffman and Ian Miller no longer understand the same phenomena – personal space – in terms of Hall’s animal behaviour, but rather in terms of language and law. The implied notions of respect and insult show that personal space is inherently linked to language and its forms. However, I posit these two notions only as a starting point of the analysis, which means that I do not have the intention to analyse touch through them. This is because an analysis of touch through the notions of respect and insult bears the danger of conceptualising the former in the form that is sustained by the dualistic theory. In that case, the analysis of touch would be reduced to the affirmation of prohibitions and to the violation of the latter. An analysis that follows the above-mentioned presuppositions does not take into account that the *limit* between respect and insult is an unstable one. In the section entitled *Touch and Community*, I have

shown that touch is inherently incommensurable. The apprehension of touch could be achieved only through a “more or less”. This is to say that touch cannot be simply posited within the category of respect or insult. Touch, rather, represents this very limit – a limit between respect and insult, which is impossible to define. In order to analyse the dynamic of this limit, a third language phenomenon must be introduced, besides that of the insult and respect. It is my argument that this language phenomenon is the joke.

4.2 FREUD’S JOKE – FREUD’S TOUCH

This section begins by analysing the meeting point between language and body as it was proposed in the previous section. Freud’s account of a particular analytical mechanism is presented in which the question of touch is explicitly and implicitly formulated. This particular analytical mechanism involves the functioning of touch, but also that of the joke. Freud’s implicit relation between touch and joke is analysed and the structure of the former is proposed.

Freud’s articulation of touch appeared at the time of a turning point in the history of psychoanalytic treatment. This turning point is represented by Freud’s passage from hypnosis to psychoanalytical treatment denominated also as “talking cure”. However, the passage from hypnosis to proper psychoanalysis was not a smooth one. In fact, there was an intermediate technique which marked the passage. The intermediate technique consisted of Freud’s touching the forehead of the patient in order to make possible the appearance of unconscious images and thoughts.

The passage from hypnosis to the intermediate technique of touching was driven by Freud’s finding that hypnosis did not work with every person⁸¹. He learned that the cause of hypnotic failure is in the resistance of being hypnotised. Freud was therefore almost forced to find another technique, a different one from that of hypnosis. Following an analysis of his own treatments, he realised that if he was too persistent with the patients in continuing to assure them that they knew the content of their thoughts or that they will

⁸¹ Besides that, Freud openly admitted that he was not a good hypnotist (Freud 2002: 310).

remember them, there was no positive effect; even worse, his comments aroused resistance and the treatment became an impossible endeavour. It was in this precise moment that he invented the intermediate technique of touching the forehead.

Freud asked his patients to lie down and close their eyes while he was sitting in front of them. He then waited for traumatic images and thoughts of his patients to arise. If the patient would not articulate those images, Freud would assume that there was an unconscious defence somewhere. About the defence, Freud writes that when an image approaches the patient's ego, which is felt as unbearable, the force of rejection arouses in the ego. The goal of rejection is the defence against this unbearable image (Freud 2002: 310–311).

Freud was aware that if he implemented “too much effort” in assuring the patients that they knew the content of their unconscious thoughts that would arouse the patient's resistance, which at the level of genesis showed itself as a rejection to articulate those thoughts. Freud's “persistence” should be understood as the main reason Freud demanded from every psychoanalytic apprentice to undergo psychoanalytic treatment himself. Freud in fact knew that the resistance of the patient has something to do with the resistance of the analyst.

Anyhow, Freud solved the problem of resistance. In those circumstances when resistance arouse, he used, as he described it, “a little technical tool”⁸². He told the patient that in the next few moments he would press gently the patient's forehead with his hand. At the same time he assured the patient that during this pressure he/she would see the memory in the form of an image or that he/she would experience a thought. Of course Freud also demanded that his patients tell him whichever image or thought they would experience regardless of the content (Freud 2002: 312)

At first, Freud tried to explain this effect as a “form of strongest hypnosis”, but because of its complicated mechanism, he proposed a rather different explanation. Freud thought that the advantage of the new technique consisted in the redirection of the patient's

⁸² Freud admits that such a pressure with the hand could be exchanged with any other signal or any other form of bodily injunction on the patient. But he states at the same time, that because of the patient lying before him it seems that the pressure exercised on the forehead or the holding of his head between his palms are the most suggestive and most comfortable ones (Freud 2002: 312–313).

awareness away from his conscious searching and thinking. Or to put it in other words, away from anything that could produce the appearance of the will (Freud 2002: 131).

The touch that Freud implemented on his new technique held a specific function. Touch itself redirected the patient's awareness and made possible the appearance of unconscious thoughts. What Freud needed, and also found, was the means by which it was finally possible to overcome the obstacle represented by the will. Or as Dolar (2008b: 97) puts it: "*One touches to get around the ego, one touches to reach the unconscious.*"

Freud dealt with the theme of redirection of awareness also in his book devoted to the question of the relation between joke and unconscious, entitled accordingly – *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.⁸³ In order to gain a valuable and insightful understanding of touch according to Freud's psychoanalysis, I propose a parallel reading of the analytical technique of touch and the theory of the joke.

Freud says that a joke has a paradoxical structure. Firstly, he argues that for example, jokes about Jews are invented by Jews themselves. Other jokes or stories concerning Jews, which are not their own product, do not achieve the comical effect. We can even say that they are rather insulting for Jews. It seems that critique and aggression in jokes are unattainable and that the latter are possible only through a deviation (Freud 2003: 152). This feature makes the joke highly co-existent with community.

On the other hand, we can say that jokes work with tact – if they are insulting, they are no more jokes in the strict sense of the term. Freud says that in the analytic practice one should work at his best as an interpreter in the place where ignorance produces anxiety and with a sense of *respect* towards the patient. This proposition therefore proposes that the joke has also something to do with respect. Joke functions on the limit between insult and respect and even more, joke represents this very limit; however it represents a limit that is potentially unstable. There is a danger that the joke becomes insulting. The same

⁸³ Freud's main proposition regarding the joke is the notion of fore-pleasure, which is not related to the content of the joke. This fore-pleasure allows the lowering of our inhibitions and makes possible to accept the aggressive or sexual tendency, which appears in the content of the joke, and which we would not accept, we would even turn away from it with disgust, if it would appear outside the context of the joke. Alenka Zupančič on the other hand proposes a supplement to Freud's theory. She says that in the narration of the joke, which redirects our attention from the place, where the turn will happen, content-related end of joke, turns our attention from this other, more radical and discomfoting end. Or to put it differently, when we laugh at the end of the joke, a certain amount of pleasure is released. This enables laughing, which takes place before this discomfoting dimension (Zupančič 2008a: 143–144).

can be said for touch, which is also placed between respect and insult, constituting their very limit.

If I may go back to the question of tact I would propose the following thesis. Tact plays the “impossible” role of delimiting respect from insult. Or in other words, tact is there in order to sustain the *unsustainable limit*.

In the context of the relation between the patient and the analyst, Freud says that the analysis could stop if a feeling that the patient is not valued or that he is even insulted, would arise (Freud 2002: 342). Insult is here conceptualised as de-valuation. As it was already demonstrated, what is devalued is not the human being as such, but rather his Element of Value. When the human being “feels devalued” what is devalued is actually the Element of Value.

Touch and joke are therefore posited on the limit between respect and insult or more accurately they represent this very limit. The question to pose is how the relationship between respect and insult is then structured and how and when does an insult occur.

The insult was already identified in connection to the degradation of the Element of Value (Lacan 1991: 298). The Element of Value is there in order to cover the lack in the subject represented by difference. Or to put it in Telban’s vocabulary, *kay* is in a state of becoming and therefore vulnerable to the influences of the habits and manners of some other “body” (Telban 1998b: 60).

In order to understand properly the mechanism of the insult, the acceptance of the fact that *the content is not offensive in itself* is necessary. As Zupančič says, the insult is a paradoxical event on the level of enunciation and the enunciated. The words “stupid” or “idiot”, for example, still preserve the linkage between the content and the offensiveness. That is why the disconnection and exchange of the enunciation and the enunciated is less evident and we could think that the content is offensive in itself. Zupančič turns to the Freudian example of the *Rat-man* in order to show that it is quite the opposite. When the little boy became angry with his father he started to abuse him, but because he did not know any other term of abuse he used all the objects he knew, such as: “You lamp, you towel, you plate!” Zupančič says that the signifiers on the level of enunciation produce something as: “I hate you, I hate you, I hate you” (Zupančič 2002: 122)⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See Freud (2005: 267).

What Zupančič shows is that an insult does not retain the linkage between the content and the offensiveness. An insult could not simply be discerned from the “meaning” of the words implied in it. Each word can be used as an insult. Therefore, the “space” that differentiates an offensive word from a non-offensive one is never really clear.

If we have posited touch and joke as the limit, between respect and insult, this also implies that touch and joke retain something insulting. As Žižek says, Lacan was perfectly aware of the sadistic dimension of humour and the relation between humour and the Super ego (Žižek 2009: 425). This is why for Mannoni (1986: 114–115) the joke is not a symptom, but *a work of art* and as such it *respects the laws* and at the same time *violates them*. Joke is posited not between respect and insult, but “as the between” and touch is exactly that – the between. This makes the relationship between touch and joke the very relationship between the Element of Value and Difference.

4.3 FROM JOKES TO TOUCH

Following the thesis proposed in the previous chapter, I demonstrate further that the structure of touch is homologous to the structure of the joke. Or to put it in a thesis form: touch is structured as a joke. Following this proposition, I will undergo a further, parallel reading of the joke on the one side, and touch on the other, and I will do so in an anthropological context.

The parallel reading in an anthropological context is followed by the evaluation and re-articulation of Freud’s findings regarding the joke in the context of the question of touch. The aim of the sections that come afterward is to re-state the main points discerned by Freud in his analysis of the joke.

We have to acknowledge the fact that Freud was not the only author who saw the relation between touch and joke. There were also several other authors who dealt with this relation in one form or another. For the purposes of this study, I analyse Michael Jackson’s conceptualisation of the joke, Claude Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of myths dealing with jokes and Gabriela Alex’s ethnographic data on touch from India.

The way in which I deal with the mentioned authors is that I establish a dialog between them and psychoanalysis. The dialog is structured into two sections, of which every one puts special emphasis on two characteristics of the relation between joke and touch. The two characteristics are the production of meaning in the relation between touch and joke and the “meaning” of sexuality in the relation between touch and joke. The analysis begins with the interview conducted by Alex’s, which explicitly acknowledges the relation of homology between touch and joke.

Alex conducted her fieldwork in India in the rural state of Tamil Nadu among the groups of *Vagri*, *Paraiyar* and *Muthuraja*. The results of her research were published in an article entitled *A Sense of Belonging and Exclusion*. The article investigates touch as a prime marker of status and social relations. She considers touch as a means of communication used to express different forms of relatedness (Alex 2008: 537).

