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The neuropolitical *habitus* of resonant receptive democracy

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the recent work on mirror neurons illuminates the character of our capacities for a politics of resonant receptivity in ways that both help us to comprehend the damages of our contemporary order and suggest indispensable alternative ethical–strategic registers and possible directions for organising a powerful movement towards radical democracy. In doing so, neuroscience simultaneously contributes to our understanding of the possibility and importance of a more durable (less fugitive) radically democratic *habitus*. While the trope, ‘radically democratic *habitus*’, may seem oxymoronic in light of Bourdieu’s extensive rendering of ‘*habitus*’, I suggest that research on mirror neurons discloses ways in which iterated practices and dispositional structures are crucial for democratic freedom.

Keywords: *radical democracy; mirror neurons; receptivity; political resonance; habitus; resonance machine; mimesis; affect*

There has been significant attention in the past few decades to the ethical and political implications of radical receptivity in relation to democratic practice. Our receptive capacities are of tremendous consequence for both our ability to respond generously and intelligently to difficult issues of difference in contexts ranging from one-to-one relationships to those that may span the globe. They are equally crucial to our ability to engender a politics of community and commonwealth at the intersection of different traditions, visions, passions, interests and experiences that are inflected by vast inequalities of power. Yet, our receptive capacities are themselves profoundly directed, shaped and limited—variously amplified and diminished—by the very topographies of inequality and subjugation that radical democrats seek to change. This generates profound paradoxes for those who seek a democratic politics of transformation.

Contemporary research in neuroscience focused on mirror neurons suggests that our receptive capacities are themselves entangled with corporeal resonances between and among human bodies. These inter-corporeal resonant relationships happen prior

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to linguistic cognition, and the latter appears to be profoundly oriented and limited by, as well as neurologically modelled upon, the former. Yet like receptivity, inter-corporeal resonance is itself not innocent of inequalities and the toxic politics of (in)difference but rather *is itself a target of and imbued with modes of power*. This has likely always been true, but in present times the relationship between our capacities for inter-corporeal resonance and contemporary practices of power is particularly salient and intense due to the ways in which such power is enmeshed with and borne by technologies and asymmetries of resonance itself. In other words, contemporary modes of power operate upon and through what neuroscience increasingly reveals to be elemental registers of our being. Moreover, they do so by deploying instruments, relationships and strategies that are at once sophisticated, intense, amplified and nearly ubiquitous in ‘developed’ societies.

Yet, the paradoxes of receptive democracy and the daunting challenges of strategies of resonant techno-relational power need not lead us to despair. Instead, I venture here that recent work on mirror neurons illuminates the character of our capacities for a politics of resonant receptivity in ways that help us not only to better comprehend the damages of our contemporary order but also to suggest indispensable alternative ethical–strategic registers and possible directions for organising a powerful movement towards radical democracy. *In so doing, neuroscience simultaneously contributes to our understanding of the possibility and importance of a more durable (less fugitive) radically democratic habitus*. While the trope, ‘radically democratic ‘habitus’, may seem oxymoronic in light of Bourdieu’s extensive rendering of ‘habitus’, I suggest that research on mirror neurons discloses ways in which iterated practices and dispositional structures are crucial for democratic freedom.

In the next section, I set pertinent aspects of the political stage with an overview of what William Connolly has insightfully coined the ‘evangelical-capitalist resonance machine’. The following section explores research on mirror neurons to better illuminate actualities of and possibilities for inter-corporeal resonance. This exploration opens onto Section 3, where I examine what might be conceived as a kind of ‘political autism’. ‘Deceptive resonance and the closures of political autism’ considers more receptive and generous democratic initiatives that might open beyond dispositions and practices of compulsive closure. Finally, an engagement with Pierre Bourdieu allows us to see how an alternative habitus might—somewhat paradoxically—be cultivated so that dynamic democratic openings and resonant receptivity could be rendered at once more powerful, innovative and durable.

EVANGELICAL CAPITALIST RESONANCE MACHINE

In the context of recent research on mirror neurons, I explore possibilities for cultivating capacities and powers that might both disrupt the dominant resonance machine and form an indispensable element—a *resonant connective tissue*—for an alternative democratic politics characterised by increasingly receptive and generous relationships. To foreground some of the challenges this project must address in

relation to contemporary power, I will briefly sketch William Connolly's analysis of the 'evangelical-capitalist resonance machine'.

Connolly—indebted to Deleuze and others—writes of capitalism as a resonant '*assemblage* composed through relations of imbrication, infusion, and intercalation between heterogeneous elements that simultaneously enter *into* one another to some degree, *affect* each other from the outside, and generate residual or torrential *flows* exceeding the first two modes of connection'. Among the key elements here (in addition to immediately recognisable economic entities such as corporations and financial institutions), he has in mind 'state policies, educational institutions, media practices, church proclivities, class experiences, and scientific practices' that not only support a commonly recognised 'capitalist axiomatic',¹ but also engender a spiritual ethos in which extreme inequality, fundamentalism, generalised *resentiment* towards difference and ambiguity, as well as bellicosity and indifference towards future generations, the poor, foreigners and the planet often intensify one another. Connolly characterises the relationships between diverse elements in terms of 'resonance' where they:

... *infiltrate* each other, metabolize into a moving complex. Spiritual sensibilities, economic presumptions, and the state priorities slide and blend into one another, though each also retains a modicum of independence from the others. [It is a] causation as resonance between elements that become fused to a considerable degree. Now causality, as relations of dependence between separate factors, morphs into energized complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement, in which elements heretofore unconnected or loosely associated fold, bend, blend, emulsify, and resolve incompletely into each other ...²

Resonance often operates beneath and between explicit articulations by means of images, music, tone of voice, facial expression, bodily posture and gesture, tempo, types of aesthetic objects, modalities of genuflection and collective performances of hostility. In this type of machine, resonant relationships happen as our bodies move through and experience the myriad institutions, practices, energetic flows and representations that mobilise and intensify one another through operative relationships of visceral similitude. In contemporary times, the virtual world of electronic media—network news, televangelists, press conferences, blogspheres, TV and radio talk shows, Internet, Twitter, movies, Youtube, corporatised tele-education, infomercials, etc.—is powerfully implicated in and often constitutive of our experiences of different domains and their relationships. While the electronic sphere conveys, infuses and mediates resonances among elements that are irreducible to itself, this sphere *it is itself a profoundly and elementally resonant medium—a medium of resonance*. By this, I mean that its existence consists of resonant waves of light and sound that vibrate through our bodies and surroundings—from living rooms, to classrooms, to offices, to waiting rooms, to sporting events, to churches, in our cars, on airplanes, in shopping spaces, at restaurants, etc.—engendering experiences, dispositions, attention, inattention and intensities of feeling, as well as practical engagements, relationships and interactions. We are increasingly vibrated into being by these visceral practices of techno-resonance.

