

## ***Gabriel Tarde and Social Psychology***

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### **Introduction**

'Tarde's aim is to do for society what 'natural-selection' did for Biology, the law of gravitation for Astronomy, the law of the conservation of energy for physics; to attain a conception which allows us to grasp in coordination, and place in rational relations, a mass of facts which are otherwise meaningless, and which swamp our minds with their multiplicity. No two men are unlike, yet unlike men live together, agree upon common rules of life, are fired at times with a common spirit and cooperate in common action' (Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University, 1909:85).

The significance of Tarde's writings for sociology and psychology, and for how we might specify the links and discontinuities between the two disciplines, was considered at the turn of the last century in an edited book, *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, produced by the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University. The volume shows how Tarde produced, depending upon the point of view, a psychologically derived sociology, or a sociologically derived social psychology, which relied upon a specific relational account of matter. The matter at the heart of Tarde's project was neither strictly psychological, sociological, biological or economical, but a complex manifold entanglement of forces which operated according to certain general principles. These principles were crystallised in the concepts of imitation and invention which produced a theory which could hold harmony and conflict in tension (Tarde 1903). Although, Tarde had little influence on the development of French sociology, he is an oft-cited figure in the development and shaping of Anglo-American social psychology and European mass psychology. Although his place has been recognised in the framing of Anglo-American social psychology (Clark 1969), there has been little engagement with the significance of

this for contemporary social theory. This paper will attempt to redress this neglect, and consider what the diffusion of Tarde's concepts within social psychology and mass psychology might tell us about some of the contemporary preoccupations across the humanities with the stasis of cultural inscription models (Thrift 2004, Grosz 2004, Massumi 2002, Sedgwick 2003, Latour 2002).

The importance of Gabriel Tarde's writings for the re-invention of sociology as a science of association (Latour 2002), has inaugurated a diverse range of projects which in their composite elements are beginning to take form around a number of key questions and issues. These include, in relation to the focus of this paper, the foregrounding of affect as a way of breathing life into the inertia of models which rely upon a discursive body. These models, characteristic of many anti-essentialist approaches across the humanities, are seen to have frozen the body in a series of social positionings which iron out movement, agency and change, or at least provide a limited range of linguistic models to address being and becoming (Massumi 2002). There are a series of elisions seen to be missing from these accounts, which have led to the resurrection of various nineteenth century scientists and philosophers to address these concerns. This is the subject of another paper (Blackman forthcoming), but in the context of this engagement with the significance of Tarde's thought, I want to consider some commonalities between the reification of a contemporary ontology of movement, with the approach to psychical constitution which animated Tarde's theories. The concepts and explanatory structures which travel across disciplinary boundaries, and are in their passage transforming what affect is taken to be, reveal the spectre of Tarde as a key figure, who although historically relegated to the background, has, one might argue, exerted a force beyond what has been seen and known. The question of what has been occluded or elided by the emergence of the disciplinary boundaries and separation between sociology and social psychology at the turn of the last century, is a site for re-examining the complex practices of forgetting, which led to the disqualification of Tarde in the formation of French sociology and social psychology (Clark 1969).

The familiar story that has been told about his marginalization, is that although Tarde had many eclectic and innovative ideas, few were propagated due to the lack of support given by the French University system. Durkheim was the key figure whose ideas were supported, circulated and had currency, shaping the project of sociology as an examination of the constraint and imposition of social structures on the formation of human subjects. For Tarde, the authorisation of what we might now

recognise as an approach which privileges cultural inscription models, devalued or ignored the agency of subjects, and the more spontaneous and unpredictable ways in which ideas, beliefs, practices and customs would spread throughout populations. In an evaluation of Tarde's writings brought together in a volume titled *On Communication and Social Influence* (Tarde 1969), we learn that Tarde had a very regimented education, born to an aristocratic family in 1843, and schooled by Jesuit priests. The debate between Tarde and Durkheim is distinguished through corresponding agonistic terms, which foreground Tarde as a thinker of spontaneity, artistic creation, romantic subjectivism and anarchism, with Durkheim embodying principles of reason, order and authority. This arbitration work does much to cover over the similarities between the writings of Tarde and Durkheim, which Tarde addresses in his essay published in 1894, *Sociology, Social Psychology and Sociologism* (ibid:1969).

Durkheim's figuration of coercion or social imposition as the processes through which subjects are socialized, rely, Tarde argues, on the very concepts of repetition and imitation which Durkheim was at pains to deny. Durkheim's assumptions of social unity as the basic unit of sociological analysis, could not explain how this unity was actually accomplished or took form. This question, which was framed across emerging disciplinary boundaries at the turn of the last century was oriented towards the problem of the one and the many; 'How do many minds act as one? Many brains as one brain?' (Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University:51). The concepts which articulated this question were stabilized through the formation of a particular kind of object, social unity, which referred to a contested domain of interpretation and reflection dispersed across the social sciences. Tarde's engagement with this question framed *association* rather than *inscription* as the means to address social reproduction and transformation, and introduced what many contemporary commentators have likened to a psychic model of contagion (Toews 2003). Isabella Stengers (1997:49) has advocated a 'going back' in order to resurrect figures, such as Tarde, who have seemingly been forgotten. She cogently shows how reversing the logic of scientific invention enables one to see, in a contemporary light, how, 'questions that have been abandoned or repudiated by one discipline have moved silently into another, reappearing in a new theoretical context'. She argues that it is never simply the case that questions have been definitively abandoned or refused. What we might be more likely to see are the way in which questions are slightly modified or translated, or particular theories exist in a dynamic relationship with those that elide or disavow the claims they might make. This is the 'background context'

that Despret (2004) argues is what makes practices of science-making so creative and inventive. They exist in relations of dis-equilibrium, dis-qualification, co-existence, conflict and continuation with those versions which are kept in the background. This relates to what Stengers (ibid:49) refers to as the 'deep communications beyond the proliferation of disciplines'.