One day Alex asked Babu (an Indian boy) whether a particular pinching inflicted to him by a girl was painful. He explained to Alex that, “*yes, it was painful, but mainly it made me laugh, because it was maskeri, joking.*” (Alex 2008: 535)

Alex says that Babu did not describe touching as a form of beating, which also happens between children, but as a kind of tickle, since it was taking place within a joking mode (Alex 2008: 535). She says that relations with affine kin are framed in a joking relationship called *maskeri*, and this is more often than not, a form of sexual joking. Alex cites Werth, who has pointed out how this joking relationship is opposed to the non-joking, rather serious relationship that a Vagri has with non-marriageable kin (Alex 2008: 534).

These insights, provided by Alex, allow the study to analyse the relation between joke and touch in an anthropological context. On the other hand, they also open a variety of questions related to meaning and sexuality.

4.3.1 MEANING AND DIFFERENCE

Alex's understanding of the relation between joking and touch relies on the presupposition that touch is an external entity, which is in a particular situation contextualised or framed in a joking relation, which consequently determines its meaning. In the example given by Alex, touch becomes *maskeri* – joking, because it was occurred in the context of joking. However, this proposition opens at least two questions. The first question is that of touch as such we do not have any knowledge except for the fact that it is meant as joking. The second question that I would like to pose is the question of authority and the dominance of the context, which gives a meaning to touch. Or to put it in other words, I am interested in the fact what authorises a context to determine the phenomena of touch on a phenomenal level, and so also on the level of meaning?

I would like to propose some initial thoughts regarding these questions. The statement that a touch can be identified with joking is equal to the statement that a joke is equal to joking. In fact, nothing can be said about the joke except the following: joke is equal joking. Of touch, therefore, we have only the knowledge that touch is equal to touching. This argumentation, which is taken from Alex's articulation, proposes to accept the proposition given by Freud that touch and joke are homologous on a structural level.

Another fact should be acknowledged. The relations between touch and touching on the one side and joke and joking on the other, are not tautologies, even if they seem so. These "tautologies" rather reveal the two levels, articulated by Dolar (2008: 86), between touch as difference and touching as sense.

And if we can say about the joke only that it is equal to joking, does that then mean that a joke functions as a context in which touch is given meaning? So, in which way does the joke function as a context? In my opinion, to answer this question we should analyse the structure of the joke alone and furthermore identify the element in it which gives to the joke the authority to produce meaning. In order to further elaborate on these questions I relate to the work of Michael Jackson regarding joking relations.

Jackson was particularly intrigued by names, sharing a name, the same name two people, people having the same name, he articulated as sharing the name

Jackson states that in many societies the sharing of a name invites a teasing relationship. He says that since joking and avoidance are both strategies for dealing with ambiguity and ambivalence, he asks what is ambiguous about sharing a name (Jackson 2005: 78–79).

His question derives from the fact that ambiguity and ambivalence in this situation cannot be clearly discerned. This is because Jackson follows the presupposition that individuals find themselves in contradictory situations where they have to either respect the social distance and therefore institute a relation of avoidance (prohibition to touch) or that they have a relation of excessive nearness (touch as joke), which refers to the joking relation (Radcliffe-Brown in Culiberg 2007: 48–50).

Jackson in his proposed example of “sharing of a name”, cannot individuate in “real life” a contradictory situation and that is why he asks why sharing a name would entail joking relations, the relation which is in his view understood as a strategy for dealing with distance and intimacy.

I propose analysing Jackson’s presuppositions regarding the ambiguous situation of sharing of a name. He argues that two subjects holding the same name are related, because of this very name. The name therefore represents a common substance that functions as a mediator between the two. At the same time, he acknowledges the fact that there is something ambiguous about this “sharing” and therefore about the relationship between the two. However, he does not propose a solution to the question of ambiguity.

While Jackson presupposes that ambivalence comes prior to the joke, first in “real life” and only then it appears in the joke, where it is framed and contextualised, I argue that ambivalence is always hidden there, but inside the joke it is finally accessible. The joke not only “deals” with ambiguity through a contextualisation or framing, but it reveals the inconsistency or ambiguity of social reality. In order to account for the nature of ambivalence, the analysis must take into consideration the temporary dimension of two moments; the moment of “revelation” and the moment of the production of meaning.

The problem to acknowledge regarding ambiguity resides in the fact that those two subjects, which “share the same name”, are not “linked” by the same name or signifier, but they are rather “linked” through the difference that finally “appears” in the joke. This leads us to acquire a different perspective on the proposed example given by Jackson.

Instead of accepting the fact that there is only one name at stake, we must accept the presupposition that in reality there are two “identical” names. However, even if “identical”, they are different. Or even better, precisely because they are identical the “minimal difference” (Badiou 2005) appears.

The ambivalence that Jackson speaks of derives from the fact that those two signifiers are identical even though they produce a difference. The difference that is produced is a minimal difference between name’ and name’’. And precisely this difference is what makes their relation an “odd” one. What is shared is not the name, which is presumably common to both and therefore shared, but rather the difference itself. As Radcliffe-Brown would put it, the point of disjunction is the point of their conjunction (Radcliffe-Brown in Culiberg 2007: 48).

What the notion or the moment of production of meaning “hides” is the point of joint or articulation between the Element of Value and difference. The production of meaning hides the fact that conjunction works on the basis of a fundamental disjunction. In order to show the point of their articulation, Zupančič argues, the effect of their disarticulation must be produced. And this is precisely what happens in the joke. At the end of the joke, the Element of Value sutures its narration and semantic field in a surprising way. We can say that the mechanism of the production of the joke (Ev-D) is obfuscated in its final re-installation of the order of identification (Ev/D) (Zupančič 2008a: 198–199).

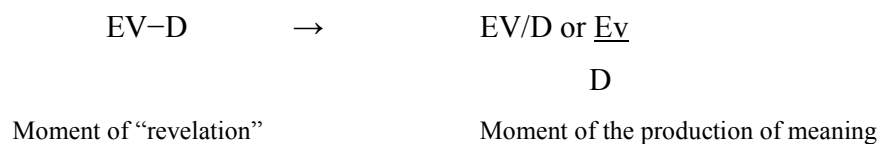


Figure 8: The moment of “revelation” and the moment of production of meaning

What consequences does this thesis bring for the question of touch? It again implies the difference enacted by Dolar between touch and touching. Touch belongs to the moment of “revelation”, while touching belongs to the moment of the production of meaning.

I propose another example given by Jackson - a joking relationship between a woman and her husband’s younger brother. From one point of view, she should keep a respectful distance between herself and her husband’s younger brother (prohibition to touch), yet

from another, she is mindful of the fact that if her husband should die she would become, through leviratic inheritance, the wife of one of his brothers. As Jackson (2005: 79) says: “The contradiction between distance and intimacy finds expression in the sexual banter that is licensed between them.”

Between the woman and the husband’s younger brother there is a double relation, one of avoidance (prohibition to touch) and the one of intimacy expressed through the joke. The avoidance between the woman and the husband’s younger brother is not due to the man’s respect paid to the woman herself, but rather to his older brother or more accurately to his Element of Value, which could also imply the respect for the ancestors, the dead, the community, etc. On the other hand, the respect for his brother obliges him tells him that if the latter was to die he could marry his wife. Again, there seems to be a common law (of the brother) that dictates two radically opposite demands and so the law appears to be something impossible. The point of impossibility could be again identified in the difference between the two demands, which are enunciated from the same position. We have therefore L’ and L’’ and the difference produced between them. What the joke produces is exactly the space between the two demands, where difference appears. The law is not identical to itself. Or in other words, the law does not coincide with itself. The breach that appears between L’ and L’’ is marked by touch and joke. This is why the latter two are identified with difference or self-difference, which stems for the non-coherency of language and therefore of reality itself. Joke and touch are not realities which could be found “real life”, but they are rather “remainders” of the reality that is thought as oneness. The structure of the joke, which is homologous to that of touch, shows us how the remainder or difference belongs to another level, a level different from that of meaning established at the end of the joke process.

Another anthropologist who found a similar relation between the joke and touch is Claude Lévi-Strauss. In his book *The Raw and the Cooked* the reader can find many myths related to the phenomenon of laughing. However, as Zupančič warns us, derision (produced by something ridiculous) must not be confused with the joke.⁸⁵ This is to say that the object of laughter is not the same as the object of the joke (Zupančič 2008a: 101).

⁸⁵ On this point, Zupančič does not speak about the joke, but about comedy. Originally, she says that derision must not be confused with comedy (Zupančič 2008a: 101). I take her insight and I re-articulate it

This is why in the final instance Lévi-Strauss provides us with only one single myth, where the relation between the joke and touch is evident. The mentioned myth is the Kayapo-Gorotire myth (Myth 40), which deals with the origin of laughing. The myth says that:

A man stayed behind to tend his garden while his companions went hunting. Feeling thirsty, he went to a spring that he knew of in the forest nearby, and as he was about to drink, he noticed a strange murmuring sound coming from above. He looked up and saw an unknown creature hanging from a branch by its feet. It was a Kuben-niepre, a creature with a human body and the wings and feet of a bat. The creature came down from the tree. It was ignorant of human language and began to caress the man to show its friendliness towards him. But its enthusiastic tenderness was expressed by means of cold hands and pointed nails, the tickling effect of which caused the man to break into an initial burst of laughter. (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 122)

In this myth touch includes enthusiastic tenderness on one side and a cold hand and pointed nails on the other. What is produced is laughter, which should not be reduced to the “tickling effect”, but rather to the homology with the structure of the joke. As in the structure of the joke, the first part of the joke leads awareness towards a place that is different from the one it wants to reach at the end. Tenderness, expressed by the creature, works as the first part of the joke, but through the pointed nails and cold hands, in the second part of the joke, the difference as such appears. The emergence of the difference produces laughing and laughing is produced through a touching that has the structure of the joke.⁸⁶

Lévi-Strauss proposes to establish a linkage between laughter and various forms of bodily openings.⁸⁷ He says that laughter is an opening and that it can cause opening. Lévi-Strauss presents this opening as a combinative variant of laughter. This is what enables him to affirm that tickling, the physical cause of laughter (M36, M37, M40, M41), may be replaced by other, similarly physical, causes of bodily openings (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 125).

through the perspective interested in the joke in order to show a difference between the object of laughing in the ridiculous and in the joke. In fact, many myths related to laughing analysed by Lévi-Strauss imply derision and not the joke.

⁸⁶ It is however interesting to note that even if the creature was ignorant of human language it “knew” how to produce a joke: a human work of art *par excellence*.

⁸⁷ The splitting of skulls (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 123) and oral openings (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 126).

The opening that Lévi-Strauss indicates is one that appears in the structure itself and this is why the opening is in its final instance only a combinative variant of laughter. While for Lévi-Strauss the opening is part of the structure, I argue that the opening presented in Myth 40 functions as an element that is external to the structure, but at the same time internal to it. This opening is the opening of the joke itself and it appears as difference between the “intentional” caress and “unintentional” touch of cold hands and pointed nails. The joke is the opening itself, which shows difference that is, *in the moment of the production of meaning*, “contextualised” or in other words, it is “absorbed” into the structure, as proposed by Lévi-Strauss.

4.3.2 SEXUALITY AND TOUCH

In the previous section, one of the questions raised concerned the problem of authority to confer meaning. In this section, the latter is rethought through the assertion made by Alex that all jokes are mainly jokes about sexuality.