While the democratic left in recent decades has missed this aspect of political life, the right wing has invested its time, money and organising efforts across a wide array of resonant venues with great success. An effective challenge to this evangelical–capitalist resonance machine requires ‘a counter machine’: ‘a political assemblage composed of multiple constituencies whose diverse experiences resonate together, finding expression in churches, schools, factories, neighborhoods, the media, occupational groups, the electorate, a segment of the capitalist class, state policy and cross-state movements’.³ Such a counter resonance machine, Connolly suggests, would cultivate a spiritual ethos of pluralisation that is more capacious towards difference, more egalitarian, experimental and ecologically responsible. Recently, Connolly has gestured broadly towards ‘role adventurism’ as an indispensable aspect of the project of modulating individual and group performances and identities in ways that might help establish infra-sensible conditions for a counter resonance machine that could more radically challenge state and corporate power.⁴

I too seek to contribute to a theory and practice of resonance that disrupts and disestablishes the dominant exploitative resonance machines of our day and that simultaneously enhances relational capacities for receptive generosity, dialogic power and vital ecological sensibilities. Yet, it is important to avoid viewing resonance itself primarily as a static *type* of energy and relationship. Although it is vital to consider ways in which we may employ currently dominant modalities and practices of resonant energy towards different ends, my primary concern here is to inquire into how resonance *as such* might be re-conceived—even *re-resonated in radically receptive democratic modes*—as a vital element of the ethos and power of an engaged, hospitable and ecological democracy.

Another way of putting this is: Might it not be possible and indeed necessary to re-imagine resonance *in radically democratic terms*, so that we would work with resonance *less* as a relatively stable *type* of energy we must re-deploy (although surely we must), and *more* as a phenomenon that must itself undergo elemental transformation if we are to advance radical democracy—a transformation that involves a certain extension and modulation of resonant capacities that are intertwined with networks of mirror motor neurons? I suggest that *transformations in the very character of resonant energy* are among the *most vital conditions* for the counter ethos, counter-conducts, counter-movements and counter-powers through which the distinction of radical, ecological and hospitable democracy might become more imaginable, powerful and politically possible.

MIRROR NEURONS AND RECEPTIVE INTER-CORPOREAL RESONANCE

In this section, I discuss ways in which neuroscience can contribute to our reflections on inter-corporeal receptive resonance and its implications for ethics and politics. People who are familiar with my work know that I draw on many genres of inquiry to illuminate and inspire such reflection—from political theory, to philosophy, to

theology, to historical and participant observer work on social movements, to ecology and more. Neuroscience, as I engage it here, is not understood to be determinative in relation to ethics and politics but rather suggestive and informative in ways that must be dialogically mediated with a variety of other modes of inquiry and practice. Indeed, I suspect that the questions and responses of scientific inquiry are always already entangled with these modes of inquiry in patterns of disclosure from which we are never separate. Processes of illumination, in the midst of such a condition, require that we explore the reciprocal implications of many threads and dimensions of differently accented inquiry. The discussion that follows should be thought of in this light: It seeks to offer contributions, suggestions and inspirations for further inquiries that in turn draw on other modes of reflection. It makes no claim to provide deterministic, privileged or fundamentalist claims but rather investigates what I take to be an indispensable part of a broader conversation across different terrains of possible understanding. A fuller discussion of the status of such science for ethics and politics is beyond the scope of this essay.

To make plausible this suggestion about the importance of—and the possibility for transformations in—resonant energy, briefly consider a couple of articulations of complex dynamical systems theory, before we turn our focus to neurobiology. Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers (advancing a line of inquiry initially formulated by Poincaré) argue that resonant energies among the frequencies of all moving bodies disrupt Newtonian trajectories and thereby provoke elemental events analogous to Epicurus's 'clinamen'—or contingent atomic swerves. Such energy plays a vital role in the birth, sustenance and disruption of many orders of things, and its presence challenges the false dichotomy between a universe governed by Newtonian causality, on the one hand, and pure human freedom, on the other. According to Prigogine and Stengers, 'human creativity and innovation can be understood as the amplification of laws of nature already present in chemistry and physics', when the latter is understood to be fundamentally infused with resonant energies that introduce probabilistic contingency into being and becoming.⁵ At their most radical, they argue that resonance is 'at the root' of thingness in most basic sense, insofar as resonance would be not only what happens among, to and in things but also constitutive of the very emergence of things. They make this case not only with regard to observable phenomenon ranging from the sub-atomic to the cosmological but also in terms of speculations on the origin of the universe, in which they suggest that the very birth of space, substance and the irreversible 'arrow of time' may be a consequence of instabilities of resonant energy that provoked the big bang.

Yet, if Prigogine and Stengers help us understand the centrality of resonant energy in the universe and its *continuity* with specifically human freedom—it is also true that the resonance between and among humans beings (and among humans, the non-human and fabricated things) is profoundly *different* from that among sub-atomic particles. Inquiry into resonant energy and radical democratic transformation requires that we attend to *both* the continuities and the changes undergone by resonance in various processes of emergence. To gain insight here, it is helpful to

draw on the work of John Holland, a leading theorist of complexity at the Sante Fe Institute.

Holland is much less attentive to resonance than Prigogine and Stegners, yet he is wonderfully insightful about ways in which simple laws enable new relationships and ‘persistent patterns’ that ‘*generate emergent behavior far beyond the individual [unrelated elements] capacities*’.⁶ Each emergent pattern transforms the capacities and possibilities of the materials from which it is made. When emergence happens, in vital respects the ‘same stuff’ does not remain the same—for example, as we shift from sub-atomic to atomic to molecular to organic materialities. Moreover, at new levels of combination in which capacities for adaptation and learning emerge, the ‘*possibilities for emergence [themselves] increase rapidly* as the flexibility of the interactions increases’.⁷ Human capacities amplify and transform such possibilities for emergent recombination, particularly our facility for discerning metaphorical relationships of similarity—and, I argue below, resonance—amidst differences. Although Holland does not explore the possibility, his discussion of our metaphorical capacities and pleasures suggests that new patterns of relationship generate *emergent characteristics* not only in relation to constitutive elements but also in relation to *resonant energies* as well—especially when read in light of Prigogine and Stengers. *With sentient life forms and human beings, resonance acquires distinctive, emergent and particularly receptive potentials.*

Yet, how might we understand specifically human-related resonance? What role might it play in human cognition, reflexivity, ethical–political community and the arts of political organising and transformation? These questions become particularly complex and salient if, as I have suggested, the character of such energy itself both provokes emergent patterns and may itself repeatedly undergo changes in relation to them. If human resonance harbours highly and dynamically receptive potentials (to others, otherness and time), then illuminating these might aid our political imaginations of radical democratic practices that in turn cultivate receptive learning and thus intensify the opening or emergent character of political time. They might, in the words of Ernst Bloch, develop a more potent relation to the *not yet* which is so integral to human flourishing.