What the re-invigoration of Tarde's thought within contemporary social theory reveals, I will argue, is how the question of the psychological, or what was framed as the 'problem of personality' in the nineteenth century (Blackman forthcoming), is not resolved, although it appears to have been abandoned by the contemporary turn to affect. It is clear, that Tarde, like many of his contemporaries such as Henri Bergson and William James, was committed to an ontology of movement, which relied on a very specific way of inventing psychological matter. They were all members of the Institute for Psychical Research in Paris, established in 1900, and framed the problem of personality through concepts derived from spiritualism, psychic phenomenon and studies of hypnotic trance. These concepts circulated across a range of sites and connected up different contexts and metaphysical questions about the nature of consciousness, humanness, and spiritism. Tarde's concept of imitation was one which was not about mechanical reproduction, but a more complex form of imitative desire which was *thought* through concepts derived specifically from hypnotic trance and psychical research. This allowed for spontaneity and repetition to exist in close proximity, and to trouble any notion of a simple stasis of reproduction, which he attributed to the work of Durkheim;

'the education that students receive from their teachers and parents is not the only one they have; considerable account must be taken of another education, involuntary, spontaneous and all the more affective because the students give in to one another and because, later on, there will continue to be free interchange among them for the rest of their lives' (ibid:118).

The notion of indeterminacy and invariance which Tarde makes a feature, particularly of more dialogical forms of communication, such as conversation, introduce elements of chance and interference into the smooth flow of social processes. Thus social constraint is considered an ineffective mechanism for explaining social evolution. The question of indeterminacy and invariance has, arguably in the present, taken form as a concern with affect as 'the invisible glue that holds the world together' (Massumi 2002:217). As Massumi (ibid:220) argues, 'the line of uncontained affect reinjects

unpredictability into context, re-making it eventful. Affect is vivacity of context situation. Affect enlivens'. Although Massumi turns to the nineteenth century pragmatist philosopher and psychologist, William James, to address the question of becoming, his work shares many features with the broad commitment within parts of social theory to re-invent affect as a key process of embodiment. The study of an 'affective register' has been ushered in as a central feature of the study of varying techniques and technologies of the social (Thrift 2004). It is therefore easy to see the value and import of Tarde's writings in the context of the refusals and re-inventions which are currently proliferating across many areas of social and cultural theory (c.f. Fraser, Kember and Lury 2005). Tarde rejected one of the key foundational dualisms, that is the separation of the individual from the social, which he felt that Durkheim had helped to sediment, and which set up an illusory belief that sociology had been freed from psychology. His aim was to create a 'mutually productive merging between the disciplines of psychology and sociology' (Tarde 1969:65). He assumed a particular 'psychical constitution' (ibid:123) to explain social evolution, and rejected the idea that the 'social' or the 'environment' could be used as explanatory concepts.

'As to this phantom – environment, which we revive at will, to which we attribute all sorts of marvellous virtues in order to dispense with recognising the real geniuses who really do good, by whom we live, in whom we move, without whom we would be nothing, let us expulse this phantom from our science as fast as possible' (ibid:124).

There are clear echoes here of contemporary work across science studies and sociology, which in many different ways are refusing and troubling the idea that the social is an entity which can be used to explain the formation of other entities, such that there is nothing left to say. Bruno Latour (2002:117) has perhaps been the most vocal in resurrecting Tarde from his position as a 'marginalized orphan of social theory', and re-positioning Tarde as a forefather to the aims and principles of Actor Network Theory. As well as the interdependence of the social and the psychological, Tarde's (ibid: 126) cautionary tale about Durkheim's neglect of 'any mixing of a biological idea in the subtle sociology he traces', also resonates with contemporary work on the body, affect and embodiment across social and cultural theory. As Thrift (2004:57) cogently puts it, 'distance from biology is no longer seen as a prime marker of social and cultural theory'. What I want to show in this paper is how some of the forgettings and elisions which mark the re-invention of affect, life, and matter, as important elements of social theory, did not simply disappear from social theory with

the take-up of Durkheim rather than Tarde in French sociology. Rather, these concerns and questions were taken up within Anglo-American social psychology and European mass psychology and became modified, translated and continued along the lines that Tarde had put in place.

One consequence of ushering Tarde in from his background status, has been to consider what sociology might have become if Tarde's rather than Durkheim's arguments had been taken up (Latour 2002:118). The aim of my project is a little more prosaic, but I hope to show important for the current re-inventions which are ensuing from many areas of cultural theory. That is, that it is not simply that sociology should be worried about trading 'a sociological theory for a psychological version' (Latour 2002:127), but that the fact that Tarde's work was taken up in the 1900's in Anglo-American social psychology adds an important dimension to work in social theory to date. It is not that this has not been recognised, as Tarde's work is one of the stated bases of the framing of mass psychology, as it came to be specified by social psychologists such as Moscovici (1985). It is acknowledged that Tarde was a major influence on the formation of Anglo-American social psychology in the 1900's (Tarde 1969:65), although I can find little engagement with the significance of this across social and cultural theory. It would seem that the problem of the psychological is seen to be over, and this is even more so with the current turn to affect as the means to address social and discourse determinism (Sedgwick 2003, Grosz 2004). This work is hugely important and offers a welcome critique of constructionist approaches to identity, which have kept in place a bifurcation of nature and culture, reiterated through the refusal to engage with embodiment other than through a concern with textual processes (Blackman 2001). However, what has been given little attention is Tarde's injunction that the separation and boundaries between sociology and psychology, and their systematic exclusion and separation from each other, were an important obstacle in preventing an adequate account of what we might term *being* or *becoming*. What I want to show is *not* that sociology and psychology can be re-united in the present, but rather, that both disciplines have disqualified, in their contemporary formation, the invention of psychic or psychological matter which was integral to the principles of imitation and invention. Chertok and Stengers (1992) argue that the rise and validation of Freudian psychoanalysis led to the concept of suggestibility, which underpinned imitation, to be abandoned, excluded and refused, replaced by the concept of transference. This translation and substitution was effected in a rather different way within social and mass psychology, and led to the problem of imitation being replaced by a problem of

will. The importance of this substitution, and what remains as an excess to this formulation, is one legacy that Tarde left us with, perhaps without us quite being aware of its importance and tenacity.