Alex states that the relations with affine kin, which are framed in a joking relationship called *maskeri*, are more often than not a form of sexual joking (Alex 2008: 534). She implies that jokes “allude to sexuality”, that jokes have a latent intentionality that tends towards the sexual satisfaction. The “last horizon of meaning” regarding the joke is therefore sexuality. In sexuality, according to Alex, we discover the principle that authorises the production of meaning.

I will re-articulate the theoretical proceeding developed until now. First, Alex affirms that in the context of a joking relation, touch gains the “meaning” of a joking touch. She affirms that the joke is the context, which confers meaning. Then I have questioned the basis for the authority to confer this very meaning. Second, she implies that sexuality is the “last horizon of meaning”. Therefore what authorises the joke to confer meaning to touch is sexuality.

But then, everything becomes sexualised. Every activity is based on sexuality. Sexuality becomes the principle of a hidden necessity that makes the world work. The latter

articulation represents also a critique that was directed against Freudian psychoanalysis. This critique is directed towards the psychoanalytical understanding that everything is reducible to sexuality and that sexuality is the final principle of necessity.

A critique with the same form as the one directed towards sexuality is also directed towards the conception of the unconscious. I propose, therefore, to read the conceptualisation of sexuality through the unconscious. I postulate the following: when Alex says that all jokes are more often than not a form of sexual joking (Alex 2008: 534), she presents us with a specific understanding of the unconscious. We should take into account that for Alex sexuality functions as a latent or suppressed entity that finally finds expression in the joke.

In order to locate Alex's theoretical position, I would now like to present Freud's conceptualisation of the unconscious. In the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud differentiates between the unconscious images and thoughts which he designates as latent dream thoughts and manifest dream thoughts – the dream itself. In this book he warns the reader that the unconscious images and thoughts are not, in the strict sense of the term, the unconscious itself. The Freudian unconscious is the “work of dreams”, that is, it is the processes by which the latent dream thoughts “become” manifest dream thoughts (Freud 2001: 265–266). In the joke analysed by Freud the mechanism of the joke is already “the work of the unconscious as the unconscious itself”. The formulation of “the work of the unconscious as the unconscious itself” is a precise one and it aims to show that the unconscious is not some kind of “hidden and deep substance”, but rather a non-substantial element that could be “seen” only through its (partial) effects in the substantial reality. The Freudian unconscious is, properly speaking, the difference between the latent thoughts and the manifest thoughts, a difference that produces singular effects.

As Zupančič writes, Freud discovers human sexuality as a problem (in need of interpretation) and not as something, with what we could interpret every (other) problem. Freud understood sexuality as inherently “meaningless” and not as the final horizon of all human produced meaning (Zupančič 2008b: 60).

Zupančič explains where the difficulties regarding the conceptualisation of sexuality come from. She argues that the problem of sexuality derives from the fact that we cannot

equate sexuality and the genital. The “genital sexual organisation” is not primary or “natural”, but it is rather the product of the development of many stages. The “genital sexual organisation” presupposes the *unification* of primarily heterogeneous, diffused, sexual drives, composed from different partial sexual drives such as looking, touching, licking etc. (Zupančič 2008b: 61–62).

Zupančič’s proposition implies that Alex’s assertion, according to which meaning derives and receives its authority from sexuality, is only possible on the presupposition that a unification of heterogeneous and diffused sexual drives have been achieved. If sexuality is by definition non-unified, as Zupančič proposes and the unification, which is called genital sexual organisation, is a product of many stages, does not the same unifying element produce also the meaning in the joke? When Alex says that sexuality confers meaning to the joke (and with it to touch) or makes it meaningful, she actually says that what produces meaning is the organising element which makes something as a genital sexual organisation possible. This “organisational element” tends towards unification, which is always vulnerable to what cannot be integrated and therefore unified.

Zupančič (2008b: 62) argues that:

“Freud’s fundamental gesture was to de-substantialise sexuality. Sexuality is not a substance, which could be adequately described, delimited and framed, but it is in itself the impossibility of its own delimitation and framing. Sexuality is not a particular, differentiated domain of the human activity or life, and this is precisely the reason it can inhabit every domain of human life.”

Zupančič implies the impossibility to delimit and describe sexuality and she also asserts that sexuality inhabits every domain of human life. Sexuality brings the same problems that the introductory part of this study has ascribed to the phenomenon of touch. I would like therefore to establish a correlation between sexuality and touch. As it has been suggested by this study, the latter is also marked by the impossibility to be adequately described and delimited and precisely for this reason it can inhabit every domain of human life. Or to be more specific, touch can inhabit any other sense. As Telban (2004: 14) suggests, looking at someone corresponds to touching someone. And also, a heard speech or melody can touch us (or move us, which also presupposes touch).

Then, the question of the value of senses, which is another way to call their “hierarchical system”, proposed by anthropology of the senses, should be re-articulated in relation to touch. I propose a variety of questions that re-articulate the above-original one: are the senses which “express” touch? Why are some dominant and others not (the exclusion of a sense in this regard is as important as the inclusion of one of them)? How does touching itself “express” touch?

The established correlation between touch and sexuality can explain why touch represents a problem for a “science of touch” (Hsu) and the human being in his/her everyday experiences and encounters. The impossibility to adequately describe and delimit touch poses the “science of touch” and the human being in a position, where nothing is absolute; counting does not account anymore, measuring is confronted with the immeasurable, and meaning is vague. Due to all these reasons touch represents the object of anthropology *par excellence*. Because of the impossibility inherent to touch or even, because of the impossibility called touch, something as culture is possible. The varieties of ways in which cultures deal with the problem of the impossible (touch) represent, in the last instance, the very substance of cultures.

5 CONCLUSION

Every conclusion is by definition a forced one. It is inclined to impose a limit or a boundary to a study, which is inherently infinite. Or to put it in the words of Nancy, a conclusion transforms a corpus into a body (into a whole constituted of parts). However, the gesture of delimiting a study produces significance and meaning of this very study. And the latter becomes significant and meaningful only if it is concluded.

That is why every conclusion is in itself paradoxical. On one hand, it concludes a work or study through the act of a closure and unification. On the other, the conclusion acknowledges that to close and summarise a certain topic is impossible. Why? Because in the conclusion, the author also emphasises the points that have not been analysed, discussed etc. In other words, in a conclusion what is emphasised is the “openness” of the study. The latter is usually presented as the “openness” for new horizons for future studies and research.

In order for the author to “redeem” himself for his gesture of power, which is always a violent one, he must admit the existence of breaches in the presupposed constituted oneness. However, these breaches do not make it impossible to conclude a study. This impossibility is translated into something else. The impossibility to conclude a study actually becomes the opportunity for future studies. What appeared at first as a deficiency (of the study), becomes something positive.

It is as if the author played a trick on us. And in fact, he has. However, when he plays the trick on us, he also plays it on himself. For the author truly believes that a study can be concluded or limited. To put it in other words, he believes that he can achieve absolute unity or oneness. But he can believe so only under the presupposition that the impossibility to conclude the study is translated into “openness” for further analyses.

This is an impossibility that is acceptable for the author. He can now handle it, because the impossibility, which is internal to the symbolic endeavour, is now externalised. Now, it concerns others, the future, other studies, new research etc.

The present conclusion is not an exception to the rule. However, my intention was not to present a theory of writing a conclusion but rather to show the far reaching extent of a thought of absolute unity or oneness. Or in other words, this thought is concerned with

the stability of meaning and it is also present, as showed by Telban and this study, in the notion of embodiment.

I am moving from a theory of writing to a theory of to embodiment. The latter is a widely used conceptual apparatus in current anthropology. In this study, the thought identified in embodiment, or even the logic of embodiment, has been discerned through the relation between the Element of Value and difference. If I define them in the context of the present discussion, I would say that the former represents the principle of unity, while the second represents the cause for unification and the impossibility to achieve the latter.

With the introduction of these two notions, I have demonstrated not only that a theory of embodiment did not overcome the dualistic conceptions, but that it failed to do so because of the fact that embodiment “appears” as a re-action to all dualistic theories. The relation between dualistic theories and theories of embodiment is marked by a simple negativity (re-action). Dualistic theories represent the ground where a theory of embodiment can flourish, but only under the presupposition that the classical duality is not erased.

Both theories are concerned with the same problem – the erasure of difference and the achievement of self-identity. As was shown in the analysis of the conclusion, the erasure of difference and the achievement of self-identity are possible, but only through a displacement. Difference, conceived as a problem, is displaced onto another level, which does not make the problem easier to handle, but *possible* to handle.

In dualistic theories such displacement occurs through the allocation of value to both of the two terms. The allocated value, provided by the Element of Value, establishes a negative relation between the two terms. Through the described process, the initial difference – the non-coincidence with itself – becomes a difference between two dualistically opposed terms.

In theories of embodiment, the displacement occurs in a different manner. Theorists of embodiment have seen the problem of dualistic theories in the relation between the two terms, which conferred to one of the terms a higher value and to the other a lower value. They saw the “solution” of the problem of dualities in the difference between the two terms and not in self-difference. On the level of structure, the theory of embodiment is confronted with the same problem as the theories of dualities. The sole distinction

between the two is how they manage to “resolve” the problem of difference. While a dualistic theory’s form of displacement is achieved by reducing difference to the status of the difference between the two terms, the theory of embodiment “integrates” and levels difference through the infinite dialectic movement between the two terms.

The introduction of the notions of Element of Value and difference into both theories enabled the acknowledgement that the main concern that persists in both theories is to guarantee the consistency of the World. To put it in Telban’s words, they both share a concern for absolute unity (Telban 1998a: 226) or oneness (Mimica in Telban 1998a: 226).

The latter is achieved differently in a theory of duality and in a theory of embodiment. The difference is in the level of stability between them and most importantly in the level of flexibility and dynamicity. In fact, stability on its own does not necessarily guarantee sustenance. This is because, as already suggested by Bourdieu, the crisis is inherent to the *habitus*. The crisis is the motor of the *habitus*.

This study has individuated the motor of embodiment in difference, which does not allow reaching self-identity. That is why self-identity perpetually aims at its goals, but always fails. However, in this failing something is achieved: achieved is a variety of cultural phenomena ranging from identity, meaning, feelings, experience, to institutions etc.

All of these cultural phenomena represent the object of this anthropological study. And it is precisely through them that the main theoretical points regarding the theory of embodiment are exposed. The research path I have chosen was the one that went from experiences, even if provided by other ethnographies, to concepts.

In the research, embodiment has been analysed through the experiences and affects of naturalness and dearness. From the first notion, it was possible to conceptualise universality, on one hand and necessity, on the other. Dearness provided the concept of value and the special value that embodiment has for a particular member of a cultural group. Necessity exposed the “structure” of embodiment and the peculiarities of the relation with one’s own embodiment. If a conclusion demands from its author to unfold a particular phenomenon that has not been analysed, because of various reasons, in this case this would be the relation of the subject to his/her embodiment.

The experience and affect of naturalness, which provided the concept of universality, enable the identification of difference and its dynamic in a theory of embodiment. The experience and affect of dearness testified for the special value that embodiment has for a human being. The latter also demonstrated that there exists a relation between the human being and his/her embodiment.