Recent developments in the science of mirror neurons illuminate the centrality and distinctiveness of resonance in human being.⁸ The upshot of this work receives crisp articulation from Marco Iacoboni, when he writes of ‘the fundamentally inter-subjective nature of our own brains’: ‘mirror neurons put the self and other back together again. Their neural activity reminds us of the primary intersubjectivity’.⁹ Mirror neurons, as we shall see, enable our emergence into the world of human and more than human relationships, and they are in turn multiplied and transformed in these relations in cycles of ongoing development. We are born, formed, carried along in and transformed by waves of inter-corporeal resonance that precede all recognition. Our perception of the world is born in resonance.

Drawing from empirical evidence, as well as speculating beyond that which is currently available, Iacoboni surmises that our most elemental sense of self, as well as the mirror neurons that facilitate this sense, develops in affective interactive

responses between the bodies of babies and those of adults. We are born with some active mirror neurons, a propensity to imitate and a capacity to further develop mirror neurons: we are born *to* engage the inter-world. Yet, these rudimentary conditions for self and brain development processes are highly interactive: they and we are, thus, also born *in and of* the inter-world of resonant energies. Here is Iacoboni's basic sketch of our capacity to recognise self and other in the process of smiling: 'Baby smiles, the parent smiles in response. Two minutes later the baby smiles, the parent smiles again. Thanks to the imitative behavior of the parent, the baby's brain can associate the motor plan necessary to smile and the sight of the smiling face. Therefore – presto! Mirror neurons for a smiling face are born. The next time the baby sees somebody else's smile, the neural activity associated with the motor plan for smiling is evoked in the baby's brain, *simulating* a smile . . . 'self' and 'other' are inextricably blended in mirror neurons'.¹⁰ As babies, we come to sense the identity of our smiling—and sense the identity of *ourselves* smiling—through the smiles of *others* who are affectively resonating with and responding to our faces smiling! Then we draw on the resonant receptive capacities of mirror neurons born in such interactions further to perceive and understand others in a circular biocultural development in which 'the mirror neuron system is largely shaped by imitative interactions between self and other'.¹¹ Of course, a smile is by no means a simple thing.¹² The key insight here is less that we rely on mirror neurons to interpret and empathise with the faces we perceive, and more that inter-corporeal affective resonance is a condition of the very birth of perception. When we clench a pencil tightly between our teeth, it profoundly disrupts the mimetic facial dance that ceaselessly occurs in fractions of a second between people who are before each other. This disruption, in turn, greatly reduces the efficiency of people's receptive capacity to detect emotional changes in others' facial expressions. In other words, affective 'mimicry precedes and actually helps the recognition'.¹³

In addition to both enabling and developing in relations among human beings, motor mirror neurons play a fundamental (and related) role in disclosing the world of things: things are born in association with resonant possibilities for action. In a manner that would come as no surprise to Merleau-Ponty (and as disclosed by scientists explicitly indebted to him) when we see a cup, 'the cup functions . . . as a *virtual pole of action*, which, given its relational nature, both defines and is defined by the motor pattern that it activates'.¹⁴ We do not see the cup and then consider possibilities for grasping it: the cup emerges for us with the firing of motor neurons and 'appears as graspable in this or that manner'—it appears as energised 'invitations to act'.¹⁵ 'crisscrossed with viable paths and more or less surmountable obstacles'.¹⁶ We haunt the space we see, and we are haunted by it: virtual possibilities for action and possible futures emerge at the intersection where self and perceived world are born. This is one way in which Bloch's claim that possibility is every bit as real as the world of present actuality appears to be profoundly true.

This action schema in which the perception of things originates is simultaneously entangled in resonant relations with the possible actions of others, and this inter-corporeally criss-crossed world is in turn elemental to our disclosure of others'

movements, which we perceive as intentionally related to it. When the other acts, our mirror motor neurons energise nearly simultaneously with those engaged by the other's action (although there are control mechanisms that generally prevent this firing from leading to action in our own body). This resonant recognition is tightly intertwined with the action-charged context in which the movement takes place. Hence, our neurons fire differently depending on the object and context towards which a grasp is directed, and in this way we register the otherwise invisible intentionality of the other. Vision of the same hand movement in different contexts (e.g. in relation to a cup vs. a pencil) energises our neural circuits very differently. All of these observations (and more) lead Vittorio Gallese to theorise what he calls a 'shared manifold' in which actions, contexts and intentions of self and others co-generate the world we experience in a primordial way by means of resonant energetic relationships.¹⁷ Moreover, these resonant relationships and capacities are highly dynamic. Underscoring the way in which resonance alters the quality of resonance itself, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia write that, 'mirror neuron activation changes depending on the specific motor competences of those who are observing specific actions being performed by others' (e.g. dancers' mirror neurons fire differently than do non-dancers when watching a dancer).¹⁸

Monkeys' and humans' neuronal systems both fire in witness to the object-directed movements of others. Yet, human beings' resonant mirror systems have an additional characteristic: our mirror neurons fire in the presence of *intransitive* movements.¹⁹ Noting that human mirror neurons fire at the sight of pantomime, whereas monkeys' usually do not, Iacoboni observes that 'our mirror neuron areas are activated by more abstract actions than are those of monkeys'.²⁰ This would appear to afford humans a greater capacity for co-participating in resonant tracking of more indeterminate actions that are not (yet) anchored in specific goals. This capacity in turn opens possibilities for gestural communication that both control and simultaneously intensify the entangled interactivity of the mirror neuron system sufficient not only to receptively 'read' others' gestures but also to *anticipate* the effect of our gestures on them, modify our gestures accordingly, read others differently in this light, etc.