### **Sociology, social psychology and sociologism**

I want therefore to extend and add to the resurrection of Tarde by considering how the psychological might be re-figured and re-invented in light of his arguments. Although a key resource for many scholars within this emerging field are the natural and physical sciences (Barry 2005, Kember 2005, Massumi 2002), the significance of the psychological sciences has been recognised as important for re-examining questions of ontology (Despret 2004, Latour 2004, Chertok and Stengers 1992, Wilson 1998, 2004). Sedgwick (2003), through her championing of the American psychologist Silvan Tomkins' work on affect, has considered both what it means to find new possibilities in what she terms 'a very different disciplinary ecology of even a few decades distant' (ibid:117), and also how this work can be brought to bear upon the 'heuristic habits' (ibid:95) of contemporary constructionist theories. Others as we have seen, have gone back to nineteenth century psychologists such as William James (Massumi 2002), in a form of genealogical reconstruction. These genealogies make visible the limits of science's ability to theorise affect and desire. Rather than engage in this kind of reconstruction, I want to turn to the knowledge practices of nineteenth century Anglo-American social psychology, and consider what this might disclose about the significance of Tarde for the development of a more cautious and perplexed politics of affect that we might wish to stage.

### **Kind-making and the invention of the impulse/environment relationship**

McDougall (1908) is often cited as one of the central founders of Anglo-American social psychology, who framed a theory of human instincts as the basic problem for social psychology (Jones and Gerard 1967:3). The problem of socialization, as it came to be known, was not possible to address, without developing a theory of the kinds of motivational impulses which drive people towards certain forms of action or conduct, rather than others. He situated himself both in relation to and in opposition to moral philosophy and theories of the moral faculty or sentiment. He was also critical of what he saw as the replacement of this pre-psychological realm, with a notion of will, which as Sedgwick (1994:134) notes, in the nineteenth century, was increasingly used to refer to an 'absolutized space of *pure* voluntariness'. McDougall

(ibid:2) also saw the sociology of Durkheim as a practice which was helping to produce the kinds of separatism which he felt allowed the social sciences to ignore psychology and social psychology.

‘Some do lip service to psychology, but in practice ignore it, and will sit down to write a treatise on morals or economics, or any other of the social sciences, cheerfully confessing that they know nothing of psychology’.

McDougall (ibid:102) was interested, like Tarde, in the concepts of repetition and imitation, and cites Tarde as a central influence in one of the questions which framed his analyses; of the ‘copying by one individual of the actions, the bodily movements, of another’. Copying or imitation was not a mechanical process, and although McDougall considers ideas of hypnotic suggestion as one means to address reproduction processes, he focuses his attention more on the idea of ‘degrees of suggestion’. Tarde’s writings show a hesitancy and undecidability between notions of ordinary suggestibility (as an everyday phenomenon), which imitation was aligned with, and notions of abnormal suggestion, which were used to explain the forms of conduct and behaviour which were likely to occur when people got together in groups (Le Bon 1922 footnote to the key place Tarde has taken up in discussions of crowd psychology). McDougall felt that this distinction was least developed in the work of Tarde, but was central to understanding what McDougall argued were the very many diverse forms of ‘imitative action’ (ibid:91) which afforded manifold activity.

McDougall framed his project as one which was extending and augmenting one of Tarde’s central aims; to explore and analyse which ideas get taken up and by whom; likened to what is realized and unrealised (Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University 1909). Latour (2002) argues that this concern with the realized and the unrealized, the virtual and the actualised, breaks down distinctions between the micro and the macro, and nature and society, replacing the idea of separate entities interacting, with the notion of provisional networks of association, better captured by the term, *multiverse*. The multiverse is always made up of a range of different ways of conceptualising the world which are multiple, and co-exist through linkages which induce or articulate connections with other versions, transform existing versions or multiply versions such that understandings of the world are solidified and transformed through processes of imitation and invention. In relation to scientific knowledge practices, these connections as we have seen, can be ‘qualified (and ) evaluated, according to whether they act under the method of simple co-existence, of conflict, of

negation of the existence of other versions and their disqualification, of emulation, of the activation of new versions or of simple continuation (Despret 2004b:24).

McDougall developed the concept of 'disposition' which he viewed as a development of the general psychological principles which underlay manifold activity. This term was used to bring together a notion of the inherited with the acquired, as a means of addressing the degree of assimilation between the actor and the acted upon.

McDougall (ibid:19) placed a study of the instincts at the heart of social psychological enterprise, which he defined as the 'essential springs or motive powers of all thought and action'. However, although McDougall is often credited with championing nature, his account weaves together nature and nurture in ways which are an interesting precursor to contemporary theories of affect in social theory (c.f. Sedgwick 2003, Ahmed 2004). Instincts although considered the springs of thought and action, were not strictly or simply located within the biological. They are always 'organised in systems of increasing complexity (ibid:17), but are often performed without deliberate action. As we have seen, one of the key questions which was dispersed across the emerging disciplines of the social sciences, in the nineteenth century, was directed towards this problem of the 'one and the many'; of how do the many act as one? Automatism, or a space of involuntariness was central to how this question was being thought. However, the accomplishment or performance of the involuntary was a complex psycho-physical process which involved the cognitive, the affective and the conative; knowing, feeling and orientation – a movement away and towards. The cognitive referred to neuronal excitement, which was located within the plasticity of the brain's neurology and was marked by 'a great complication and variety' (ibid:34). The affective, or feeling component of the instinctual economy, referred to the distribution of impulses throughout the central nervous system and produced the sensation or 'emotional excitement' (ibid:47). This acted in contiguity with the conative system – the distribution of impulses to the muscles of the skeletal system, for example – which would afford the potential for certain action. The relationships between the affective and conative were that which were capable of modification and were further differentiated through a simple/complex dichotomy. McDougall distinguishes simple instincts from more complex instincts by focusing upon the functional aspect of such distributional economies. The fight/flight instinct, for example, is felt affectively as fear, and in conjunction with the cognitive and conative systems produces a response of either fight or flight – bodily retreat or concealment. The primary or simple instincts are those which tend to exist in such a binary pairing of instinct and emotion (used to refer specifically to the combination of

