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Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect. Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014. 202 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-7024-7

In the last ten years, Ben Anderson has developed an extensive work on governmental anticipatory action, focusing on discourses and practices of preparedness and immediate response against threats to security in diverse case studies such as the ‘War on Terror’ discourses, the US Counterinsurgency Doctrine or Civil Contingencies in the UK.¹ A major focus in his work (which he published alongside Peter Adey)² is how governments prepare for emergencies, mobilizing institutions, resources and technologies to plan immediate responses to threatening events such as terrorist attacks.

Along this line of work, he has also emerged as one of the main theorists in what has been called non-representational theory,³ a

¹ Ben Anderson. “Security and the Future: Anticipating the Event of Terror,” *Geoforum* 41 (2010): 227-235; Ben Anderson. “Morale and the Affective Geographies of the ‘War on Terror’,” *Cultural Geographies* 17 (2010): 219-236; Ben Anderson. “Facing the Future Enemy: US Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Pre-Insurgent.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 28 (2011): 216-240; Ben Anderson “Population and Affective Perception: Biopolitics and Anticipatory Action in US Counterinsurgency Doctrine.” *Antipode* 43 (2011): 205-236.

² Peter Adey and Ben Anderson. “Event and Anticipation: UK Civil Contingencies and the Space-Times of Decision.” *Environment and Planning A* 43 (2011): 2878-2899; Ben Anderson and Peter Adey. “Affect and Security: Exercising Emergency in UK Civil Contingencies.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011): 1092-1109; Peter Adey and Ben Anderson. “Anticipating Emergencies: Technologies of Preparedness and the Matter of Security.” *Security Dialogue* 43 (2012): 99-117; Ben Anderson and Peter Adey. “Governing Events and Life: ‘Emergency’ in UK Civil Contingencies.” *Political Geography* 31 (2012): 24-33.

³ Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison, *Taking Place. Non-Representational Theories and Geography*. (London: Ashgate, 2010).

theory developed in human geography that focuses in providing tools to analyze the performative and embodied aspects of experience, going beyond traditional representational approaches. This theory has mobilized post-structuralist philosophy (Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Michel Serres), actor-network theory (Bruno Latour, John Law) and different strains of affect theory (Patricia Clough, Brian Massumi, Melissa Gregg) to approach contemporary issues such as the neoliberal forms of government, the speeding up of social processes and rhythms, or the influence of technology and media on human bodies and minds. In human geography and other social sciences, non-representational theory has provided new perspectives on security apparatuses and how they are shaping everyday life in different contemporary societies.⁴

Encountering Affect is the result of this long line of works on anticipatory action, security and non-representational theory. It focuses on affect theory as a means to provide tools to describe and interpret the work of apparatuses, governmental and otherwise. In this book, Anderson sought to outline “a distinctive analytics of affect orientated to three ways of encountering affect” (p. 4): affect as an object-target; affect as a bodily capacity; and affect as a collective condition.

Anderson builds his arguments throughout seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to the problematic of the book and presents the main question: what is affect? Throughout the five following chapters, Anderson outlines his perspective, introducing a key concept to understand affective life in each of the chapters: apparatuses, versions, the imbrication of affect, structures of feeling, and affective atmospheres. The seventh chapter concludes by discussing how affective life is continually mediated. As characteristic within non-representational theory, Anderson’s text, while highly conceptual, is richly illustrated with descriptions of examples that stem from his research on topics in the field of security studies, such as morale, torture, or emergencies. In each chapter, Anderson does a very good job in demonstrating how theory applies in practice, presenting detailed accounts of situations that can be explained through the provided concepts. In addition, each

⁴ For works other than Anderson’s, see the works of Peter Adey and Nigel Thrift.

chapter builds on the arguments presented previously, building a very cohesive text.

Anderson's concern with affect stems from its centrality in contemporary societies, following the claims of Brian Massumi and Nigel Thrift that to understand and explain social practices in the culture of information and image which characterises late capitalism, one must attune to how bodies are affected by not only the increase of movement and information in everyday life, but also the increase of attempts and techniques to control and manage these rhythms and flows.