If we step back and reflect upon this discussion, it becomes apparent that the resonant energies of our mirror neuron system infuse our being with dynamic qualities that harbour richly receptive and transformative potentials. In light of earlier reflections by Prigogine, Stengers and Holland, we could say that with human beings, resonant energies that are an elemental aspect of the universe have acquired particularly receptive, interactive and adaptive powers through which resonance can reflectively modify resonance in ways that demonstrate remarkable capacities to alter systems within and between selves as well as in relation with the world. Our perceptual world emerges as imbued with possibilities for action, and our resonant receptive capacities develop in relation to how our interactions with the world actualise some of these possibilities. Insofar as we have developed capacities for registering movements that are intransitive, abstract and communicatively (hyper)interactive, *the quality of time-as-opening-of-possibility that infuses each context intensifies because movement and action are significantly unbound from the givenness of such contexts in*

ways that afford visceral experiences of indeterminacy, manifold potential relationships and transformative interactions that can act receptively not only within the world but also on the world-disclosive context itself. The more we engage in receptively accented activity and experience, it appears that the resonant capacities of our neuronal system may often undergo development and transformations that further enhance our capacities for resonant receptivity. Thus, our resonant capacities for emergence, in Holland's sense, would appear pregnant with capacities for learning and adapting that rapidly increase what he alludes to as, 'possibilities for emergence [themselves] ... as the flexibility of the interactions increases'.²¹

At least *this* aspect of human being would seem charged with revolutionary receptive potentials in which both our sense for and the actuality of the 'not yet' character of becoming might intensify as we interactively work the horizons of the present with others. Once more, these aspects of our being and becoming suggest that the resonant capacities with which we are born enable relationships that in turn qualitatively shape, transform and may intensify these very capacities.²² Indeed, as Susan Blackmore argues in *The Meme Machine*, human practices that are imitatively learned and transmitted appear to transform our brain's imitative capacities themselves (mirror neuron system), such that these elements of culture depend on a human mind that, in Daniel Dennett's words, 'is itself an artifact created when memes [elements of culture passed on by imitative learning] restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes'.²³ I will return to this point below when I consider the implications of all this for cultivating radical democratic resonance. The key point for now is that *resonance appears to transform resonance*, not only with shifts from level to level (e.g. sub-atomic to atomic to organic) but also within the development of human individuals and cultures over time.

DECEPTIVE RESONANCE AND THE CLOSURES OF POLITICAL AUTISM

Yet, the potential for ethico-political relationships and powers of receptive resonance seems so often dimly manifest—at best. We have already gestured towards a few of the myriad ways in which power can stifle, manage, control, drown out, warp, re-channel, infuse with resentment and invert these energetic potentials. We are by no means primarily 'smiled into becoming'—and even smiles are often far more about expressions of power, embarrassment unease, etc., than Hallmark would have us believe. Here, I am interested in the effects of *deceptive* resonance machines on potentials for more *receptive* resonance, to reflect carefully on possibilities for distinctly radical democratic modes of resonance that might disrupt these machines and engender a democratic *habitus*. By deceptive resonance machines, I mean not to refer to operations of power that would conceal purportedly easy-to-receive transparent truths. Rather, I refer to those practices that tend to shut down, deflect, or diminish resonant relationships among us that enable people to open towards the plurality and complexity of the world. These inter-corporeal openings enable us to

better exercise empirical, ethical and political judgements through which we might better evade, resist and fashion alternatives to strategies aimed at managing our resonant sensuous intelligence for purposes of subjugative control. Radical democratic receptive resonance opens and intensifies ‘acknowledgement’ of others—which is as much a condition for agonistic negotiation as it is a condition for more harmonious processes.²⁴ What it disrupts are deceptive modes by which others are made to disappear from public and private life. ‘Receptive resonance’ and ‘deceptive resonance’ name ideal types, yet are almost always mixed together in the world of human relationships. They should be thought here as predominant tendencies and directions in relationships rather than fully realised achievements.

Human bodies and their potentials for relatively horizontal relationships are frequently overwhelmed by enormous corporate super bodies with superpowers.²⁵ Among these powers are extraordinary capacities to variously undermine, blend with, colonise and transform political, media, cultural and religious institutions in ways that co-construct the resonance machines Connolly analyses. These machines have unprecedented capacities to mold, direct and energise visual and audio perceptual fields with volumes (loudness and quantity) that render many contending visions, voices and relational possibilities relatively inaudible, invisible and/or insignificant. They are remarkably good at scrambling resonances through which other kinds of power and knowledge might form. In addition, contemporary resonance machines mobilise affects, such as fear and hatred, in ways that profoundly disrupt the possibilities for relationships of receptive resonance between members of dominant groups and those who are thus targeted (particularly along the lines of race, class, nation and faith). If a central problem of capitalism is that it constructs selves with very weak capacities for receptive and generous democratic engagement, among the most debilitating effects of such constructions are bodies imbued with dampening characteristics in relation to frequencies of democratic work and action, on the one hand, and amplifying characteristics in relation to frequencies and transmissions from FOX news, right wing demagogues and televangelists.

We might consider these effects to be a kind of *political autism* in which—analogue to autism commonly understood—our vision, capacity for relationship and sense of time-as-infused-with-possibility are greatly debilitated. Recent work suggests that autism is not (as once thought) rooted in a directly cognitive problem understanding others but rather in an ‘inability to ‘resonate’ emotionally with other people’: ‘the most critically impaired faculty is the social affective form of imitation, more than the ‘cognitive form’ of imitation’.²⁶ The meaning of emotional resonance here refers not to emotional agreement or identity but rather to the pre-conscious receptive resonances through which we viscerally register the fluctuating substance of other people’s emotions and active intentions within our own bodies. These affective deficits then lead to profound social-cognitive incapacities for understanding other human beings—which makes sense in light of the research we have discussed indicating that affective resonance is integral to our perception and understanding of others and the world. In this context, it is not surprising that autistic children show a deficit in mirror neurons, although it is still unclear whether this deficit is a root

cause or is itself rooted in some other deficit such as the one pertaining to visual tracking.

As we have seen, mirror neurons *develop* in affectively imbued resonant relationships, hence any breakdown in this cycle (in which mirroring relationships develop mirror neurons, which in turn enhance capacities for mirroring relationships, and so on and so forth) is potentially debilitating. Yet, Iacoboni argues that this socially interactive understanding of mirror neurons and brain development also ‘open[s] up a whole new realm of hope’²⁷ because it suggests that more intentional affective mirroring practices can awaken and enhance cognition and spark favourable cycles of development. Substantiating this insight, experiments show that adults’ active mimicry of autistic children provokes an affectively responsive relationship that quickly improves social cognition and—in a dynamic relation—greater engagement in relational possibilities on the part of the children. I shall return to this point shortly, for it has important implications for radical democracy.