the affective and the conative) and are those which are performed automatically or involuntarily. The pairing of primary instincts and emotions are also modified through a more complex secondary organisation and underlie what McDougall (ibid:91) saw as the variety of forms of imitative action which are reproduced and reproduce particular patternings and regularities. Disposition referred to the sum of all the inherited (primary) instincts and together with character; those acquired through habit (repetition) would 'make up' both the life of the individual and the life of society.

McDougall also sought to introduce a constitutional element to the systems which make up life; those which he felt at the time of his writing were little understood. These were affective realms or *moods* which were linked to bodily disorder. He focused on particular pathologies, usually within the hormonal systems, which would produce particular changes in temperament or mood. Thus the 'thyroid body' referred to:

'a small mass of soft, cellular tissue in the neck. We know now that defect of the functions of this organ may reduce any one of us to a state of mental apathy bordering on idiocy, and that its excessive activity may throw the mind into an over-excitable condition verging on maniacal excitement' (ibid:117).

The temperament referred to those realms of 'feeling' which were linked to recognisable disorders, such as hypo and hyper thyroidism, and which were 'little capable of being modified by voluntary effort' (ibid:119). Thus the inherited and the acquired were weaved together in a complex system of combination, association and substitution. The idea of the pure and the mixed linked the vital and the social together in a way which was compatible with the kinds of evolutionary ideas which were mobilized to understand what was posited as a 'complex and cultured society' (ibid:221). The differentiation between the primitive and the civilized became the axes through which the customs and traditions of different cultures were judged and distinguished from each other. Although McDougall was critical of moral philosophy, he did not reject the realm of the moral. However, the moral was always fixed by the limits of the triad of character, temperament and disposition, and the object of moral training was not the pure space of optimistic transformation, which was incorporated into other writings of the time (Smiles 1864). Moral conduct was acquired through habit and training and was considered one of the 'higher modes of learning or acquisition' (ibid:175). The distinction between the higher and the lower became a central device to differentiate the customs of so-called primitive societies from so-

called civilized societies. Primitive customs were considered rigid and well-defined and relatively immune to processes of invention understood in a Tardian sense. The relationship between invention and imitation in so-called civilized societies was marked by a degree of movement; lines of disruption, variation and as multi-directional; what McDougall (ibid:335) termed 'geometrical progression':

'the coincident appearance of two interinfluencing inventions, are determined by so many, such obscure, and such uncontrollable causes, that we may properly refer to chance as a factor' (FPS 1909:139).

The element of chance and indetermination was not viewed as a marker of so-called primitive societies. The space of chance and indetermination was one that McDougall believed weakened social influence, and particularly public opinion. Public opinion, particularly channelled through the medium of newspapers and print journalism was seen to be a source of 'suggestive influences' (FPS 1909: 188) and produced a unification of ideas; the making of similarity rather than difference. Thus within a space of indeterminacy regularities were subject to discordance, interference and interruption as well as accordance with existing ideas/practices. This notion of 'social influence' was established alongside what we might term 'kind-making' and 'nation-making processes'. People were seen to differ infinitely and this difference, through the concepts of evolutionary biology, could be mapped, identified and differentiated. Thus what is realized and unrealised, in terms of the relationship between patterns of invention and imitation, also brought the individual and their particular psycho-physical 'make up' into patterns of regularity and difference. The psycho-physical subject became a crucial nodal point within systems which presumed the distribution of vital and social processes through concepts which combined the voluntary with the involuntary, the inherited with the acquired and the simple with the complex as contiguous relationships. Within these conceptions the higher cannot exist without the lower, the complex without the simple, the inherited without the acquired, functioning as parasitic relationships (see Stenner 2004). These relationships were unified through the mobilization of evolutionary concepts. The co-existence of invention and imitation, within a harmonious system of living was made possible by the 'sentiment for self control' (McDougall 1910:253). This was viewed as one of the highest acquisitions of civilized practices. This normative conception of the psycho-physical was contrasted against those studies of so-called abnormal states of mind, such as hypnotic trance. The capacity to be open to dissimulation or dis-inhibition of one's thought and action was linked to variation in suggestibility; mood, sex, age, as

well as along a scale marking out people as particular types or kinds. For example, Binet argued that children were more suggestible than adults (footnote to Tarde's planned engagement with Binet just prior to his death). This embedded the trope of phylogeny within a developmental discourse which was mapped onto emerging distinctions between the primitive and the civilized (Le Bon 1922). The rigidity of custom of the so-called primitive, alongside a conception of inherited grades of mental ability, became what was increasingly seen as the pre-social and pre-human soil from which patterns of invention and imitation were shaped. The vital was thus seen to have a life-history and organisation which linked kind to nation and a particular hierarchy of races and classes to the question of 'how one can act as many'.

'the life of societies is not merely the sum of activities of individuals moved by enlightened self-interest, or by intellectual desire for pleasure and aversion from pain; and to show him that the springs of all complex activities that make up the life of societies must be sought in the instincts and in the other primary tendencies that are common to all men and are deeply rooted in the remote ancestry of the race' (ibid:351).