It is on this point, finally, that the question of touch enters into the debate of this conclusion. One is so attached to his/her embodiment that any contact that would endanger it is avoided. Touch then appears as something inherently problematic. It is marked by a radical inadequacy and incommensurability. That is why the process of embodiment cannot “contain” it. In other words, the absolute unity oneness (Telban 1998a: 226) and oneness (Mimica in Telban 1998a: 226) for which the process of embodiment strives for cannot integrate difference.

The second concept which derives from the experience and affect of naturalness, and necessity, provides the location of touch “outside” embodiment. If touch cannot be “measured” and any approach to touch is inadequate and incommensurable, then violence and reduction must be achieved. The latter two reach their completion in necessity. Necessity makes the figure of touch appear. Even if touch is marked by its inadequacy to be represented, a decision is taken and necessity guarantees the making of that very decision. The taken decision is of course the mode in which the problem of touch as difference is understood.

Even embodiment was demonstrated to be more diverse in this regard than the presented formula of embodiment may perhaps suggest. In fact, in this study I have individuated two modes of embodiment. On the structural level, they are as the formula of embodiment proposes. However, their difference resides in the emphasis given either to the Element of Value or to difference. The first mode has been discerned from Telban’s research of the Ambonwari, while the second has been discerned from Lock’s research of Japan and North America and some other studies (see Farnell 1999; Van Wolputte 2004; Lesure 2005; Retsikas 2007).

What encouraged me to draw the distinction between the two modes of embodiment was the peculiar fact that Telban was one of the few authors who introduced the notion of *kay*, which I have generalised with the notion of Element of Value. At first I, thought that the

lack of the conceptualisation of something as the Element of Value in a theory of embodiment was due to a “lack in theory”. However, I realised later on that the non-inclusion of the Element of Value or at least the non-mentioning of it was a part of its structural prerequisites. This fact has not surprised me, because in analysing Lock’s notion of embodiment I have postulated that her moral position is dictated by her theory and not *vice versa*, as it is commonly supposed.

This fact makes of embodiment not only a theory, but most of all a discourse in which the author is placed. A theory (discourse) of embodiment therefore implies language, thought, experience, judgements, decisions etc. A whole reality is at hand for the author of a theory of embodiment.

Among the above-mentioned aspects of embodiment I have given special emphasis to language and thought. These two enhance the importance of the analysis of the position of the subject in such discourses. I would therefore like to remind the reader of the three approaches to touch pertaining to the anthropology of the senses, which were exposed in the introductory part of the study. These were denominated as dispersion, historical narrativisation and unification. In the approach of dispersion, the research consisted out of many sporadic analyses of the phenomena which were unrelated. In the approach denominated as historical narrativisation, the research reviews various theories of touch and establishes a history of narratives. In the last approach, which is called unification, the research is conducted in a holistic manner that usually implies a system of “all five” senses.

What these three approaches share is their acknowledgement of the fact that there is a self-difference at work, which makes unity impossible. Conversely, the unity in these approaches is achieved through the displacement of the initial problem.

A science of touch, whether it is social or natural, refers to coping with the problem of touch as difference. Besides science, touch is something problematic (it represents an issue) for a human being in his everyday reality. That is why touch is dealt with in various theories of duality and embodiment. For the Baruya, the touch of the *kwaimatnie* is something more than a simple symbolic gesture. For the Anlo-Ewe people, the approach to the problem of touch as difference is accomplished through the embodiment

of equilibrium in the act of walking. Among the Sambia people, touch is marked by many prohibitions.

In all of these approaches, touch is understood either as something unattainable or even as something other than it actually is. The “fact” that touch is unattainable must be understood as being already a product of an empty abstraction of this very thought that posited it as such. The turn from a position that holds touch as unattainable represents the proposition that this research announced in the introduction. That is why only starting from the impossibilities pertained to the phenomenon of touch and taking those very impossibilities as part of the phenomenon of touch itself, can the study achieve a proper understanding of it.

The present study has proposed that one of the possible ways to understand touch is through the joke and its structure. I would like to explain why that is so.

The joke has been invoked in my study, because it pertains to the following question. How is it possible to make difference “appear”? In answering this question, I will try to achieve two things at the same time. I will expose the difficulties or rather peculiarities of such an “appearance” and also the reasons that make that makes the appearance of difference so difficult and peculiar.

In the joke, we should acknowledge the paradigm of duplication and of the double. In the Kayapo-Gorotire myth (Myth 40), which deals with the origin of laughing, Lévi-Strauss points at the difference in the joke through the “division” between caressing on one side and cold hands and pointed nails on the other (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 122)?

The same kind of “division” has been found in Freud’s comment on the technique of placing the hands on the forehead of the patient. The implicit homology between touch and joke articulated by Freud has been explicitly put forward and analysed.

Even if I have proposed an analysis of difference through the structure of the joke, I have also proposed an example pertaining to law. The example was provided by Michael Jackson and it shows the re-doubling of the law. Jackson demonstrates that regarding the status of the wife of a man, the law says two contradictory things at the same time and from the same position. First, it says that every man except the husband must avoid her. Second, it says that if the husband should die, one of his brothers would become, by leviratic law, the wife’s next husband. This double nature of the law and its internal

division makes the relation between the husband's brothers and the husband's wife a joking one.

This example shows that difference is not something substantial in itself, but it nevertheless retains a certain materiality. In order to avoid confusion, I will elaborate a bit further on the distinction between these two concepts.

Difference is not substantial, because it is impossible to describe. It is impossible to say anything about it. The reader would argue that this is a paradox as this study concentrated precisely on the "description" of difference. The critical reader would be right. This study is about difference or more precisely, it is about touch as difference.

The fundamental question pertaining to difference is the one already acknowledged by Freud regarding the access to the unconscious. It is not by chance that I have proposed an understanding of the Freudian unconscious through his analysis of the dream. As Freud says, "The dream is the royal way to the unconscious." This is not because Freud was able to "raise" (as from the depths) the latent content of dreams, but rather because he saw in *the work of dreams* the intermediary moment between latent content and manifest content. Therefore, for Freud the unconscious is not a substance that could provide meaning for our dreams. The unconscious is not to be equated with the latent content of dreams. It is rather the cause of the translation of the latent content, in such and such way, into the manifest dreams. The unconscious is therefore nothing other than the effect produced by it. Only through its effects – the "torsion" of the latent content into manifest dreams – it is possible to achieve a "description" of it.

This is the "substantiality" of the unconscious. It could be "seen" only if observed from the side and non-directly. How to understand its materiality then?

The unconscious could be observed only from the side, i.e., through the effects that it produces. These effects are "determined" by the torsion of one reality into the other. The materiality of the unconscious is nothing other than the torsion of these two realities. To put it in other words, materiality of the unconscious is the "fold" of language. This "fold" is best "visible" in the joke and also in the imperative of the law (see Jackson). If I may suggest a paradoxical thesis: "The materiality of difference is not the materiality of difference itself". Its "materiality" originates from the torsion of empirical materiality.

This is best exemplified by the Anlo-Ewe's pot that is put on the top of the head. While walking, one must not touch the pot. Regarding the function of the pot in relation to difference, I quote Lacan (2006: 15) who says, "This pot is made in order to produce this hole, in order for this hole to be produced."

However, something must be added to the present discussion. It seems that I started talking about difference from a perspective including language, while I proposed an example implying empirical materiality such as clay. Here, I invoke Raoul Kirchmayr and his comment regarding this matter according to which, "In order to understand the implications related to the pot we should differentiate between the pot as instrument and tool, on the one hand and the pot as thing, on the other." (Kirchmayr 2002: 153)

The pot as thing is a signifier. The pot, according to Kirchmayr, refers to the *thing itself*, i.e., the pot indicates a lack. It is a signifier without the signified, which is excluded from the symbolic field together with other signifiers (Kirchmayr 2002: 153).

The empirical clay that takes shape "around nothing" (difference) is already a part of language and discourse. This is the reason this study accomplished a discursive analysis of experience – the experience of touching.

On this point, I would like to pose a radical question. Does an experience of touching require the existence of touch?

The answer is both yes and no. The posed question refers to the actual existence of touch. On this point, we should pose a simple question: what is touch? From the aspect of contact, it could be said that touch is simply an established contact between two bodies. However, touch as contact presupposes the "agglutination" between the two bodies and therefore identity. Touch becomes an "identity machine" that produces Identity or the Same. This argumentation leads to the assumptions that touch as contact is not, properly speaking, touch.

We know that touching presupposes some kind of contact. On this question, I rely on Jean-Luc Nancy, who says that touch is a contact in retracting itself or a contact that retrieves itself. Nancy's formulation implies that touch is a contact in non-contact. It touches without touching. It is a contact that establishes a non-contact (Nancy 2005a). What touch produces is a hole and a gap. To put it in terms used by this study, touch is difference, which is established through contact. Or, if I use Radcliffe-Brown's

conceptualisation, the conjunction (touching) is achieved through a disjunction (touch) (see Radcliffe-Brown in Culiberg 2007: 48).

If, therefore, touch is conceptualised as a hole, a gap or difference, i.e., nothing, how is it then possible to experience it? The argument that I have proposed in the study is that it is possible to experience touch only through its figure. Of touch as such, we do not possess any knowledge. Touch “gives-itself-to-us” only through the figure of touch.

The assertion that touch “does not exist” means that we must invent a concept that would provide its existence. This is the reason the title of the study emphasises the distinction between the concept and the phenomenon of touch.

To invent a concept does not mean only to ascribe to the status of difference to touch, but to show how difference shows itself. If Freud characterised the dream as “the royal road to the unconscious”, this does not mean that the latter is the only one that leads us “there”. In fact, Freud discovers other “paths” that lead “there”. Among them there are jokes, forgetting, symptoms and slips of the tongue.

This study chose the joke as a paradigm to show the implications of touch. Through the reading of Freud’s implicit and explicit homology between the joke and touch, it could be discerned that touch appears in processes of re-doubling.

However, as already noted, the joke is a paradigm only to the extent that it makes “visible” the process of re-doubling. This fact calls our attention to further studies in what I am inclined to call “an analysis of the Double”⁸⁸. The latter will put its interest in the phenomena of twins and the un-decidability between the father and the son. I deliberately limit my exposition to these two examples.

The first example comes from the well known event that occurred between Jesus and St. Thomas; the latter called also “Doubting Thomas”. I recapitulate the story as written in the Gospel of John, chapter 20: Jesus, after appearing to Mary Magdalene, on the same day visited his disciples. Thomas was the only one of the twelve who has not witnessed Jesus’ reappearance. The other disciples told him that they saw the Lord. I cite his response: “But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” After eight days Jesus re-appeared in front of all the twelve disciples, including

⁸⁸ Alenka Zupančič would call it the Philosophy of the Two (see Zupančič 2003).

