Stuck Together: A Correspondence on Protocols between Scholars and Objects

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Abstract:
Through a correspondence between two scholars, this paper explores and critiques various ways in which scholars working in ethnography and cultural analysis frame and construct their methodology and object of study. Through the close reading of theoretical accounts of methodology in ethnography and cultural analysis, we examine how these accounts construct the relationship between the scholar and her object of study. We read these scholarly practices as protocols, referring to the ways in which accounts of methodology may be understood as rules/guidelines by which scholars in these fields conduct research. *Protocol* etymologically refers to *protos* (first) and *kolla* (glue). Through the figure of the protocol, we delineate how scholars in ethnography and cultural analysis themselves become implicated in giving accounts of their research methodologies.

Keywords: methodology; ethnography; cultural analysis; anthropology; protocol.

Andries: I find it provocative to write a paper together that at the start of writing already seems like a kind of nebulous palimpsest. Something we wrote together many times already without actually writing it down, without it being materialized. In a way, that touches upon the topic we kept coming back to over the last year. I remember we were both interested in what it means to work with a 'methodology' in Cultural Analysis (CA). How, to some degree, it remains intangible. When and where does the method start exactly? When we pick an object? When we frame the object through choosing an approach? You then started getting interested in ethnography for your PhD, and how that methodology relates, or could relate, to the scholarly practices

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you learned in CA. Since ethnography is most closely related to anthropology, I thought the following juxtaposition between CA and anthropology by Mieke Bal could be helpful to start things off:

> The anthropologist's work is more clearly cut out. To do anthropology, you have to choose a field, apply a method, and construct an object (Augé 1999: 1). The same holds for cultural analysis, on condition that a few words are changed to point out that the world of culture is not so easily mapped. The *field* of cultural analysis, is not delimited, because the traditional delimitations must be suspended; by selecting an object, you *question* a field. Nor are its *methods* sitting in a toolbox waiting to be applied; they, too, are part of the exploration. You don't apply one method; you conduct a meeting between several, a meeting in which the object participates, so that, together, object and methods can become a new not firmly delineated field. (2002: 4)

Bal here differentiates anthropology from CA in that in CA, the conceptual construction of method is questioned through setting up a *meeting* between scholar, approach/theoretical framework, and the object. Instead of conceiving this relationship unidirectionally, Bal stresses the importance of the meeting as a space of participation, suggesting that all the elements that are part of the meeting continuously inform one another. I find this juxtaposition too clear-cut in what it seeks to oppose: anthropological work is depicted as formulaic and linear, whereas CA is difficult and more muddled. Both construct an object according to Bal (4), but it seems to me that this would do anthropology injustice in that for anthropology too, there seems to be continuous reciprocity between its 'field', 'method' and 'objects'. Marilyn Strathern wrote a wonderful but difficult book that engages with this thought, entitled *Relations: An Anthropological Account* (2020). She writes that 'Relation is at once one of anthropology's central tools of inquiry and a prime target of anthropological knowledge, while at the same time its theoretical invention as a scaffolding device precipitates its discovery as something that seemingly slips out from under explicit theorizing' (2). Here, it seems that Strathern understands the concept of relation as object, method and theory all at once. Strathern elucidates further:

> The kind of description at which anthropology excels is expository; exposition entails setting forth information in a way that might encompass interpretation, explanation, and other analytical moves, but all with the aim of elucidation. Anthropological notions of analysis and theory, and above all that special trademark, the comparative method, take for granted that this implies showing relations between phenomena. (4)

What I find valuable in comparing Strathern's approach to Bal's, is that for Strathern *exposition* as a descriptive method can be contrasted with that of the *meeting* that Bal has in mind. For both scholars, method, object, and theory interact in a non-linear fashion, where the object can inform the method or theory, rather than the object only being studied *through* methods and theory. Where they seem to differ is in how they explicate the nature of the interactivity between the elements. Exposition entails a sense of display; of showcasing the relevant elements at stake – almost theatrical in its suggestiveness. A meeting, meanwhile, suggests more of a dialogue, a collection of voices that talk with each other, or in Bal's words, participate in the scholarly activity. As a scholar who is currently engaged at the crossroads of both these fields, how do you see the differences between these conceptions of method? What are the similarities and differences you have experienced so far?