By suggesting that we suffer from *political autism*, I mean to say that our receptive capacities to resonate affectively with others are weakened in ways that greatly impede our social perception, understanding, imagination—our political vision. These deficits are deleteriously entangled with erosions of democratic capacities for empathy, dialogue, judgement, hope born of both cooperative action and respectful agonistic struggles across difference. ‘*Political autism*’ has two fundamental dimensions: the first concerns social *space* and the second concerns *time*.

In terms of social space, we suffer political autism when it comes to affective, perceptual and cognitive interactions with people across geographies of difference. We have significantly weakened propensities for sensing and understanding people as active-affective-intentional beings and this in turn is entangled with weakened capacities to responsively imagine ourselves in political relationship with them. Recent neurological studies suggest that such social and political oblivion across geographies of difference anchors—and then intensifies—itsself in the mirror neuron system’s (in humans and some animals) basic tendency to activate differentially in relation to patterns of ‘social relevance’. Part of this is due to great differentials in mirror system activation based on filtering due to visual discriminations that have an automatic dimension. Thus, when moving, people facing away from us activate our mirror neurons far less than those doing the same movement who are facing us. ‘Signals about the actions of other people are filtered, by modulating visuospatial attention, prior to the information entering the ‘mirror system’ allowing only the actions of the most socially relevant person to pass’.²⁸ Another study indicates that (beyond visual attention differentials) ‘social relations modulate action simulation’: ‘motor activation during action anticipation depends on the social relationship between the actor and the observer formed during the performance of a joint action task. Simulation of another person’s action, as reflected in the activation of motor cortices, gets stronger the more the other is perceived as an interaction partner’.²⁹

Consider, for a moment, how such biological propensities to thus differentiate come into play when vast systems of resonant power come to bear on socio-political investments in groupings and divisions. It is highly probable that our mirror motor

system will fail to activate in the presence of those deemed irrelevant as potential action partners in horizontal socio-political relationships (or those located in positions such that they typically are excluded from such relationships), as well as those located or projected at distances (especially ‘downslope, or facing ‘away’) across political geographies of power. This in turn will likely sediment political patterns of visual, affective and motor disengagement that bear certain similarities with autism.

When these patterns become entrenched, analogous to the deficits in emotional resonance among autistic children, it seems likely that this politically debilitating deficit strikes not only—or most profoundly—at empathy as a capacity to receptively acknowledge another’s *specific* intention and affect, but more basically at our propensities and capacities *to receptively resonate with targeted others as affectively intentional beings in ways that allow us to register and acknowledge them as ‘others’ in the first place*. This dampened resonance, in turn, is cyclically entangled with an extremely dimmed sense for relational possibilities, be they cooperative or agonistic or both. Analogous to autistic children, we visually disclose bodies and actions that are significantly drained of affectively imbued intentions and aspirations. We do not sense them as resonantly intertwined with us in a world of possibilities to be co-created at the—frequently bewildering but not paralysing—intersection of myriad pathways and obstacles. This void is simultaneously filled with resonance machine insinuations conjuring demonic, parasitic, lazy, unintelligent and other negative qualities. At best, we are able to experience a kind of pity at a sense of others’ incapacitated suffering—and perhaps step in with a charitable contribution or a service learning project. Yet, this is a far cry from experiencing others as beings with aspirations imbued with affective intensities and capacities for (inter)action. And so, it is a far cry from a sensibility that is conducive to—and actively creative regarding—possibilities for entering into democratic relationships that might bend the world towards justice and co-create commonwealth. This debilitation likely stems from weak capacities for ‘visual and acoustical tracking’ linked to deceptive resonances of stereotyped projections and a lack of more proximate relational practices through which our more receptive biocultural capacities for resonance might develop.

Hence, to speak of specifically *political* resonance in this way is to indicate relationships of affective resonance that emerge neither as an ‘affective merging’ (in the sense Arendt fears), nor as an emotional relationship that is formed when fundamentally distanced selves ‘world travel’ in ways that emotionally commingle only in the sense that they ask ‘how would I feel where you are?’—while assiduously maintaining a fundamental distance.³⁰ Rather, it is an affective resonance that is a precondition for our politicalness that hinges on receptive disclosures of others as potentially political beings with whom we might struggle and cooperate. *Such resonance is implicated in an affective relationality that is itself a condition for intelligent judgement concerning desirable distinctions and separations, appropriate modes of travelling and so forth.*

This spatial political autism is entwined with a *temporal* political autism. Autistic children have relatively weak capacities for experiencing relationships as temporally open to creative connection, intervention and transformation. Instead, experiences of social time are often disclosed as repetitive, closed and claustrophobic—all of which is sometimes expressed in compulsive movement repetition. In a comparative sense, people who are not autistic are able to take up relationships in ways that are more open, dynamically interactive, charged with auras of possibility and so forth. Temporal *political* autism refers to analogously weakened capacities to sense the more intensely and expansively open, dynamic and infused-with-possibility modes of temporality that tend to be intertwined with receptive democratic practices.

TOWARDS A RADICALLY RECEPTIVE DEMOCRATIC HABITUS

Democratic political relationships are distinct from many others in that they are drawn by, perform and engender a sense of the future as more open to emergent world transformative possibilities through widespread engagement. While a basic characteristic of all (inter)action is that we intend to make a difference in a future moment that would not otherwise occur, most action takes the basic social structures of the world as given frames that endure indefinitely into the future: the temporal character of such frames appears as a closed context within which our actions take place. One which, as Bourdieu puts it, ‘*goes without saying because it comes without saying*’.³¹ From a radical democratic vantage point, such action can appear quite similar to compulsive repetitive motion disorders—tracing the contours of the given over and over again as if they were immutable. Democratic temporality involves a heightened receptive sense of the emergent, transformable, relational character of the future *even in regard to aspects of social structure that are typically considered unalterable*. It is not that democratic time is somehow ‘pure openness’ or ‘pure plasticity’. The closed or opening qualities of time are not dichotomous but rather more matters of degree, intensity and mixture that are greatly affected by many kinds of resonant practices, habits, capacities, knowledge and institutions in relation to which people develop. In situations where receptive democratic engagement and action are widespread, however, the character and limits of the order of things tend to be disclosed as more open and capable of undergoing (sometimes profound) transformations.

Recall the reflections above on how perceptual capacities are essentially born and developed in inter-corporeal relations of affective resonance in relation to bodily expressions, gestures, movements and intentional relations with our surroundings. Resonance creates possibilities for further interaction that in turn enhances resonance. This circular development fosters a perceptually enriched and more open disclosure of a world that is increasingly ‘criss-crossed’ with more—and more textured—resonant possibilities for action. Hence, for example, what appears as an insurmountable wall of impossibilities to those who do not climb rock may be receptively disclosed to a community of practiced climbers as a surface of

dynamically linked possibilities for movement, pleasure and efficacy. Similarly, with practice, we increasingly disclose a checker board as manifold networks of possibility rather than disorienting complexity.