### **Taking the past to heart**

Edward Ross, a pre-eminent Professor of Sociology published a book in 1909, *Social Psychology: An Outline and Source Book*, which is repeatedly cited as inaugurating one of the traditions which has shaped contemporary social psychology (Kremor et al 1993, Jones and Gerard 1967). Where McDougall (1908) is seen to have invented the importance of nature or individual psychology in understandings of social processes, Ross is firmly placed on the side of nurture or social understandings of what are often taken to be individual psychological processes. Kremor et al (2003:6) identify these two figures as the 'earliest identifiable ancestors of the two traditions' which predate the importance of the very idea of social influence; or what is now understood within social psychology as the individual/society dualism (Henriques et al 1984/1998). Jones and Gerard (1967:3) in *Foundations of Social Psychology* repeat the split between the individual and the social, nature and nurture in their recognition of both McDougall's and Ross's contribution to the social psychological project. McDougall is credited with championing the importance of the human subject's instinctual nature as the basis for understanding processes of socialisation. Ross in contradistinction, is aligned with the importance of the social transmission of

ideas, beliefs and feelings from person to person. The explanations that both authors gave have been subject to a kind of retrospective 'arbitration work' (Stengers 1997:xii) which has helped to establish and reify the bifurcation of nature and culture in processes of subjectification. However, what I want to examine in this section is how this 'arbitration work' has performed an erasing of the ways in which the bifurcation which underpins contemporary social psychological ideas of 'social influence' was far from settled in either of these treatises.

Both of the works draw on the writings of Gabriel Tarde, and both engage with the problem of the 'one and the many' through a mobilisation and assembling of particular concepts of the acquired and the inherited, the simple and the complex, the instinctual with the environmental in ways which have more similarities than differences. The retrospective arbitration of the traditions they are now taken to exemplify, has more to do with the complex forgetting which underpins the establishment of social psychology as a discipline which is viewed as distinct, separate and even antithetical to a sociological enterprise. Kremor et al (2003:6), discussing the importance of McDougall and Ross acknowledge that 'the actual content of these books has justifiably faded into history'. Social psychology, and its varied conditions of existence and forgetting, is a particularly fruitful place to explore the genealogy of the forms of knowledge which have helped to shape the contemporary domain of problematisation which separates the sociological from the psychological (Latour 2002). I will argue that the return of some of the questions which shaped this domain, can be seen in the current and proliferating engagement within cultural theory with the realm of affect and emotion. This arena has become a container to think through some of the problems which were central to social psychology in the 1900's.

When we consider Ross's (1908) writings in their historical specificity, we can clearly see that 'the theory of two factors' (Despret 2004b:107); the idea of nature and culture as two separate and distinct realms had not been stabilized. Although drawing on similar background theories or versions (ibid), the meanings of the concepts which were mobilized by both Ross and McDougall were distributed very differently. Both authors were attempting to account for uniformity in feeling, belief and action in relation to the question of 'how can many act as one?' As we have already seen, this question was dispersed across the social sciences, and within social psychology was framed in different ways through an engagement with the relational theories of Gabriel Tarde. The legacy of Tarde's thinking is evident

throughout Ross's treatise, which inserts the propensity for suggestibility within a contrast between the simple and the complex, the inherited and the acquired, the primitive and the civilized, and the flexible and the rigid. Ross triumphantly states in the preface to his book, the extent to which Tarde was a major figure and influence on his theory for understanding human interaction and inter-influence:

'At the moment of launching this work, I pause to pay heartfelt homage to the genius of Garbriel Tarde. Solicitous as I have been to give him due credit in the text, no wealth of excerpt and citation can reveal the full measure of my indebtedness to that profound and original thinker. While my system has swung wide of his, I am not sure I should ever have wrought out a social psychology but for the initial stimulus and the two great construction lines – conventionality and custom – yielded by his incomparable *Lois de l'imitation*. If only this expression of my gratitude could reach him' (1908:xiii).

Although Ross has become associated with the central role played by social processes in the formation of human subjectivity, he did not assume that individuals were simply blank slates waiting to be moulded or written upon by the heavy hand of culture. He engaged with similar background versions or theories to McDougall, for example the idea of an inherited instinctual economy, but proclaimed that the 'aligning power of association triumphs over diversity of temperament and experience' (ibid:1). Whether in 'dress, diet, pastimes or moral ideas', the 'individuality each has received from the hand of nature is largely effaced, and we find people gathered into great planes of uniformity' (ibid:1). The object of social psychology, he argued was 'planes or currents of uniformity' (ibid:2) which were psychic in origin. The distinction between the psychic and the non-psychic translated widespread concerns with hypnotic phenomenon, as well as drawing upon 'contagion' metaphors, which as Richards (1996:122) argues had emerged from the 'medical discoveries of Pasteur and Koch' and which 'had provided Le Bon with his notion of 'mental contagion'. Non-psychic uniformities were those aligned with disease, physical environment, conditions of life and what Ross referred to as race endowment. This concept drew on a notion of character, similar to explanations invoked by McDougall, which saw character as primarily constituted by acquired dispositions which were modifiable and subject to change. The concept of character was a central feature of the kinds of nation-building and kind-building work that established the importance of separation and boundaries in the performance of the emerging modernist subject. Ross both reiterated these dividing practices in his citing

of such common character dispositions as, 'the Negro volubility, gypsy nomadism, Magyar passion for music, Slavic mysticism, Teutonic venturesomeness and American restlessness', (ibid:3), but also felt that the extent to which these dispositions could be located within inherited disposition, rather than conditions of life and the physical environment, 'were yet to be settled' (ibid:3). We can see here the beginnings of the contrast between evolutionary biology, and revisionist black psychology (refs), which has framed discussions of such contentious issues as racial intelligence, child development, and personality within psychology (c.f. Blackman and Walkerdine 2001). However, one of the central paradoxes or dilemmas in Ross's work is both his silencing of evolutionary biology in some contexts, and his mobilization of some of the key contrasts between the primitive and the civilized, and the mobile and the rigid, which underpins how the so-called animal and the cultural are brought together within his account. This paradox remains more intelligible when we consider what Ross views as the central aim of a social psychological project; to promote individuality and to enable subjects to 'become a voice and not an echo, a person and not a parrot' (ibid:4).