Ohad: Thank you Andries for shooting us off to this nebulous start! I also appreciate how our discussion brings us back to the foundations of the discipline we were trained in, namely cultural analysis. Speaking of vagueness and scholarly/disciplinary practice I find it helpful to first point to a few indeterminates that already delineate our discussion. This brings me back to the first days of my research MA degree in CA at the University of Amsterdam where the word 'object' started appearing frequently in lessons. When the word 'object' made itself present in the classroom, all my classmates and myself were puzzled by how a word that until that moment was an 'innocent'/neutral/boring/dry entity in the world (chair as an object for example) could be the focus of scholarly inquiry. For kids, objects are usually toys that your friend or sibling took from you, and you desperately want it back, for teenagers, objects seem to be these days objects of consumerist desire such as a new pair of shoes or a phone. For adults, objects are symbols of status i.e. a car, a house, etc. that we find it important to identify with to maintain our status in the social world we inhabit.

Sherry Turkle in her book *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (2007) gives a beautiful account of the time she spent as a child in her grandparents' apartment. In the grandparents' apartment all the valuable objects of the family such as books, photographs and other souvenirs were stored in the kitchen closet, where, using a kitchen table, she would climb up, to take out some of these objects, with permission, and then put them right back. Turkle further explains that her biological father would be an absent figure in her life since the age of two and searching through the objects in the kitchen closet would become, whether consciously or unconsciously, an undercover investigation for

clues about or traces of her absent father. I bring this here to remind us that, as scholars setting the scene for doing scholarly work with objects, we might not be very different from the kids clinging to their toys, or from Turkle searching for hints about a known unknown we try our whole life to figure out.

Coming back to your question about the crossroads of the fields of CA and anthropology, perhaps this slight detour can already point to the problematics of the appearance of some key terms in these disciplines such as 'object' or 'case study'. Laurent Berlant (2007) following Foucault elaborates on how the 'case study' is used by biopower as a tool to normalize individuals into societal structures or how in other instances (aesthetic form) it takes the form of detective novels or fictional autobiographical accounts to organize the public around a desire for shared knowledges whether 'singular, general or normative' (664). Objects in that sense, whether theoretical objects or everyday objects, might also organize us as scholars around a shared known unknown that through scholarly practice brings us a little bit closer to finding out what each one of us is searching for in our 'kitchen closets'.

And yet, and hopefully not to spoil the party, the mode of inquiry of anthropology or ethnography more specifically has always left me with an uncomfortable feeling or itch you could say. I find it hard to commit fully to a field of scholarly work that feels to be made of an 'us' and 'them' of a sort. Us here stands for 'the knowers' or 'in the know' and them, stands for the unknown or ignorant/savage/other. I am fully aware that the field has crossed a few bridges since the early Malinowski days of ethnography and yet I feel affiliation to Horkheimer and Adorno, who, for example, were skeptical of the possibility of anthropology to offer any account of what the human being can or should be. The only thing (philosophical) anthropology according to media scholar Dennis Johannssen (2013) can do in this regard is a form of 'negative anthropology' that:

> understand[s] the human being as the ensemble of what it is *not* (2)…It deciphers man's inclination towards isolation as nothing more than the child's unconscious internalisation of the prevailing socio-economic order, rehearsed in the sandboxes of public schoolyards (8).

I find this critical theory led starting point to anthropology helpful in mapping out the *ensemble* of 'object', 'field' and 'method' you elaborate upon succinctly. It also points to something that came up in our very first discussions. If I remember correctly, you mentioned that objects in the form of novels, poems or other cultural artifacts are 'stable' entities that allow scholars to come back to them throughout their analysis. Human beings, in that regard, are not stable, always changeable and therefore

hard to study scientifically. For Horkheimer (1974) in the same vein '"a static conception" of man is impossible because of the individual's dependency on its social and cultural circumstances' (4). In other words, if the 'sandboxes of public schoolyards' are the places/fields where scholars try to isolate objects in and from the world, analyze them, compare them or glue them to a meta-conceptual field of a sort then this attempt is rendered futile and can only point to the socio-economic order that put those sandboxes and scholars there in the first place. Can you elaborate on this difference between doing scholarly work with objects and/ or humans? Where do you draw the line between objects and humans/scholars?

Andries: I find your reading of Turkle provocative in thinking about my own preferences to study so-called cultural artifacts instead of people. The almost psychoanalytic hermeneutics you derive from it – studying objects to discover a 'known unknown' – is the kind of gesture that many scholars (myself included) have the knee-jerk reaction to resist, via the argument that there is more at stake here than just my own private interest. But I do believe the crucial word is 'more'. Which is to say, the relevance of the question 'why am I drawn to this object' is not negated via the argument that studying the object can also produce knowledge that is relevant to others. There is something about objects, their aforementioned presupposed stability, that attracts me to study them. I say 'presupposed' because to attribute agency to objects (and consequently, for them to have some kind of 'instability') has become commonplace in both the humanities and social sciences. To come back to CA and the different ways in which this agency can be attributed, I want to return to the different constellations or settings in which this happens. Bal (1999) gives a clear delineation of what an exposition (the term employed by Strathern earlier) between people and objects may look like:

> The inevitable implication of a "first person" who "speaks" or does the showing makes the expositional statement *apo-deictic* in the second sense: opining, opinionated. In terms of the distribution of roles, the situation of exposition has, typically, the following form: The "first person" remains invisible. The "second person," implicitly, has a potential "first person" position as a respondent; his or her response *to* the exposing is the primary and decisive condition *for* the exposing to happen at all. The "third person," silenced by the discursive situation, is at the same time the most important element, the only one *visible*, in the discourse. This visibility, this presence, paradoxically makes it possible to make statements about the object that do not apply to it; the discrepancy between "thing" and "sign" is

> precisely what makes signs necessary and useful. But the discrepancy in the case of exposition is blatant and emphatic, because the presence of a "thing" that recedes before the statement about it brings the discrepancy to the fore. The thing on display comes to stand for something else, the statement about it. It comes to *mean*. The *thing* recedes into invisibility as its *sign* status takes precedence to make the statement. A sign stands for a thing (or idea) in some capacity, for someone. This is a definition of a sign. And "sign" is perhaps the best synonym for performance in the other sense of the word, as it indicates the performing arts. The thing, then, becomes an actor, or singer. (8-9)

Bal delineates the object as a 'third person', as a thing that is simultaneously visibly present and silent (where silence should be understood as a kind of agency), necessary for the setting of the exposition in order to allow for a situation in which the first and second persons can make statements about the object/third person. The agency of the object is thereby conceptualized as that which is constituent in allowing the first and second persons to expose, discuss and respond in the first place, to make statements about it. Although I find this elucidation of agency concerning objects convincing, I disagree with the final anthropomorphization that the quote ends with. This is not a latent humanism on my part, but simply that I am not convinced that the agency attributed through this conception should or would indeed lead to an understanding of the object as an 'actor' or 'singer', evocating roles commonly associated with humans. The value of Bal's delineation of the exposition for our discussion seems to me to mostly lie in how it shows that the line between objects and humans/scholars is not one that is preemptively and deliberately drawn by the scholar (as though it were a kind of proto-agency). Instead, Bal suggests that the line between scholar and object/sign becomes drawn through the nature of the situation itself, in the meeting or exposition of the 'three persons'. While we have used 'human' and 'scholar' largely interchangeably it is here where a valuable difference might be made. Evidently, humans, scholars or not, cannot *not* interact with objects; the exposition that Bal sketches isn't reserved for scholars alone. People enter into discussion with one another because of their surroundings all the time, and humans cannot exist in a vacuum without an environment. But it is the scholar, more specifically, of whom it is required to artificially create this kind of expository space, to delineate and argue for the way in which she will approach the object in question. Many scholars might come across an object like a novel or a film and discuss it with their friends, but it is in the necessity of doing scholarly work itself that the employed framework *needs* to be accounted for. The figure of *drawing the line* might then be

contrasted with that of the necessity to give an account that becomes *stuck* to the scholar by virtue of the nature of scholarly work.

In our earlier conversations, we were drawn to the word *protocol* to describe this process. Incidentally, protocol comes from the Greek *prōtokollon*, a combination of *prōtos* (first) and *kolla* (glue). I think we both enjoyed the suggestion that the original, or first thing that scholars become glued to lies in how they give an account for their methodology and framework. In contemporary usage, protocol has also acquired a new meaning that I think is still relevant. Media scholar Alexander Galloway (2006) writes that 'Protocol is a technological problematic. That is to say, the concept of protocol is an intellectual terrain on which one may contemplate a number of overlapping, sometimes contradictory and often interrelated theoretical problems at play today' (317), and that 'Protocol refers to the technology of organization and control operating in distributed networks. Protocol functions largely without relying on hierarchical, pyramidal or centralized mechanisms; it is flat and smooth; it is universal, flexible and robust' (317). Galloway presents us with a more common understanding of protocol as a technology which is used to organize and control agency within a network. I find his last statement provocative, suggesting that protocols do not rely on hierarchical or centralized mechanisms, but are rather flat and smooth. Ordinarily, we do think of protocols being hierarchical in nature; if they are trespassed there will somehow be consequences. Yet at the same time protocols require an interpretation, and the way they are executed in practice necessarily varies. I think this is especially true for scholars in CA and ethnography, and brings together the etymological reading with the understanding Galloway presents to us. These scholars all need to give account of their methodology and framework both in the various networks in which they operate (other scholars, organizations and institutions), while at the same time are glued to methodology in that there appears to be a necessity for the scholar herself to construct this framework. I'm curious, since you're a scholar trained in CA who now does ethnography, how do you find yourself relating to the various protocols you need to deal with? I am thinking here of the various protocolized aspects of research described above, but also the (kinds of) protocols that you encounter in the organizations in which you do research.