Due to this, Anderson begins by demonstrating how affect can be an object-target, i.e. something that can be known and manipulated by some form of power. Anderson draws extensively on two examples to show how apparatuses of powers deploy technological and scientific mechanisms to understand how they can act on affects: the attempts to elevate morale in the US and UK during the Cold War; and the use of torture to induce dependency, debility and dread in prisoners in Guantanamo. Afterward, the author focuses on affect as a bodily capacity, taking into account that bodies are not self-contained, and therefore their capacity to affect or be affected must be considered in relation with other beings and things. He draws upon his own research on hope as a feeling that the body is only capable in connection with something external (e.g. someone else, or the future). Finally, Anderson discusses affect as a collective condition, introducing the concept of affective atmospheres to show that affects are often contagious, and will transmit feelings and moods even without conscious interventions. The exercises of civil contingencies in the UK are taken up as an example of a situation in which affects flow in between bodies without attempts of control, despite occurring within the United Kingdom's security apparatuses.

The theory of affect that Anderson outlines follows Eve Sedgwick's conceptualization of affect as a kind of "free radical" that can be attached to almost anything. Anderson argues that there is no thing as "affect itself" in the real world, and that affects can be constituted by different perceptual, cognitive and emotional phenomena which, in turn, can attach or be attached to different situations and spaces. Despite the initial acknowledgement of this heterogeneous nature of affect, both at

the level of the body and the environment, Anderson's conceptualization of affect through *Encountering Affect* seems to be much too focused on emotions and the body, therefore losing some of the promising features of the affective turn and non-representational theory.

On the one hand, despite recognizing the significant strain of works that show how affects are very often non-conscious and non-intentional, occurring through biological and neurological processes that exceed consciousness (pp. 84-93), Anderson does not incorporate this in his perspective on affect. He justifies this choice by arguing that it is in "how collectives are gathered – the ordering effects of apparatus, encounters and conditions – that affects, feelings and emotions differ" (p. 163). This focus on emotions generated by encounters, however, generates incomplete analyses because, as Lisa Blackman and Margaret Wetherell have argued, unconscious and conscious processes feed each other and the individual's cognitive, emotional and perceptive flows are mutually constituted.⁵ Therefore, Anderson's focus on emotions may actually fail to grasp all the mechanisms through which apparatuses exert influence during encounters with individuals.

On the other hand – surprisingly, given his background as a geographer – Anderson's conception of affect approaches its spatial qualities insufficiently. While he addresses Gernot Böhme's conceptualization of affective atmospheres very well (pp. 137-148), and discusses the "strange materiality" of atmospheres, Anderson seems to ignore a long strain of works that highlight the affective qualities of spaces and landscapes and the objects, sounds and smells that populate them. Instead, Anderson focuses on how affective atmospheres function as a force field on the human body, not exploring the different sensorial and cognitive channels through which specific material assemblages act on the human body. By doing this, Anderson's analysis becomes too centered in the temporary evental nature of situations, ignoring how materialities can continuously exert influence in different spaces, interfering with rhythms, sensations and cognitive processes.

⁵ Lisa Blackman. *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*. (London: Sage, 2012); Margaret Wetherell, "Trends in the turn to affect: a social psychological critique." *Body & Society*, online (2014), <http://bod.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/03/27/1357034X14539020.full.pdf+html>

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Despite these shortcomings, readers will find very inspiring and useful insights in this book. *Encountering Affect* is a significant work for those interested in security studies, especially those with an interest in the relations between security apparatuses and human bodies. Furthermore, *Encountering Affect* will interest those who are engaging with affect theory or non-representational theory that are looking for a detailed and cohesive perspective on affect that provides solid analytic tools. The good equilibrium between theory and practice that the book presents will appeal both to those interested in conceptual advances and empirical knowledge in the field of security studies.