Thomas. Jesus said to Thomas: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” And Thomas answered: “My LORD and my God.”⁸⁹

Where and when does the theme of re-doubling come into the story? In order to answer this question, I resort to the work of Glenn W. Most, who accomplished an exhaustive and concise analysis and interpretation of St. Thomas. He proposes the thesis that Thomas was Jesus’ twin brother.⁹⁰ Furthermore, he says that John never mentioned in his writings that Thomas actually touched Jesus. Most believe that there was no contact between Thomas and Jesus. However, I propose to read Most’s thesis not through a dualistic conception, which approves the acceptance of the event or its rejection, but rather in accordance with our study, which would claim that this event consists of a touching that did not touch. In the “cut” or space between “has been touched” and “has not been touched”, touch as difference emerges.

This event is worthy of our interest at least for two reasons. First, the “event of Thomas touching Jesus” was heightened to the privileged place of the construction of ideologies and the battling between them. If we accept Most’s thesis, which argues that Thomas never touched Jesus, we should understand the *naissance* of ideologies and their battling as an attempt to close the gap or hole produced by a “touch that has not touched”. Ideologies organise themselves around this “touch that has not touched” and where every ideology or story becomes possible. The political implication of the words “everything is possible” emanate from the place of impossibility, from the place where “touch has not touched”.

The second reason is that this event (that has not occurred) fostered the emergence of innumerable artistic reproductions and interpretations.⁹¹ The touch that has not occurred gave birth to the figure of touch. In fact, for the majority of authors the event has occurred.

⁸⁹ See John’s passage 20 (King James Version) at: <http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearchresults.php?passage1=John+20&version=9>.

⁹⁰ For an exhaustive argumentation see the second part of the book (Most 2009).

⁹¹ To mention only some of them: Caravaggio, Petrus Cristus, Workshop of Martin Schongaur, Cima da Conegliano, Girolamo da Treviso, Marco Pino, Mariotto di Nardo, Bicci do Lorenzo, Andrea del Verrocchio, Bernardino Butinone, Albrecht Dürer, Pieter Paul Rubens, et al (see Most 2009: 141–195).

The event opened a variety of questions that extended from faith, religion and God to the senses, epistemology and certitude. However, if we accept Most's thesis that Thomas has not touched Jesus, all of these questions should be re-thought in a radically new way.

The other example that I would like to present is an "odd" event from Exodus 4 that confused many interpreters of the Bible. The excerpt is short, so I shall cite it in whole:

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely, a bloody husband art thou to me.

So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.⁹²

There have been many debates on the proposed excerpt from the Bible. Childs wrote that: "Few texts contain more problems for the interpreter than these few verses which have continued to baffle throughout the centuries" (Childs in Allen 1996: 260).

In the article *The "Bloody Bridegroom" in Exodus 4:24–26* Ronald B. Allen analyses some of the main interpretations of the former. I do not intend to present all the interpretations, but only the one that pertains to our case. Brevard Childs, as many other authors, notes many difficulties, including those of connection, the rash action of the Lord, the lack of stated reason, the lack of an explanation of the action of Zipporah, the lack of antecedents, and the irrational, almost demonic, atmosphere with its focus on blood. But the most interesting thing that he notes is that the excerpt does not explicate whose feet were touched. Anyhow, Childs could not accept such an answer, which is a decision of non-decision. At the end, however he accepts the interpretation that Zipporah touched her son (Allen 1996: 261).

Both examples testify for a radical impossibility of concluding a single narrative that organises and materialises itself around the touch that has not touched. All the involved

⁹² See Exodus 4 (King James Version) at: <http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearchresults.php?passage1=Exodus+4&version=9>

narratives demonstrate a high level of interest for the question of touch and with it a high level of pertinence of the narrative object. The question of touch is approached in a variety of ways and all of them testify for the variety of ways in which the question of touch as the problem of difference is dealt. The latter is nothing other than the inherent incongruence of the law, language and human existence.

A further study should not limit itself to the two exposed examples, which belong to a Christian tradition, but should take them as an inspiration. I am aware of the fact that I have not presented a sufficient amount of ethnographic data. Even more, I have not presented any data from my fieldwork, because there has not been one. The latter is, in my opinion, one of the greatest deficiencies of my study, even if this study is legitimised by the notion of “theoretical study”.

However, as I have already said in the *Introduction*, the expectations of this study are not extensive. Its main objective is to propose some initial theoretical orientations that will enable the reader to start considering the question of touch from a different perspective. The present study offers a contribution to anthropology, in such a way that it does not limit itself to dimensions of study defined by the anthropology of the senses. It highlights issues and authors that have been neglected. The main effort of the study was to bring a single “sense” – touch – into the central place of an “anthropological” theoretical study. I have offered an approach based on philosophy and psychoanalysis, suggesting its applicability in other anthropological theoretical settings and fieldwork. I have accomplished this task through an intra-disciplinary approach, which begins an analysis from within and not from outside thus negating any negative relation between the disciplines. I hope that I have achieved the main goal of this study, which was to re-think some theories and notions that are seen as important in contemporary anthropology and with these, the object of the study as well.

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POVZETEK (SUMMARY)

Magistrska naloga se ukvarja z dotikom na konceptualni in fenomenalni ravni. Raziskava temelji na ugotovitvi, da je fenomen dotika problematičen tako na nivoju raziskovanja – za t.i. znanost o dotiku, kot na nivoju izkušnje človeškega bitja v vsakdanjem življenju. Avtor po eni strani pokaže kako so se dotedanje raziskave, ki pripadajo predvsem tradiciji antropologije čutov (Geurts, Classen, Howes, idr.), soočale s težavami, ki jih raziskovanje dotika vključuje, po drugi strani pa zagovarja tezo, da te težave niso posledica neadekvatnih znanstvenih pristopov, ampak so notranje samemu objektu raziskave. Temeljni teoretski premik, ki ga ta naloga zagovarja leži v spoznanju, da je problematičnost objekta, s katero so se srečali omenjeni avtorji, pravzaprav že del samega objekta raziskovanja.

Izostanek omenjenega teoretskega premika je povzročil nastanek treh pristopov do objekta raziskovanja, ki jih avtor imenuje: disperzija, historična narativizacija in po-enotenje. Pristop disperzije temelji na partikularnih in torej „parcialnih“ raziskavah in analizah objekta raziskovanja, katera implicitno priznava nemožnost po-enotenja vednosti o preučevanem objektu. Pristop historične narativizacije temelji na deskripciji in razlagi teorij in filozofij, ki so se in se še vedno ukvarjajo z dotikom, s katerim ustvarja zbir partikularnih „naracij“ in pogledov na fenomen dotika. Pristop po-enotenja temelji na tradiciji „holističnega“ pristopa antropologije čutov, skladno s katero je fenomen dotika raziskan v okviru vseh „petih“ čutov, kjer dotik predstavlja enega izmed delov, ki sestavlja neko celoto, vendar pa taisti pristop hkrati priznava težave s kategorizacijo in nemožnostjo ultimativnega poenotenja.

Vsi trije pristopi so si enotni v tem, da „zagovarjajo“ in priznavajo *točko nemožnosti*, ob katero naletijo pri raziskovanju fenomena dotika. Z drugimi besedami, omenjeni pristopi poskušajo doseči neko vednost o dotiku s pomočjo določenih kategorij in teoretičnih aparatov, ki se vselej izkažejo za neadekvatne glede na preučevan objekt.

Takšna ugotovitev bi nas lahko odvrnila od zadane naloge preučevanje fenomena dotika, saj se slednji kaže kot nezmožen biti preučevan. Vendar sam zagovarjam stališče, da je raziskava fenomena dotika možna zgolj s pomočjo privzetta te točke nemožnosti kot del samega fenomena. Tako konceptualizirana raziskava se lahko začne samo pod pogojem,

da pred samim začetkom opravi dva „teoretična koraka“. Najprej je potrebno vzeti nase dejstvo, da vsem navedenim pristopom spodleti pri „totalni vednosti“, zaradi točke nemožnosti. Formo zavesti, ki zagovarja mnenje, da je dotik kot tak onkraj dometa vednosti in misli, moramo postaviti kot produkt te misli same, ki se ukvarja z dotikom. Povedano drugače, prav misel je tista, ki je postavila dotik v ta onkraj. Drugi korak pa sestoji v tem, da je potrebno „nedosegljivost“ oziroma „nemožnost totalnega vedenja“ o dotiku postaviti v sam fenomen.

Zaradi dejstva, da pričujoča raziskava dobiva vse bolj podobo filozofskega problema, si ta naloga zadaja preučiti in operacionalizirati, za namene antropologije, filozofije Jacquesa Derridaja in Jean-Luca Nancyja. Omenjena avtorja sta namreč določeni del svojega opusa posvetila ravno vprašanju dotika. Njuna filozofija je uvedena antropološkemu bralcu s pomočjo Lacanovega in Freudovega psihoanalitskega aparata, saj po avtorjevem mnenju le-ta omogoča jasno artikulacijo njunih filozofij, hkrati pa zagotavlja kritično-interpretacijsko pozicijo v razmerju do omenjenih filozofov. Razlog za vključitev omenjenih avtorjev v študijo dotika leži predvsem v nujnosti, da bi se področje raziskovanja antropologije čutov razširilo na področja „drugih antropologij“, ki so relevantna za raziskavo omenjenega objekta. Sama antropologija čutov ima namreč tendenco zoževati svoje raziskovalne polje in izključevati določene kulturne in družbene fenomene, ki so bili v „klasični antropologiji“ že raziskani. Vključitev omenjenih filozofov in psihoanalitikov v raziskavo o dotiku služi kot obramba pred nevarnostjo, da bi antropologija čutov ne postala (še ena) nova podzvrst antropologije.

Ena izmed implicitnih, a vendar temeljnih, nalog pričujoče študije predstavlja preizpraševanje same definicije čuta znotraj raziskave o dotiku. Po avtorjevem mnenju je potrebno ponovno zastaviti vprašanje o tem, ali je redukcija dotika na definicijo čuta sploh možna. V kolikor sprejememo definicijo dotika kot čuta sprejememo vselej že okvir znotraj katerega želimo dotik tudi umestiti. Na tem mestu si avtor prizadeva za pristop, ki ne bi potekal od definicije čuta k dotiku, ampak ravno obratno, od dotika k čutu.

Raziskava dotika hkrati odpira vprašanje razumevanja telesa. Avtor zagovarja, da se je potrebno, v okviru raziskave o dotiku, zavedati dveh temeljnih dejstev. Prvič, da je koncept telesa kot tak Zahodni koncept, ki je bi prenesen v druge družbe in drugič, da je vsakršna statična definicija telesa, ki vztraja pri delitvi med umom in telesom, za mnoge

kulture in družbe nesprejemljiva, saj le-te poudarjajo dinamični vidik telesa. Ti dve dejstvi vzpodbujata avtorja k uporabi koncepta utelešenja (*embodiment*), saj je bližji razumevanju telesa v tistih družbah, kjer telo ni ločeno ne od umnih, ne od drugih svetnih dimenzij. Kljub temu pa velja opozoriti bralca, da je koncept utelešenja, kakor nam ga predstavljajo sodobni antropološki avtorji, potreben temeljite analize pred samo aplikacijo v raziskovalno polje.