This statement or articulation is the place where the apparent ambivalence of this mobilisation foregrounds some of the key differentiations which enable Ross to insert the propensity for suggestibility within a distinction between the civilised and the primitive. The sets of contrasts which perform the work of distinguishing the democratic and mobile American, from those cultures which become aligned with the rigid and the so-called primitive, inscribe suggestibility within a link between the crowd or mob, so-called pathological states of consciousness (such as hypnotic trance and related phenomenon), and the threat of social disorder. Americanism is expressed through a patriotic feeling embodied by the capacity to be self-made and move in a path of one's own. Ross draws on the writings of Cooley in *Human Nature and the Social Order* to argue that this embodied orientation towards oneself and others, is socially formed, but also thoroughly naturalised to the extent that 'the more thoroughly American a man is, the less he can perceive Americanism. He will embody it; all he does, says or writes will be full of it, but he can never truly see it, simply because he has no exterior point of view from which to look at it (ibid:4). What echoes throughout Ross's writings is the constitution of a normative gaze which socializes nature such that the very idea of the self-enclosed and clearly bounded, unified individual, able to *withstand* social influence, is produced as the index of progress, worth and liberation from enslavement. The regulatory ideal which forms the pinnacle of Ross's writings is just one of the many places within psychology

where different and often conflicting theories are brought together within a unified system of explanation. This unifying system assembles and stabilises a set of contrasts or distinctions between the atavistic characteristics of the crowd, and 'those who know how to separate themselves from the world, resisting fashion, preserving borders, any of so many ways to say enclosing oneself (Despret 2004b:134).

Thus, the characteristics of crowds; such as instability, credulity, irrationality, simplicity, immorality and the lack of a capacity for self-control, explained through the mechanism of suggestion, are contrasted with 'veracity, prudence, thrift, perserverance, respect for another's rights' and 'obedience to law' (Ross *ibid*:56). The characteristics of crowds, translated through understandings of hypnotic suggestion and trance, are considered both 'atavistic and sterile' as well as the 'lowest of the forms of human association' (*ibid*:57), in a Tardian sense. Isabella Stengers (1997:xv) in *Power and Invention. Situating Science*, considers the various epistemological positions within science, which have attempted to stabilise our worlds, usually through demarcations made between the inside and the outside, the subject and the object, the individual and the social, the natural and the cultural. In a foreword to the book by Bruno Latour, he considers how as a philosopher of science, Stengers has introduced a different normative set of distinctions for judging good science from bad. I wish to examine the implications of her philosophical writing for judging the efficacy of the translation of suggestibility and its re-distribution of meaning within Ross's social psychological account. Stenger's advocates a form of 'risky construction'; as Latour discusses, 'the distinction she tries to make is not the one between true and false statements, but between well-constructed and badly constructed propositions' (*ibid*:xiii). The 'cosmopolitically correct' statement does not make a contrast between the real and the constructed, the authentic and the performed, but rather between the element of risk afforded through allowing one's propositions or statements to be modified by the world (the subject/objects which are framed through one's analyses). Pertinent for my discussion of Ross, is Stenger's judgement of the way in which Freud's statements about transference within the therapeutic relationship, framed the analyst/analysand as vehicles for transference. The concept of transference, she suggests, is one which presents a 'purified analysis' (*ibid*:xv) which results in 'the elimination of influence from psychiatry' (*ibid*:xv). The subsequent result of this engagement or interpretation of suggestibility protects Freud from the implications or consequences of the practice of hypnosis.

Similarly, Ross's translation of the mechanism of suggestibility, although paradoxically on the one hand positing it as the underpinning of Tarde's concept of imitation, on the other hand re-defines the very idea of social influence as a characteristic of those who are considered lower, inferior, weaker and aligned with the primitive. For example, the key distinction is between the effect of suggestion, and those who have the power or capacity to withstand suggestion. The term invoked at the time of his writing in the early 1900's was inhibition (Smith 1992), or will-power (Sedgewick 1994). It is this trope of social influence which is central to the principles and aims of contemporary social psychology, and has also been formative in the shaping of the parameters of media studies (Blackman and Walkerdine 2001). Although Ross is associated with the realm of social transmission (Jones and Gerard 1967), he invokes and stabilizes a hierarchy of suggestibility, whose meanings are distributed, through sets of contrasts reliant upon an evolutionary trope. Although the propensity to suggestibility or social influence is most marked in the so-called primitive, such as the 'artless, unsophisticated children of nature like the Malays (ibid:13), its specification was further differentiated through distinctions made between temperament, sex, age, nervous disease and the source and duration of suggestion. Thus women were considered more suggestible than men, the sanguine more than the melancholic, children more than adults and Celts more than the English or Scandinavians (ibid:14-15). His undecidability about the evolutionary ideas he invokes is made apparent in his discussion of the relationship between femininity and suggestibility, where he draws on the Tardian concept of custom and conventionality. The so-called 'mob susceptibilities' (ibid:17) identified in women, and their aligning with the emotional rather than reason, could be explained through her restriction from 'individualising influences such as higher education, travel, self-direction, professional pursuits and participation in intellectual and public life (ibid). Thus the life of the woman, characterised as simple and rigid, separated her from the complex and uni-directional influences of public life, and linked her to the primitive through the environment ('house life' ibid:230), rather than by nature.