I suggest that radically democratic perception—radical democratic sensibility – is likewise born and developed in *relationships* of public work and political action. In such relational practices, however, the emergent transformative possibilities of the future—the future *as* possibility—are experienced, solicited and cultivated in broader, deeper and more intense ways. Radically democratic practices likely deepen and broaden resonances that disclose the world as more temporally open because democracy involves distinctively *game-transformative games* in which those engaged experience each other—in gesture, expression, movement—questioning, testing, modifying, co-creating, challenging and transforming topographies of power, suffering, outcome and possibility that most people not thus engaged accept as immutable. I venture that such practices ‘criss-cross’ our perceptual world with possibilities for action in a manner that differs from the criss-crossing that happens in relation to action practices that take the basic structure of the world as given. The interactivity of questioning, challenging and changing situations likely engenders resonant perceptions we might think of as ‘*criss-crossed in depth*’. Here, possibilities for action burrow *into* the basic terrains, patterns, interactions, structures and flesh of the political–social world, such that they tend to render its primordial appearance more mutable—more elastic, more malleable, more *possible*—in ways that resonate with our bodies and thus energetically solicit further interrogative and game-transformative interactivity with each other and the world.

Corporeal experiences of publics with whom we are engaged in intense efforts to question, openly imagine different arrangements that those typically accepted as immutable; or experiences of organising viscerally charged powerful networks to advance fundamental alternatives; or experiences of engaging and witnessing great deeds that open horizons hitherto unimaginable; or experiences of solemn remembrance or ecstatic celebration of such performances, achievements and possibilities—all these experiences of intense affective resonance likely cultivate perceptions of ourselves, others, the world and time as pregnant with the ‘not yet’. This type of resonant perception, in turn, likely nurtures and intensifies the development of human capacities we mentioned earlier for mirroring relatively intransitive and abstract movements, gestures and affective intentions in ways which enable and solicit more democratic work and action infused with a sense of receptive possibility, *and* thereby stimulate further affective neurological development in a circular process (as is the case with soccer, tool use, etc.). Through such practices, we would gradually become beings with greater capacities to see, hear and feel the solicitation of ‘not yet’ realised possibilities for world-changing initiative as well as more robust propensities to work our way towards such possibilities. Insofar as such resonant malleable perceptual fields are powerfully intertwined with solicitations of democratic work and action, our politics would not only *appear* more elastic and open to possibility, they would actually *become* more elastic and temporally open to the resonant potency of Bloch’s ‘not yet’. This line of inquiry is what I meant by

radical democratic transformations of resonance itself at the outset of this paper. My gesture towards specifically radical democratic resonance of mirror neurons calls us to this possibility for *enhancing the experience and actuality of possibility as such*. It is a call to cultivate dynamic practices through which receptive democratic resonance enriches and creates a polity more hospitable to receptive democratic resonance: a radically democratic *meme*.

My intention is not to cast the role of mirror neurons here in ways that occlude the vast and important role of more explicit modes of teleological reasoning and inference, for clearly the latter are also fundamental aspects of democratic engagement. Indeed, recent studies indicate that when we are faced with ‘nonstereotypic implausible actions’, we utilise ‘context-sensitive inferential processing’, while, ‘the mirror system [is] more strongly activated for intentionally produced action’ in contexts where the action is more readily plausible.³² Yet, the activities of democratic practice mentioned in the previous paragraph likely tend to do two things in relation to these findings. First, they extend the range of ‘the plausible’, such that democratic intensities of questioning, imagining, exploring, advancing, struggling and co-creation tend to be witnessed with greater affective receptivity—or visceral comprehension. Second, through this extension of the viscerally ‘plausible’ to include activities that proliferate our engagement with the ‘not yet’, our bodily being is in turn likely more receptively drawn to engage (and countenance others engaging) the edges of radically *unusual possibilities*. Inference, teleological reasoning as well as a range of affective responses will all be drawn on to engage these edges in any democracy worth its salt. My wager here is that the mirror resonance associated with practices of democracy can prepare and pre-dispose us to employ these manifold modalities in ways more solicitous than fearful—more drawn by resonant energies of opening and less so by intensities towards closure.

Such experiences and sensibilities are not—and ought not be—homogeneous in focus, scope or intensity within vibrant and sustainable democracies. Rather, they stem from an *ecology* of practices in which the temporal orders of our world are pushed and pulled in different registers and modalities, across diverse sectors, with different effects. Mutually informing and transforming each other, these different kinds of practice contribute to perceptions of the world that are ‘crisscrossed in depth’ with diverse possibilities for collective action. Hence, for example, everyday political engagements in what Harry Boyte insightfully analyses as ‘public work’ (engaging, bending and reorganising our institutions and practices of daily life to co-creatively produce commonwealth) engender relationships, knowledge and capacities that enable people to sense themselves as powerful democratic agents receptive to the mutability of the world.³³ Such work typically has a mix of cooperative and agonistic aspects and takes the textures and limits of the present to be objects of reflection and gradual transformation—sector by sector, site by site. They build deep and broad senses of collective agency. Yet, while such practices are profoundly indebted to and sometimes entwined with more intense modes of radical democratic challenge to the present, public work typically involves modalities that are more modest, slower burning, less contestational and more durable. Although they do not usually take

Foucault as an inspiration, they nonetheless give profound expression to his line about ‘patient labor giving form to our impatience for freedom’.³⁴

Looking from another vantage point in the ecology of democratic practices that engender sensibilities for temporal opening, we see a variety of more intense, interruptive and directly contestational activities against war, inequality, racism, ecocide, anti-immigrant politics, etc. These practices benefit greatly when they draw on spatial-temporal sensibilities of people who have developed in more modest forms of collective action. Yet, intensifying movements, frequently, must invent modalities that importantly exceed the repertoire and sensibilities of those formed through public work, as they engage in actions with higher temperatures, greater risks, more radical disruption and more irruptive relationality. The opening of time requires a dense and variegated matrix of supportive relational sensibilities that enable us to palpate, push, pull, ply and sometimes pound at and pour beyond the edges of the polity. Hence, radical democracy ought to nurture tensional ecologies of practices and associated resonant capacities that engender selves who are receptive to the mutability of the world such that they can supplely move among a variety of agonistic political modalities: rooting in many domains and at many depths, working the limits of the world in diverse ways and intensities, and forming networks of resonances across differences to engender more receptive, multiplicitous and temporally open modes of commonwealth. Such would be the conditions of possibility for an organised, durable, resonant democratic movement.