Prvo poglavje se ukvarja z analizo predpostavk teorije utelešenja in njeno aplikacijo na fenomen dotika. Avtor najprej pokaže kako različica teorije utelešenja, ki jo razvija Kathryn Linn Geurts, predpostavlja izključitev univerzalnih telesnih izkušenj in čutenja oziroma zanikanje univerzalnega telesa kot takega. Temeljna pozicija teorije utelešenja je namreč ta, da je utelešenje vselej že partikularno in naučeno. Zaradi tega pa se Geurtsova pozicija „nevarno“ približa relativistični teoriji. Kljub temu pa se le-tej ogne z implicitno predpostavko, da vsako partikularno utelešenje, kljub temu, da je partikularno, deluje kot univerzalno – subjektu partikularnega utelešenja ni preprečeno, da ne bi doživljal in izkušal (ter mislil) lastno čutno organizacijo (*sensorium*) kot univerzalno. Ta implicitna predpostavka ima za posledico dejstvo, da nedosegljivi zunanji svet (realnost), ki je produkt partikularnih pristopov k realnosti in je bilo v prejšnji koncepciji postavljeno onkraj partikularnega dosega, je sedaj postavljeno ravno v doseg sam, ki je partikularno-univerzalen.

Medtem ko Csordas, priznani teoretik utelešenja, zagovarja tezo, da je v koncepciji utelešenja prišlo do „kolapsa“ razlike med subjektivnim in objektivnim, kognicijo in emocijo, ter umom in telesom, avtor postavlja tezo, da ta razlika ni enostavno izginila, ampak je bila prenesena v sam proces utelešenja in da zdaj ta predstavlja njen temelj delovanja.

V Geurtsovi teoriji utelešenja kolaps razlike omogoči vzpostavitev „harmoničnega“ razmerja med kulturnimi kategorijami in čutno organizacijo (*sensory order*). Vzajemna prepletenost kulturnih kategorij in čutne organizacije vzpostavlja dinamični pogled na kulturo in posameznika ter proces spremembe, ki sta mu podvržena. Vendar hkrati postane tudi jasno, da je vzajemna prepletenost take vrste nezmožna odgovoriti na vprašanje vzročne smeri. Ta nemoč odgovora na vprašanje vzročne smeri tako odpira

različna vprašanja glede možnosti kulturne in družbene spremembe kot tudi njene praktične aktualizacije, predvsem pa njenega razumevanja.

Teorija utelešenja je bila namreč zamišljena in osnovana kot orodje za prekoračitev dualističnih teorij in problemov, ki ji le-te prinašajo. Toda sedaj se izkaže, da je teorija utelešenja, kljub temu da je rešila nekatere probleme dualističnih teorij, proizvedla kopico novih in njej lastnih problemov. Skozi branje knjige Margaret Lock, ki nosi naslov *Encounters with Ageing*, avtor pokaže, da teorija utelešenja vzdržuje trdno vez z dualističnimi teorijami in da prav to dejstvo onemogoča dejansko prekoračitev le-teh.

V svoji knjigi se Lockova ukvarja z menopavzo na Japonskem in Severni Ameriki. Skozi celotno knjigo si avtorica vztrajno prizadeva pokazati, da je bila menopavza v Zahodnih kulturah prikazana kot negativen fenomen in da je potrebno le-tega pozitivizirati. Takšen preskok misli ji omogoča analiza menopavze na Japonskem (*konenki*), kjer ta ni razumljena kot konec nekega pozitivnega obdobja, ampak zgolj kot obdobje življenja, ki omogoča realizacijo osebnih možnosti.

Objekt Lockove kritike predstavlja predvsem koncept simbolne izgube (*symbolic loss*), ki ga je razvila psihoanalitičarka Hellen Deutsch. Ob podrobnejšem branju se izkaže, da se vsi diskurzi, ki se ukvarjajo z menopavzo skozi metaforo izgube pravzaprav „srečajo“ v kritiki omenjenega koncepta. Kljub temu, pa Lockova ne analizira tega koncepta, ampak se omeji zgolj na moralno zavračanje negativne pozicije, hkrati pa zagovarja nevtralno pozicijo, ki pa se nazadnje izkaže za moralno pozitivacijo raziskovalnega objekta. Sam postavljam tezo, da je ravno ne-analiziran koncept simbolne izgube interpretativni ključ za branje njene knjige. Poleg tega pa predlagam, da se izvrši miselni obrat glede razmerja med moralo in znanostjo, kjer zdravorazumska predpostavka pravi, da je moralni pogled tisti, ki subjektivizira in torej kazi delo znanstvenika. Ravno nasprotno, na primeru Lockove knjige želim pokazati, da je sam znanstvenikov diskurz tisti, ki proizvede moralno pozicijo.

V ta namen je potrebno artikulirati srž problema dualnosti, saj je ravno ta tarča Lockove knjige. Problem vseh dualizmov se nahaja v tem, da je med dvema dualističnima terminoma eden vselej več vreden kakor drug. Zanima nas torej vrednost teh dveh terminov, predvsem pa vzpostavitev te vrednosti. Ontogenezo vrednosti razložim s pomočjo Marxovega branja *Kapitala*. Marx ugotavlja namreč, da je za vzpostavitev

vrednosti potreben ekvivalentna forma vrednosti, torej eden izmed vseh možnih objektov menjave je izključen iz menjave zato, da bi lahko predstavljal splošno menjalno vrednost. Za namen analize dualistične teorije in kasneje tudi teorij utelešenja označujem ekvivalentno formo vrednosti z matematičnim simbolom EV (Element Vrednosti, *Element of Value*). Ta stoji „izven“ dveh terminov, ki sta prisotna v dualističnih teorijah in hkrati vzpostavlja njuno razmerje.

Če kritika teorije utelešenja sestoji iz tega, da očita dualističnim teorijam ločenost dveh terminov, zaradi razlike med njima, nam Element Vrednosti omogoča misliti dve različni razliki, ki sta prisotni tako v dualističnih teorijah kot v teorijah utelešenja. Tako imamo, prvič, razliko med dvema elementoma v dualistični teoriji, kjer pa je njuna razlika pravzaprav določena z delovanjem EV. In drugič, imamo razliko kot tako, ki predhodi vzpostavitvi delovanju EV. Druga vrsta razlike je samo-razlika, ki šele vzpostavi delovanje EV, ki sledi težnji po celovitosti oziroma integraciji samo-razlike, vendar pa je ta osnovan ravno v razliki, ki jo hoče preseči.

Skozi formulo dualnosti, katero predstavljam v nalogi, je možno razložiti razmerje med dvema elementoma, vlogo, ki jo ima EV in posledice za subjekta. Prav tako podam formulo utelešenja, ki se na ravni njenih elementov ne razlikuje, kljub temu pa ima svojo lastno konfiguracijo. Spremenjena mesta, ki jih zasedajo posamezni elementi tako povsem spremenijo njihovo delovanje kot tudi strukturo kot celote.

Namen te ekspozicije pa leži predvsem v tem, da se pokaže na ključno razmerje med EV in Razliko ter neuspeh dualistične teorije, kakor teorije utelešenja, po integraciji razlike in dosegu končne samo-identitete. Teorija utelešenja resda presega dualistično teorijo v njenem preseganju dualnosti, vendar se ne zaveda vzroka te dualnosti – Razlike. Prav zaradi tega je teorije utelešenja zgolj reakcija na dualistično teorijo oziroma na njen vzrok, saj implicitno temelji na njej. Tega se nezavedno zavedajo tudi teoretiki utelešenja, saj sami pravijo, da je bila teorija utelešenja zasnovana kot reakcija na dualistične teorije.

Onstran razlik med dualistično teorijo in teorijo utelešenja, pa je potrebno raziskati razliko med dvema vrstama utelešenja. Lockova se ukvarja s teorijo utelešenja, ki bi ji lahko rekli „Zahodna“, medtem ko se Telban ukvarja s teorijo utelešenja, ki bi ji lahko rekli „Papuo-Novo-Gvinejska“. Za obe utelešenji je značilna povsem ista struktura,

vendar na določeni ravni prihaja do pomembnih razlik med njima. Medtem, ko je v „PNG utelešenju“ poudarek na po-enotujočem elementu (v primeru Ambonwarija je to koncept *kay*), pa je v „Zahodnem utelešenju“ poudarek na sami razliki in heterogenosti, ki je kasneje nivelizirana skozi proces utelešenja.

Da bi orisal omenjena modusa utelešenja sem se zatekel k Mircae Elliade in njegovi knjigi *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Kljub temu, da se avtor v tej knjigi ukvarja z religijo, je njegovo delo tako splošno zastavljeno, da bi se lahko imenovalo tudi ontologija izkušnje. To kar Elliade opiše kot religijski človek ustreza „PNG utelešenju“, medtem ko ne-religijski človek ustreza „Zahodnemu utelešenju“.

Prav tako se poslužujem Žižkovega razlikovanja med židovsko-krščansko odprtostjo do Drugega in pagansko-plemenskimi gostoljubjem. Prva ustreza „Zahodnemu utelešenju“, medtem ko druga „PNG utelešenju“. Tudi tukaj pride do izraza ne toliko religijska determinanta kolikor razmerje do Drugega. Bralec bo tudi opazil, da obstaja nesimetrična relacija med Elliadovo in Žižkovo pozicijo na ravni religijskega.

„PNG utelešenje“ je nadalje raziskano znotraj okvira, ki ga je zastavil Marshal Sahlins s svojo knjigo *Ekonomija kamene dobe*. Sahlinsova knjiga je zanimiva za raziskovanje dotika in utelešenja, zaradi njene konceptualizacije takta. Takt ustreza temu, čemur Bourdieu pravi kriza oziroma čemur Telban pravi ranljivost *kaya*, ki predstavlja vzrok dinamičnega delovanja *habitusa*.

Poleg tega Sahlins opravi obrat, značilen sicer za ekonomske razsikave, od znotraj-skupnostnih k med-skupnostnim odnosom. Ta obrat nosi s seboj pomembne posledice za raziskavo dotika, saj umešča znotraj polja raziskovanja vprašanje Drugosti.

Temeljno vprašanje, s katerim se Sahlins ukvarja v svoji knjigi je določanje menjalne mere. Ker v družbah Papue Nove Gvineje zakon ponudbe in povpraševanja ni prisoten si Sahlins prizadeva pokazati načine kako je določena menjalna mera. Med drugim, na to vprašanje odgovori s konceptom takta. Tega definira kot funkcijo diplomacije ekonomske dobre mere in varnosti v Hobbesovih okoliščinah. Poleg svoje ekonomske funkcije pa je koncept takta pomemben tudi za analizo soočenj s tujcem in sovražnikom.

Da bi razumeli mesto in pomen, ki ga ima takt v razumevanju „PNG utelešenja“, je potrebno analizirati razmerje, ki se kaže med pojmom skupnosti in sorodstva. Sahlins najprej pravi, da sta si ta enakovredna in da se oba pogojujeta ali na kratko, oba sta

zaznamovana z razmerjem, ki je značilno za teorijo „Zahodnega utelešenja“. Vendar Sahlins kasneje dodaja, in to je ključna razlika za razumevanje „PNG utelešenja“, da je sorodstvo vendarle pomembnejša kategorija izmed obeh, saj je „zmožna“ definirati tujca in sovražnika. Ta obrat tako ne predstavlja „regresije“ k dualistični teoriji, ampak zaznamuje singularnost „PNG utelešenja“.