However, this characterisation did not perform a simple bifurcation of nature and culture. The echo of hypnosis reverberates in the central role within Ross's account accorded to *feeling* and how imitation spreads through the social body. Ross's writing draws upon a very energetic model of contagion, where ideas and opinions are separated from feelings, which refer to the more permeable and porous boundaries of the social body. The model of affect which Ross works with brings to the foreground what has been elided or obscured by the resurrection of Tarde as a

'thinker of networks' within sociology (Latour 2002:118). That is that Tarde, alongside his contemporaries such as Henri Bergson and William James were all members of the Institute of Psychical Research in Paris, established in 1900. Tarde's ideas were related to his interest in psychical research and phenomenon, as well as derived from concepts producing what hypnotic trance was taken to be (c.f. Blackman forthcoming). As we have seen, the question of both metamorphosis and social unity, was not conceived as mechanical reproduction, but involved complex imitative processes aligned with a conception of consciousness which was layered, complex, conscious and non-conscious.

These 'planes of vibration' (ibid:64) can be expressed and felt through bodily articulations which were considered to propagate and spread with an ease and facility not characteristic of the spread of ideas and opinions.

Many authors have referred to this model of affect as a form of 'mental touch', which was considered a powerful mechanism of suggestion (Connor 2004, Durham Peters 1999, Asendorf 1993). The spread of *feelings* intensified through gesticulation, bodily movements, motor co-ordinations and repetitions was considered a much more fecund and fertile soil for mental contagion. Technologies of the body, which might have included marching, manners of speech and bodily movements characterised by their rhythmic repetition were seen to spread through the air, paralysing reason; 'boisterous laughter, frenzied objurgations (and) frantic cheers'. These all created a spectacle of feeling which was dangerous, according to Ross, bombarding the senses with innumerable impressions. The result of this spreading might compel people to imitate with a vibrancy which would cross and mix the individual's bodily state with what was considered a pathological expression of the social body. Thus, in 'a French convent a nun began to mew like a cat; other nuns began to mew likewise. The infection spread until the nuns in the very large convent began to mew everyday at a certain hour' (ibid:122). The characterisation of feeling as a propensity to engage in conduct considered automatic and involuntary, combined a set of fears about the capacity of people to be affected, embodied within the practice of hypnosis, with a set of fears about the possible permeability of the very boundaries and separations which established the modernist subject as self-contained, unified and self-enclosed. These fears and anxieties were told, through the very idea of social influence, which authorized an articulation of this potential mixing and crossing, through the register of individual and social pathology. Thus the kind of social psychological project which

Ross helped to establish, was one which was a thoroughly colonial and classed project from its very inception.

The mixings and crossings which were considered a healthy expression of a civilising ethos were those where the middle classes (the professional and mercantile classes) could plunder or borrow from the working classes or other cultures in order to advance its own accumulation and progression. The middle classes were differentiated from the working classes through a contrast between the flexible and the rigid. Thus, 'advance on the plastic side is much easier than on the rigid side' (ibid:335). However, it was more usual for the inferior to ape the superior, where the 'rich are imitated by the poor' (ibid:175) and the city by the country. The distinction between the rigid or fixed and the flexible or plastic were key contrasts through which the boundary and separation between those considered socially superior and inferior was thought and accomplished. American culture was considered more elastic than the rigidity of cultures viewed as other and closer to the primitive, where a 'strong, robust individuality' (ibid:83) was contrasted with 'ethnic or mental homogeneity'. This contrast differentiated unanimity of thought from the differentiation and diversity seen to underlie processes of invention as opposed to processes of imitation. Fixity was considered a form of calcification likened to 'the calcareous deposit in the walls of arteries' (ibid:217). Although *habit* in the form of a kind of 'imitative rapidity' (Toews 2003) was the mechanism through which innovation spread, *habit* could also crystallise in the form of customs or traditions which presented themselves as a kind of atrophy of thought or 'social old-age' (Ross ibid:217). Thus the art and practice of renewal was one which required the 'habit of breaking thought-habits' (ibid:221), and characterised static from more dynamic societies (ibid:222). Thus habit was both necessary and a problem, and became linked into some of the classed projects of social transformation which were based upon an assumption that 'education for the lower class must mean the excitation of new wants' (ibid:263, Smiles 1864). However, the kinds of moral training and education which underpinned some of the more successful projects such as Victorian self-help, were also those which might stifle genius.

'It is hardly necessary to point out that only a stimulating, equipping education can mature geniuses. A regime that prunes, clips and trains minds, levels genius with mediocrity. A schooling devised primarily to produce good character, or patriotism, or dynastic loyalty, or class sentiment, or religious orthodoxy may lessen friction in society, but it cannot bring genius to bloom' (ibid:360).

Thus for Ross, the question of 'how can the many act as one' was resolved through a project which translated suggestibility into a particular kind of object, social influence. This object allowed the intermingling and crossing of the boundaries and separations integral to the modernist subject, through the register of individual and social pathology, cross cut by classed, raced and gendered lines. These intersections provided places, practices and peoples where the anxieties and fears about permeability and fluidity could be located within particular bodies; bodies who were considered lowly, dangerous, inferior and in want or need of the civilizing ethos, or what we might describe, following Ross, as processes of Americanization. These processes, and the concepts which articulated them, assembled and held together the tension between evolution and creation, order and chaos, patterning and diversification. It was the tensions, contradictions and borders created by these processes which allowed particular crosses and interminglings, whilst fixing certain peoples, places and practices as expressions of atavism and primitivism. Thus the relationship between particular notions of equilibrium and rupture were essential to the very idea of social influence. This assemblage, as we have seen, provides a solution to the problem of the one and the many, by positing the withstanding of social influence as the prerogative of the few to transmit to the many.

'Since these appeal to the needs of diverse temperaments, it is unlikely that the spirit of unification will bring about the triumph of the one over the rest, or their coadaptation into one form' (ibid:364).