All this is to say that a radically ‘democratic resonance machine’ requires a sense of resonance that exceeds the terms and connotations of sympathetic or harmonious vibrations of shared common sensibilities and spiritualities—although these are an important part of the mix. Radical democratic resonance is also often more like the resonance of Jews around a table, resonating in many ways through the complex dissonances of heated argument; or the resonance of Jews with Yahweh, contesting not only each other but also sometimes even Yahweh, and sometimes even the existence of Yahweh. The assemblage constitutive of a radically democratic resonance will be significantly enlivened by dissonances within itself as well as those antagonisms between itself and that with which it is in deepest contestation. This internal dissonance is at once a condition of radical democratic vitality and our opening towards the not yet, and at the same time must be recognised and cultivated as an aim of such vitality. The complex character of democratic resonance is that it must be cultivated from the interactions of both sympathetic and discordant vibrations.

This analysis suggests the paradoxical possibility of cultivating a radically democratic *habitus*. Yet Bourdieu, the foremost theorist of this concept, is largely skeptical about such prospects and we need to take his concerns seriously. Bourdieu conceives of *habitus* as ‘the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, [which] produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the *habitus*’. He sees

a degree of flexibility and play, but habitus profoundly delimits this range insofar as the perceptions and dispositions generated by practices in objective conditions tend to be reproductive of the latter. Bourdieu's theory of practice concerns 'the *dialectic of the internalization of the externality and the externalization of internality*, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification'.³⁵ This dialectic proceeds primarily through daily practices of 'em-bodiment' that precede and frame consciousness such that 'the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture . . . are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' . . .'.³⁶ The generative relations of practised habitus are analogous both to the 'art' of producing art as well as to how art itself communicates: in both cases there is 'a *mimesis*' that is profoundly corporeal: 'something which communicates, so to speak, from body to body, i.e. on the hither side of words or concepts, and which pleases (or displeases) without concepts'. Bourdieu's account emphasises how the historical and the arbitrary pass in and out of us, such that doxa sediments so deeply into our unconscious being as to become self-evident and unquestionable.

Of course, Bourdieu not infrequently calls our attention to the fact that habitus is not the only factor that affects practice. Cultural contact, class and generational conflicts, double binds and various crises of disadjustment can throw doxa into question by presenting people with 'competing possible'. In such situations, there is a dislocation of subjective structures of disposition and perception that previously 'fit' with objective conditions, and this dislocation can 'destroy self-evidence practically', thereby opening new spaces for a degree of autonomy for symbolic contestations in which we have a 'margin of freedom' that can alter practices. Indeed, Bourdieu emphasises that he first theorised habitus precisely 'as a way to understand mismatches'. Nevertheless, there is precious little in his writing to suggest that body practices themselves can be structured in ways that tend to generate imaginative critical interrogations, flexibilities, push-back against the limits of the self-evident and radical transformation. These spaces of possibility open only when and because gaps, blips and mismatches—failures of articulation—occur. Bourdieu appears, in a sense, to read such possibilities as too *weightless*: too indebted to paradigms of subjectivism, ahistorical interpretivism and communicative relations that all disembodiment consciousness and thus exaggerate its symbolic freedom. Such paradigms and their associated intellectualist virtues of distance, 'simply transmute into an epistemological choice [and a projection onto the practices one observes] the anthropologist's [or theorist's] objective situation', which is spectatorial, disengaged and so forth.³⁷ These transmutations and projections conceal the intricate and resonant criss-crossing of flesh by practices through which power sediments the perceptions and dispositions required for the reproduction of subjugation. In this

way, these paradigms participate in diminishing the vary phenomena (freedom) they take to be the relatively weightless essence of our being.

I find Bourdieu's concerns and much of his theory of practice compelling. Yet, the work on mirror neurons and resonance discussed above suggests that—to the extent that we cultivate them—our dispositions and capacities for generous perceptions of difference, receptive dialogue, intense questioning, imaginative interpretation, radical challenges to injustice, the co-creation of commonwealth as well as a profound sense of political time as pregnant with possibility are *themselves born in and cultivated by mimetic inter-corporeal practices*, rather than disembodied subjective powers of cognition and autonomous symbolic interpretation. Bourdieu's skepticism towards the possibility of a *radically democratic habitus* appears to be entwined with his undefended assumption regarding a tight association between the qualities associated with it, on the one hand, and a disembodied (inter)subjectivity this is all too often taken as the principle of their origin, on the other. Indeed, this ready acceptance is part of the doxa that still has great sway. 'It goes without saying because it comes without saying', as he says. Yet, just as Bourdieu argues that the subjectivist paradigm is a transmutation of the spectatorial practices and objective conditions of scholars, I suspect that *Bourdieu's own sense* and dismissal of these capacities, as well as associated possibilities for radical democratic habitus, is itself a transmutation of a scholarly posture that (for all we owe to his profound insights) too infrequently engaged in the textured practices of radical democratic body politics. Just as disembodied (inter)subjectivists underplayed the dense embodiment of social power, Bourdieu for analogous reasons (distance from specific body politics) underplays the dense bodily character of radical democratic *practised sensibilities and enlivened possibility*.

This is not to say that enlivened senses of democratic possibility borne of democratic practices can completely free themselves from the powerful sedimentations of embodied subjugative power with which they always seem to be intertwined. Reform and revolution always work in unending tensional relation to problematic sedimented regularities, as Bourdieu illustrates most profoundly. Yet, just as practices and habitus embody and animate subjugative regularities, so too my discussion of the research on the science of mirror neurons suggests they may also embody and animate the public work and action of receptive resonance, through which we democratically tend to each other and the world by means of practices of more reciprocal freedoms. Practised habitus may be generative of both—the point is to enact shifts towards the latter.