Kakor pravi Lacan, vsako srečanje med človeškimi bitji predpostavlja nek minimum tesnobe. V tem kontekstu je vloga ekonomije ta, da naredi srečanje možno. V srečanjih, ki jih opisuje in analizira Sahlins, se skozi in s pomočjo takta vrši ekonomija (menjava) in srečanje kot tako. Za takt, kakor ga opiše Sahlins, je značilno, da v aktu menjave in določanju stopnje menjave s potencialno sovražnim partnerjem, se enoti menjave, ki deluje kot celota, doda še določena količina blaga. Ta dodana količina blaga ima kvalitativen vidik, ki ravno omogoča menjavo in soočenje z menjalnimi „partnerji“. Ta količina je kvalitativne narave, saj se ne ve, kolikšen je presežek nad enoto osnovnega daru.

Derrida, v nekem drugem kontekstu pravi, da ima takt funkcijo zmernosti in da je postavljen na mesto, ki ustreza temu manj ali več oziroma je sam ta meja, ki jo je nemogoče zarisati. Ali kot pravi Dolar, znotraj konteksta dotika, to mejo (*threshold*) je nemogoče vzdržati in ta nemožnost je ravno dotik.

V kolikor primerjamo dotik, kot smo ga razvili tukaj, ne samo z ostalimi čuti, ampak tudi s samim čutom dotika lahko sledeč Derridaju pridemo do naslednjih ugotovitev. Derrida namreč pravi, da so čuti primerljivi z dotikom, vendar ne zato, ker bi se na nek način vsi dotikali objekta. Nanašajoč se na Freudov stavek, ki pravi, da je gledanje aktivnost, ki je nenazadnje izpeljana iz dotika, avtor predlaga dobesedno branje tega stavka, v kolikor želimo razumeti Derridajeve implikacije. To razmerje med gledanjem in dotikom omogoča radikalno razlikovanje med vsemi čuti (med njimi tudi dotik sam) in dotikom kot Razliko. V ta namen avtor sledi Dolarju, ki razloči med čutom dotika in dotikom kot Razliko s pomočjo imenovanja, ki prvo označi kot dotikanje in drugo kot dotik.

Da bi orisali in začrtali meje dotikanja, se je potrebno vrniti nazaj k teoriji utelešenja oziroma k izkušnji naravnosti (*naturalness*), ki jo ta implicira. Če smo v prvem poglavju iz izkušnje naravnosti razvili koncept univerzalnosti pa tukaj razvijamo koncept nujnosti. Slednji je pomemben za analizo strukture teorije *habitusa*, kakor jo je zasnoval Bourdieu

ter teorije utelešenja. Bourdieuju je bilo namreč večkrat očitano, da je bolj kot teoretik spremembe teoretik reprodukcije. Vendar tudi sami Bourdiejevi kritiki niso bili sposobni najti ustrezne rešitve. Avtor zagovarja tezo, da je konservativna „narava“ *habitusa*, kakor jo označuje Bourdieu sam, onemogočila Bourdieuju misliti radikalno spremembo.

V ta namen je predstavljena hintonova teorija kot primer logike in predpostavk teorije *habitusa* in utelešenja. V analizi se pokaže, da je pogoj te teorije pravzaprav skrita nujnost, ki se na ravni izkušnje kaže kot naravnost (*naturalness*). Prav ta nujnost oziroma struktura mišljenja, ki proizvede to nujnost ne omogoča misliti radikalno spremembo znotraj *habitusa* ali utelešenja.

Vendar tukaj ne gre za neko nujnost, ki bi obstajala na transcendentalni ravni, ampak za nujnost, ki je proizvod misli Enega ali tudi drugače „potencialistične“ misli, kakor bi jo imenoval Meillassoux. Ta predpostavlja zaprto množico potencialnih dogodkov, izmed katerih bo eden na koncu izbran in aktualiziran. Vsa dinamika teorije utelešenja se torej kaže v tej aktualizaciji potencialnega, ki pa ima za posledico dejstvo, da ne predvideva dogodka, ki ne bi bil vselej že vpisan v množino potencialnih dogodkov. Avtor zagovarja tezo, da je ravno ta zaprtost množice potencialnih dogodkov tista, ki proizvaja „učinek“ nujnosti in naravnosti.

Skozi branje Meillassouxjeve filozofije in znotraj teorije utelešenja začrtam razliko med pogosto spremembo potencialnih dogodkov in radikalno kontingentno spremembo, ki ni vsebovana v množici potencialnih dogodkov. Omenjen pogled in delitev pa ni zunanja antropologiji. Sledi takšne delitve je najti namreč pri Telbanu in Pooleu, ki poudarjata pomembnost izkušnje za-lesketajoče svetlobe med krošnjami dreves, ki deluje kot radikalno kontingenten dogodek, saj ne obstaja kot del zbir potencialnih možnosti oziroma spomina in predstavlja zatorej dogodek brez zgodovine.

Drugo poglavje analizira dotik skozi koncept utelešenja. Naloga se ponovno osredotoči na eno izmed izkušenj, ki je konstitutivna za utelešenje, in sicer izkušnja ljubega (*dearness*), ki jo je delno raziskala Geurtsova.

Avtor pokaže, da je ta izkušnja homologna z Ambonwarijskim konceptom *kay*. Oba sta vselej ogrožena s strani zunanjih dejavnikov, predvsem teles in *habitusov* drugih ljudi. Vsako poseganje v intimo telesa in osebe je razumljeno kot poseg v dinamično delovanje *kay*-a oziroma izkušnje ljubega.

Geurtsova se znotraj analize ljubega sreča s paradoksom, za katerega sama pravi, da je nerešljiv. Sprašuje se ali je ljubo učinek utelešenih kulturnih kategorij oziroma so kulturne kategorije vselej že ljube in so zato utelešene. Avtor pokaže, da je zmožnost artikuliranja omenjenega paradoksa oziroma vprašanje nujna za teorijo utelešenja, vendar je prav tako nujna nemožnost odgovoriti nanj.

Analiza pokaže, da kljub temu, da Geurtova postavlja znotraj koncepta ljubega vprašanje o vzročni zvezi, pa lahko izenačitev le-teh vodi v teoretsko zmedo. Vzročna zveza namreč deluje na prikrit način oziroma je „vidna“ zgolj v procesu utelešenja. Na drugi strani pa je potrebno identificirati ljubo s konceptom Elementa Vrednosti, ki determinira odnos med kulturnimi kategorijami in utelešenjem. To je možno narediti na podlagi dejstva, da ljubo v teoriji utelešenja umesti problem vrednosti, ki obstaja prav tako na ravni EV.

Ljubo in EV se srečata v Anlo identiteti, ki jo Geurts definira kot kvaliteta Biti Anlo (*the quality of Being Anlo*). Ta identifikacija omogoči razumevanje izbora partikularnih karakteristik omenjenega ljudstva in totalizacijo le teh znotraj množice. Hkrati pa kaže tudi na nezavedno delovanje utelešenja, ki ima, kakor pravi Bourdieu za *habitus*, svojo logiko, in ki pravzaprav deluje samo na sebi in samo zase.

Nadalje se naloga usmeri v preučevanje razmerja med dotikom in rituali prehoda, ki so jih opisali in analizirali Maurice Godelier, Kathryn Linn Geurts in Micheal Herdt. Ta del naloge vodi raziskovalno vprašanje o specifični funkciji, ki jo ima dotik v ritualih prehoda.

Godelier opisuje dotik skozi ritualni predmet *kwaimatnie*. Ta pokaže na paradokсно naravo tega dotika, za katerega sam pravi, da je hkrati simbolni akt, a vendar ne zgolj to. Ritual prehoda sestoji predvsem v diferenciaciji med moškim in žensko in vzpostavitvijo temeljnega razmerja med njima. Godelier pokaže, da je potrebno iskati razlago dotika v ritualih prehoda v samem *kwaimatnie*-ju. Sam pravi, da obstajata dva *kwaimatnie*-ja, eden ženski in drugi moški in da je prvi vedno „močnejši“ izmed obeh. Da pa bi moški

kwaimatnie (ki je dejansko uporabljen v ritualu) pridobil na moči si mora najprej podvreči moč ženskega *kwaimatnie*-ja. Poleg tega, da dvojnost *kwaimatnie*-jev ponovno odpira vprašanje dualnosti, pa nakazuje tudi njuno ontogenezo in s tem pravzaprav samo razmerje med moškim in žensko. Avtor zagovarja tezo, da je potrebno brati moški *kwaimatnie*, ne kot od ženskega izoliran artefakt, niti v razmerju z njim, pač pa kot samo razmerje med enim in drugim. Poleg *kwaimatnie*-ja, ki deluje kot diferenciator med ženskim in moškim, obstajajo še drugi inicijacijski predmeti, ki nosijo prepoved dotika. Te predmete Godelier poimenuje *insignije*, ki imajo zgolj to funkcijo, da ustanovijo razlikovanje med moškim in ženskim, ne da bi dodajali kakršnekoli pozitivne vrednosti. Podobno kakor Godelier, se tudi Geurtsova sreča s takšno vrsto predmetov tekom njenega terenskega dela. Ti se imenujejo *legbawo*, katere Geurtsova označi za objekte moči (*empowered objects*), ki imajo funkcijo nadzorovanja in kontrole tako prostorskih kot tudi telesnih mej.

Najbolj zanimiv fenomen, ki ga predstavi Geurtsova pa je *agbagbađođo*. Ta predstavlja hkrati proces nastanka človeka kot takega, torej kot kulturnega bitja in na drugi strani nosi zelo natančen pomen uravnovešanja nečesa težkega, občutek uravnovešenosti in kakor dodaja Westermann, nošenje nečesa na glavi, ne da bi se dotaknil tega objekta ter prvi poskus hoje. Medtem ko Geurtsova poudarja, da gre pri tej uravnovešenosti kot čutu, za enega najbolj značilnih in pomembnih čutov znotraj preučevane kulture, pa se sam osredotočam na pomen, ki ga ima moment ne-dotika tega objeta. Moja teza je, da preko vzpostavitev razlike oziroma minimalnega odmika med subjektom in objektom povzroči ločevanje med gor in dol, hojo po dveh in štirih, itd. Kot pravi sama Geurtsova ima ta fenomen zmožnost določati razliko med človekom in živaljo. Vendar je potrebno njeno tezo nekoliko natančneje določiti in sicer, da je ravno ta zmožnost diferenciranja tista, ki naredi iz človeka človeka. V tem smislu je glavni objekt raziskovanja Geurtsove v tem novem kontekstu zgolj drugotnega pomena oziroma bolje, le-ta nastopi v nekem drugem momentu, saj je temeljno za to razmerje (ravnotežja), neka prvotna neuravnovešenost. Poleg tega je potrebno določeno pozornost posvetiti dejstvu, da je največkrat objekt, ki je nošen na glavi lončenina. Skozi branje določenih Lacanovih tez glede lončenine pokažem, da je ne-dotik le-te enakovreden ne-dotikanju nič. Moja teza je podkrepljena s praksami nosečih žensk, ki jedo glino proti negativnim reakcijam nosečnosti.