Similarly, McDougall (1910:98) introduced the 'self-reliant man of settled convictions' as the norm, from which were contrasted those who were not able to withstand social influence. These again, included children, colonial subjects, the working classes and women. Similar contrasts were mapped onto this distinction, including the mobile and rigid which was used to differentiate so-called primitive customs from the degree of movement within Anglo-American societies which was seen to weaken the hold of social influence (ibid:211). The 'voluntary direction of attention' (ibid:240) which was also described as inhibition or will (Smith 1992, Sedgwick 1994), was linked to the 'sentiment for self control' (ibid:253). This was articulated within a strict hierarchy of classes and cultures; imitation in the Tardian sense would always spread from the higher to the lower, from the middle to working classes. Although some of the concepts that both authors drew on were distributed in rather different ways, they also refer back to very similar questions, problems and modes of articulation,

particularly embedded within the writings of Gabriel Tarde. Although retrospectively, the forms of arbitration-work (Stengers 1997) performed by contemporary social psychology has placed them on either side of a bifurcation between nature and culture and the individual and the social, both accounts have helped to cultivate and mobilise an object, 'social influence', which has a very precise historical configuration and set of motivations.

## **Conclusion**

What is interesting about both these authors, and their acknowledged place in the shaping of Anglo-American social psychology is firstly, how the manifest consequences of practices of hypnosis were translated into both an acknowledgement of people's capacity to be affected, whilst simultaneously disavowing this through positing the capacity to withstand social influence as the regulatory ideal of civilizing processes. The contemporary stabilisation of nature/culture, individual/society as separate realms of proximate influence, has presented social theorists with a range of problems for thinking through questions of agency and subjectification (c.f. Henriques et al 1984/1998). Although many contemporary theorists have attempted to move beyond the idea of an 'interaction effect' (Riley 1983), and refuse the separation of categories such as nature and culture (Haraway 2004), the legacy of 'social influence' creeps in across many areas of social and cultural theory (c.f. Blackman and Walkerdine 2001). Paradoxically the resurrection of Gabriel Tarde in contemporary social theory is associated with a change in what the problem is taken to be, alongside a refusal and acknowledgment of how inadequate some of our conceptual tools might be. What this cursory examination of the way in which Tardian concepts were translated within Anglo-American social psychology, recognised as being 'the most important single vehicle for the diffusion of Tarde's thought in America' (Tarde 1969:65) alerts us to, is that they were re-assembled and combined and re-combined to produce a very particular normative psycho-physical subject. It was this subject, with its complex constitution of bio-cultural processes, which became distributed through contrasts between the rigid and the flexible, the higher and the lower, and the superior and the inferior. Thus although the subject was an open system, and not atomized, he/she was also specified through the capacity of individuals, groups and nations to acquire a particular set of psychological competencies, defined by the concepts of will and inhibition. Thus Tarde's pretensions to specify ability through hereditary psychology, and particularly the work of Baldwin and Galton, were translated by McDougall and

Ross through a complex mixing of the voluntary and the involuntary, the acquired and the inherited, and the vital and the social. This was in line with Tarde's (1880) most specific reflection on psychology, where in a consideration of nineteenth century psychophysical experimentation (Wundt), he rejected the idea that one could simply separate out these processes to determine causal relationships.

'that no one knows what remains of sensation once judgement is removed; and that in the most elementary sound, in the most indivisible coloured point, there is already a duration and a succession, a multiplicity of points and contiguous movements whose integration is an enigma' (Tarde 1969:198).

Although the re-invention of re-invention (Thrift 2005), and the development of a model of affect, which allows life to be injected into the stasis of cultural inscription models, is an important conceptual move, we still need to explore how Tarde's concepts were translated and re-figured in knowledge practices such as psychology and social psychology. There is a body of work which has explored through genealogical investigation how the 'psy' sciences have become integral to the management and regulation of populations since their emergence in the nineteenth century (Henriques et al 1984, Rose 1985, 1989, 1996, Walkerdine 1990, Blackman and Walkerdine 2001, Blackman 2001). This work has tended to suffer from a focus upon 'subject positions', aligned more with cultural inscription models, and has overlooked the more messy, invariant and indeterminate ways in which we exist in our being and becoming (Blackman 2004). One thing that strikes me about both strands of work, is the way in which the complex conceptions of psychological matter, which Tarde and others were mobilizing, are left out or mentioned in passing, such that the psychological is infolded into the domain of the social – albeit a more flattened conception. This sociologism and discourse determinism fails to engage with what advanced liberal governments seem to know so well; that is what Thrift (2004:65) terms the domains 'carved out of the half second delay which has become visible and so available to be worked upon through a whole series of new entities and institutions'. This 'half-second delay' refers to the space of embodied experience, of non-conscious perception, which forms a constant backdrop to experience; what Thrift (2000) terms the domain of 'bare life'. It is this domain which is being targeted and shaped through the proliferation of practices of microbiopolitics (ibid:2004). It is this domain of non-conscious perception, marked by association and disassociation, which Tarde and others brought into visibility, and which has had a profound role on understandings of mass psychology in the twentieth century (Graumann and

Moscovici 1986, 1985, Barrows 1981, Blackman forthcoming). It would seem that suggestibility is still as much a site for the making of subjects in advanced liberal governmentalities as it was, albeit in rather different ways, in nineteenth century colonial and classed projects (Blackman *ibid*). This would suggest that a 'neuropolitics of the subliminal' (Connolly 2002 in Thrift 2004:68), which foregrounds the psychological as an important dimension of social theory, is one legacy that Tarde left us with, and which shows perhaps that the question of hypnotic suggestibility is not over (Blackman *ibid*, Orr forthcoming).

'we propose to *propagate* the question of hypnosis. This does not mean that we will show that hypnosis is 'everywhere', but that we will attempt to reveal, precisely where disciplines have closed the circle of their judgements, a common 'unknowing' whose most noticeable symptom is the question of hypnosis' (Chertok and Stengers 1992:xxv).

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