This position's indebtedness to and divergence from Bourdieu can be expressed in a different way that sheds additional light. Recall that he theorises habitus as, 'the *durably* installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, [which] produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle' (my emphasis). Even as we seek to cultivate a practised habitus that accents democratic *improvisational* capacities in opposition to subjugative regularities, *both Bourdieu and the neuroscientists* suggest that a certain profound durability is both a condition for and a consequence of flourishing improvisational practices. Improvisational practice in the

best democratic senses relies on and embodies itself in our brains, perceptions, dispositions and capacities for action and reflection. Such sedimented durability, it seems to me, is a *good* thing, for it indicates that where conditions and practices of resonant receptive democracy gain a foothold, humans are likely endowed with a biocultural being that can sediment *democratic* regularities—among which are precisely the regularities of practices and dispositions conducive to innovative action for both uncommon justice and commonwealth. This, in turn suggests that our biocultural make up allows that embodied democracy can become more than ‘fugitive’—or ephemeral, episodic—in Sheldon Wolin’s terms.³⁸ Indeed, our capacities for spontaneity, improvisation, transformation and the like are perhaps most intense and powerful when durable democratic practices and associated dispositions are vital and pervasive aspects of a polity.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, our capacities for fugitive democracy—its evasive, episodic, irruptive, spontaneous qualities—thus, would themselves be indebted to the discernment and invention of significantly stable practices that tend to engender intensities and enthusiasms for democratic innovations. Perhaps, however, this is somewhat less paradoxical than it seems: Merleau-Ponty argued that it is bodily *movement* itself that resolves Zeno’s intellectualist paradox concerning the seeming impossibility of arriving at another point in space given the infinite number of infinitely small spaces we would have to cross to get there. Similarly, the biocultural *developmental movements and journeys* of practised and resonant human bodies appear capable of going the distance—even as the journey is always full of unanticipatable ateleological swerves—towards bridging the paradox of durable improvisational capacities. In a time when increasingly anti-democratic powers do indeed often keep democracy on the run at best, we may do well to keep this thought in mind as part of a moving platform of encouragement and hope in dark times. Democratic hope of the most ambitious character begins at the cellular level, in the electrical firing of resonances between bodies struggling their ways to illuminate paths of freedom.

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NOTES

1. William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity American Style* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 11.
2. *Ibid.*, 40.
3. *Ibid.*, 15.
4. William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 142–47.
5. Ilya Prigogine, *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 71.

6. John Holland, *Emergence: From Chaos to Order* (New York: Basic, 1998), 5.
7. *Ibid.*, 5.
8. Prigogine and Stengers refer to resonant energy as ‘nonlocal’, insofar as it emerges *between* beings. It is thus perhaps emblematic that the discovery of ‘mirror neurons’—the energetic receptors involved in such resonance—likely happened not as a result of the intentionality of a subject-researcher, nor even within that locality we designate as the ‘human’ but rather accidentally in a chance observation of resonance between a macaque monkey and a human. As Vittorio Gallese, a neuroscientist deeply indebted to Merleau-Ponty, reached for something during a break in his research on a brain-wired monkey, he heard the computer unexpectedly register monkey-brain grasping activity even though the monkey was entirely still. (There are other versions of this ‘origin’ story involving other researchers, yet all seem to point towards ‘nonlocal’ interspecies serendipity.) Gradually, Gallese and numerous other scientists working in Giacomo Rizzolatti’s laboratory in Parma were drawn to investigate this seemingly impossible trans-being neurological activity, and from this work eventually a whole field of inquiry emerged for which Rizzolatti received a Nobel Prize many years later, Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The Science of How We Connect with Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008), 10–11.
9. *Ibid.*, 152, 155.
10. *Ibid.*, 133–4.
11. The dynamical interactive biocultural character of this development is further indicated by the growth of ‘new properties’ in monkeys’ mirror neurons as a result of their repeated exposure to humans using tools that the monkeys do not yet use nor comprehend *ibid.*, 42. It is also indicated by the change in mirror neurons that occur in relation to practices, as I discuss below.
12. Carl Zimmer discusses the complexity of smiling and interpretations of smiling in Carl Zimmer, ‘More to a Smile Than Lips and Teeth’, *New York Times*, January 25, 2011. Smiles are not simply about harmony and love: they can be about happy emotion, relations of power, embarrassment and so forth. Chris Huebner brought this article to my attention, which was published the day after I presented a shortened version of this essay at Canadian Mennonite University, and he was pushing me to discuss additional complexities involved in resonance and mirror neurons. On this latter point, see my discussion of (and additional endnote on) political resonance below.
13. Iacoboni, *Mirroring People*, 111.
14. Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain: How Our Minds Share Actions and Emotions*, trans. Frances Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48.
15. *Ibid.*, 50.
16. Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, *La Nature Et La Regle: Ce Qui Fait Que Nous Pensons* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998), 137.
17. Vittorio Gallese, ‘The ‘Shared Manifold’ Hypothesis: From Mirror Neuron to Empathy’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8. In general, Gallese’s writing appears to the most ‘philosophical’ of the group of scientists in Parma and is deeply influenced by Merleau-Ponty (2001), 33–50.
18. Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain*, 137.
19. *Ibid.*, 117.
20. Iacoboni, *Mirroring People*, 26.
21. Holland, *Emergence: From Chaos to Order*, 5.
22. The vitality of these relationships and the way in which we are disposed to enter them are further indicated by the fact that our pleasure is profoundly oriented to this interworld, as is manifest by the great joy babies, children and adults take in imitation games.
23. Iacoboni, *Mirroring People*, 51. Iacoboni is quoting from Daniel Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained*.

24. Although I think Patchen Markell's concept of 'acknowledgment' is more complexly alloyed with 'recognition' than he theorises (and the term and its promise must thus unendingly struggle with 'recognition' to become that to which Markell gestures), I, nevertheless, find his discussion illuminating in and I am indebted to it here, Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
25. Iacoboni, *Mirroring People*; Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Inc: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
26. Iacoboni, *Mirroring People*, 171, 172.
27. *Ibid.*, 157.
28. James M. Kilner, Marchant, Jennifer L., and Fristh, Chris D., 'Modulation of the mirror system by social relevance', *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 1 (2006): 147.
29. Dimitrios Kourtis, Natalie Sebanz, and Gunter Knoblich, 'Favouritism in the Motor System: Social Interaction Modulates Action Simulation', *Biology Letters* 6 (2010): 760.
30. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
31. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167.
32. Roman Liepelt, D. Yves Von Cramon, and Brass Racel, 'How to We Infer Other's Goals from Non-Stereotypic Actions? The Outcome of Context-Sensitive Inferential Processing in Right Inferior Parietal and Posterior Temporal Cotex', *NeuroImage* 43 (2008): 785; Marcel Brass et al., 'Investigating Action Understanding: Inferential Processes Versus Action Simulation', *Current Biology* 17 (2007) 2017–2021.
33. Harry Boyte, *Commonwealth: A Return to Citizen Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Harry Boyte, *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2005).
34. Michel Foucault, *What Is Enlightenment?*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 50.
35. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72.
36. *Ibid.*, 94.
37. *Ibid.*, 1.
38. Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 601–06; Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy", in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).