Pri Herdtovi analizi ritualov se naloga osredotoča na analizo dotiku prepovedanim predmetov, ki so razumljeni kot del moških in predstavljajo njihovo moškost. Teoretska pridobitev, ki nam jo ponuja Herdt k analizi dotika sestoji v njegovem poudarku inherentnega antagonizma, ki vlada med moškim in žensko. S tem Herdt vpeljuje ne samo vprašanje spola, ampak tudi seksualnosti znotraj analize dotika. Na podlagi omenjenih predmetov, ki imajo funkcijo „dopolnjevanja moškega telesa“, avtor vzpostavi določene vzporednice z raziskavo Telbana, znotraj katere se ukvarja z logiko utelešenja in njenim temeljnim konceptom *kay*. Telban pokaže, da utelešenje ne pozna razlike med subjektivnim in objektivnim ter psihičnim in materialnim in da torej utelešenje sledi logiki Enega. Vendar kmalu tudi sam podvomi v takšno tezo. Sam namreč pravi, da je za *kay* značilno, da je v večnem procesu nastajanja ter je potencialno ranljiv, zaradi vplivov drugih *habitusov* in teles. Na podlagi Herdtove in Telbanove raziskave avtor pokaže vez med utelešenjem in *kay*-em oziroma njeno generalizirano obliko – EV.

Tretje poglavje vzame pod drobnogled proksemično teorijo (*proxemics theory*) Edward T. Halla, ki skuša razložiti razmerja bližine in oddaljenosti med telesi v različnih kulturah. Poudarek Hallove teorije sloni na razumevanju razdalje med telesi, ki predpostavlja razlikovanje med biološkim in družbenim telesom oziroma prostorom kot telesom. Temeljni koncept Hallove teorije je intimni in osebni prostor, ki ga definira kot prostor, ki je lasten Jazu. Ta se različno razprostira okoli tega kar imenuje biološko telo, glede na kulturo, kateri pripada posameznik. Avtor analizira diskurz Hallove teorije predvsem v točki „nastanka“ (osebnega) prostora v procesu prihoda drugega telesa, poleg tega pa izprašuje možnost „merjenja“ vdorov v osebni prostor, kar je nenazadnje cilj Hallovih prizadevanj.

Sam sprejemam Csordasovo mnenje, da je Hall zgolj apliciral lingvistični model na telo in da se ni neposredno ukvarjal s telesom kot takim, kljub temu pa ne zavračam pomembnosti Hallove, manjše a vendarle, zelo pomenljive opombe. Ta nakazuje še neko drugo možnost vdora, ki ne pripada telesu kot takemu. Gre namreč za jezikovno formo, ki ji pravimo žaljivka. Ta opomba napotuje na tezo, da je vendarle potrebno pri proučevanju telesa vselej vključiti tudi jezik, in še več, prikazano razmerje med žaljivko in vdorom nakazuje nov predmet preučevanja, in sicer razmerje med jezikom in telesom.

Če ima Csordas prav, ko pravi, da je Hall zgolj apliciral lingvistični model na telo, to pomeni, da je potrebno ta model eksplicirati na tak način, da bomo sposobni uvideti njene posledice za samo telo. Te eksplikacije pa ni potrebno proizvesti povsem na novo, saj sta to že storila William Ian Miller in Ervin Goffman. Slednja zagovarjata zelo podobno pozicijo kakor Hall, vendar s to razliko, da je v njuni teoriji vloga jezika zelo eksplicitna in torej ločena od telesa kot takega. Namesto Hallove biološke teorije telesa, ki implicitno vključuje lingvistični model, dobimo tako Millerjevo in Goffmanovo teorijo prostora telesa, ki je osnovana na pravni teoriji.

Nadaljevanje raziskave tako postavlja na svoje osrednje mesto jezik, njegove specifične forme in razmerje s telesom. Vendar se sam najprej osredotočim na fenomen vica in ne žaljivke. To pa iz preprostega razloga, ker bi analiza žaljivke nujno potegnila za seboj njeno nasprotje – spoštovanje. Analiza bi se tako ponovno znašla v, sicer nekoliko kompleksnejšem, a vendarle, dualističnem razmerju.

Za analizo fenomena vica se odločim iz sledečih razlogov. V preučitvi zgodovine Freudove psihoanalize se pokaže, da je prehod od hipnoze k psihoanalitski tehniki zaznamovala vmesna tehnika, ki jo Freud označi kot polaganje rok na pacientovo čelo. Omenjena tehnika je nastala zaradi specifične zagate, v kateri se je znašel Freud. Ta je prišel do ugotovitve, da ni sposoben hipnotizirati vseh pacientov in predvsem dejstvo, da je tekom analize večkrat nastopila obramba, ki ni dovoljevala napredovanje analize s hipnozo.

Freud je ugotovil, da je možno s pritiskom rok na pacientovo čelo zaobiti obrambe jaza in se dokopati do nezavednega materiala. Freudu se je zdela razlaga takšne tehnike, in njenega uspeha, v terminih hipnoze preveč zagonetna, zato je zadevo razložil enostavno kot preusmeritev Jaza oziroma zavesti in pozornosti.

V Freudovem opusu pa najdemo še en fenomen, ob katerem se temeljito ukvarja s preusmeritvijo pozornosti, in sicer z vicem. Zaradi tega razloga predlagam paralelno branje tehnike dotika na eni strani in tehnike vica na drugi. Skozi branje omenjenih tehnik postavljam tezo, da imata vic in dotik homologno strukturo. Ta struktura omogoča tudi razumevanje razmerja med spoštljivostjo in žaljivko, ki je bila v prvem trenutku, torej začasno, opuščena. Pokaže se namreč, da se vic in dotik umeščata na mejo med spoštljivim in žaljivim, ki pa nosi s seboj karakteristiko potencialne nestabilnosti.

Homolognost teh dveh fenomenov tako daje prvi odgovor na problematičnost dotika, saj temu nenehno grozi, da bo „padel“ bodisi znotraj kategorije spoštovanja, bodisi znotraj kategorije žaljivke. Iz istega razloga bi dotik prenehal obstajati kot dotik, saj bi se reduciriral na eno izmed dveh skrajnih možnosti. Po drugi strani pa se pokaže, da dotik, tako kakor vic, sestoji ravno iz vzdrževanje te „nemogoče“ meje ali povedano drugače, dotik in vic sta ta meja sama.

Freud ni edini avtor pri katerem lahko najdemo implicitno povezavo med vicem in dotikom. Med drugimi avtorji so tudi antropologi kot npr. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michael Jackson in Gabriela Alex. Dognanja, ki so bila pridobljena z analizo Freudove teorije vica in dotika so primerjana s pozicijami, ki jih zasedajo naštetih avtorji.

Raziskava jemlje za svoje izhodišče članek Gabriele Alex, ki se eksplicitno ukvarja z vprašanjem dotika v Indiji. Še posebno izstopa dogodek, ko je ta povprašala dečka, ki ga je neka deklica uščipnila, ali mu je ta vrsta dotika zadala kakršnokoli vrsto bolečine. Deček ji je odgovoril, da ta dotik ni boleč, saj je bil *maskeri*, t.j. šaljiv. Ta primer predstavlja najmočnejši dokaz razmerja med dotikom in vicem, ki ga je bilo moč najti znotraj antropološke literature.

Michael Jackson se na drugi strani ukvarja z vprašanjem „delitev imena“ (*shared name*) na katero pa ne najde zadovoljivega odgovora. Jackson namreč pravi, da sta razmerja šaljivosti in izogibanja dve strategiji, s katerima se človek sooča z ambivalentnimi situacijami. Vendar hkrati priznava, da v situaciji, ko si dve osebi delita isto ime, in kjer pride do dejanske uporabe omenjenih dve strategij, ne vidi nobene ambivalentnosti oziroma si ne zna razložiti, kaj bi bilo ambivalentnega na tem. Sam poskušam rešiti Jacksonovo nerešeno vprašanje tako, da nekoliko spremenim izhodiščne predpostavke problema. Postavim namreč tezo, da v tej situaciji ne gre za eno samo ime, ki je „deljeno“ med dvema subjektoma, ampak gre pravzaprav za dve identični imeni. In nadalje, zaradi te identitete dveh imen pride v omenjeni situaciji do vznika minimalne razlike med njima. Prav vznik te minimalne razlike pa povzroči ambivalentnost občutkov v dani situaciji.

Skozi Zupančičevo artikulacijo strukture vica pokažem, da je vznik minimalne razlike prav tako značilen tudi za vic. Kljub temu pa končno uokvirjenje pomena in njenih koordinat zabriše trenutek njene pojavitve. Zato avtor, sledeč Zupančičevi shemi, razlikuje med trenutkom »razkritja« Razlike in trenutkom produkcije pomena.

Drugi primer, ki ga ponuja Jackson, sestoji iz ambivalentnega razmerja med ženo in moževim bratom, kjer zakon zahteva dve nasprotujoči si zadevi. Po eni strani zahteva določeno distanco do žene svojega brata, po drugi strani pa veleva, da če bi njegov brat umrl, bi jo ta lahko (moral) poročil. Isti rez, ki smo ga zaznali v prvem primeru se tukaj ponovi. Zakon se razpolovi na sebi in dejansko imamo dva povsem enaka zakona (Z in Z'), ki proizvedeta minimalno razliko.

Lévi-Strauss ponuja primer mita *Kayapo-Gorotire* (mit št. 40), ki se ukvarja z izvorom smeha. Med vsemi miti, ki se ukvarjajo s smehom, ima edinole ta strukturo vica in v njem eksplicitno nastopa vloga dotika. Mit na kratko povzemam sledeče: neko bitje, napol človek in napol netopir se dotakne človeka nežno, vendar z mrzlimi in rokami in dolgimi špičastimi nohti, zaradi česar se človek začne smejati.

Homolognost strukture dotika in vica pa odpira še nekatera druga vprašanja. Predvsem izstopa vprašanje razmerja med seksualnostjo in dotikom. Alex namreč pravi, da je vsako šaljenje seksualno. Njeno razumevanje implicira, da je seksualnost nekaj, kar daje pravzaprav smisel celotnemu razmerju šaljenja. V nasprotju pa Freud pokaže, da je seksualno ravno tisto nesmiselno v celotni situaciji.

Skozi branje Freudove knjige *Interpretacija sanj* pokažem, da nezavedno ne predstavljajo latentne sanjske misli, prav tako tudi ne manifestne, ampak sam "prevod" med njima dvema. Skladno s Freudovo koncepcijo nezavednega pokažem skozi branje Zupančičeve, da je potrebno vedno imeti v mislih razliko med heterogenostjo gonov in unifikacijo seksualne organizacije. Sam stremim k temu, da bi pokazal, da seksualnost ni ultimativni horizont pomena, kakor to predpostavlja Alex, ampak je le-to, kakor je pokazal Freud, desubstancializirano.

V kolikor sprejmemo takšno razumevanje seksualnosti in njeno razmerje z dotikom lahko razložimo dejstvo, da se dotik vselej pojavlja kot problem, tako za »znanost o dotiku«, kot tudi za človeka v vsakdanjem življenju.