Ohad: Thank you for elaborating further on what draws or in your words 'attracts' you to objects. I continue to find the knee-jerk resistance by scholars surprising especially in the scholarly age of 'limited location and situated knowledge' (583) as Donna Haraway has outlayed convincingly

more than 30 years ago in *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*. I fail to see (perhaps due to my partial perspective…) how 'private interest' is in fact a private matter. This makes me think of how an art practice in contrast to a STEM subject in education systems is regarded as a 'private interest' or hobby rather than a career path. I might be wrong but I am assuming here that if some-'thing' is interesting or of 'interest' to some-one it is because that 'thing' is highly connected in numerous networks of significance and 'interest' to many other human and non-human entities which span beyond a singular autonomous subject. As far as I understand, the call for situated, embodied and localized knowledge is exactly the call to come out of the hiding/closet so to speak, put under the light and expose not just the object under study but also the localized, partial, "ethico-onto-epistemological" (Barad 2007:90) grounds one is speaking on and from and stop playing a scholarly 'hide-and-seek' of sorts.

I believe that the same goes for doing ethnographic work. To refer to my own experience of preparing for doing my first ever 'field work', the choice for the first organization I will be a participant-observer in based on more or less a hunch, or a feeling of comfort (not the same as ease). More specifically, the 'chosen' organization fits well with the fictional or auto-fictional life-narrative I have been busy constructing for the last 10-15 years or so, perhaps since the time I moved to The Netherlands which also resonates with my educational background in psychology, cognitive sciences, art practice and cultural analysis. In that sense you could say that the organization or 'field' chose me or made room for my embodied self slightly more than other potential organizations which is also the same feeling I had when I decided to study cultural analysis – a feeling I locate somewhere between a preference and a necessity.

As for the presupposed stability or instability of objects, since my RMA cultural analysis studies, I am busy developing what I called an *autoimmune methodology* which tries to find different ways of situating the analyst doing cultural analysis which is even less in control of the objects they analyze just as the autoimmune body is less in control of itself and at times resists or attacks itself. In other words, if living with an autoimmune body means being in a constant negotiation between the different disagreeing notions of self in mind and attending to these disagreeing notions of self with tolerance and care, the 'result' of this analysis is contingent and specific, yet ambivalently antithetical even to itself.

As for our interest and discussions about protocols, I find this a generative space to think anew our practices in cultural analysis

and ethnography. As you suggest, a protocol indeed needs interpretation to be activated and in the current conjuncture we see this flood the political landscape in how covid-19 regulations and protocols take on different spins and narratives depending on who is doing the interpretation. As for my own situation and the PhD project I am developing, I am currently confronted by the massive amount of time and energy that goes into getting ethical approvals from privacy officers, data managers and general ethical commissions for all research that involves human subjects since the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules came into force in 2018. This is something that surely I did not even think about when I did cultural analysis of cultural, agri-cultural or medical artifacts. Perhaps this says something about the infancy of the field of privacy and data management that hasn't yet gotten around to treating objects as something that we scholars need ethical approval of to conduct research with them…

The manner in which you mention the need for scholars to (constantly/repetitively/stickingly?) *give an account* of their methodology and framework in the networks they operate in, whilst being glued to the methodologies they use to construct their frameworks reminds me of Judith Butler's words in *Giving An Account Of Oneself* (2001) which perhaps also ties in with the 'private interest' polemic I tried to provoke at the start of this response:

> If we require that someone be able to tell in story form the reasons why his or her life has taken the path it has, that is, to be a coherent autobiographer, it may be that we prefer the seamlessness of the story to something we might tentatively call the truth of the person. (Butler, 2001:34)

I find solace in the notion of the 'seamless' story that Butler points at here which for me translates into a kind of performative nonchalance, rather than a perfectly organized movement or search towards scientific and/or autobiographical 'truths'. I am sure that through your training in cultural analysis and from our previous discussions in our Change Management research group meetings around the topic of anti-management the question of storytelling, narrative and counter-narrative play an important role in your research. Could you elaborate on how the topics we have so far discussed in this dialogue relate to questions of narrative and counter-narrative? Are we able to develop new narratives of acting in the personal and professional worlds we inhabit whilst being stuck to protocols, methodologies, our own bodies?

Andries: I was indeed thinking of Butler's text when I was using the term 'giving an account', although I have a different reading from the one you offer. Butler offers an intricate critique of narrative:

> I would suggest that the structure of address is not a feature of narrative, one of its many and variable attributes, but an interruption of narrative. The moment the story is addressed to someone, it assumes a rhetorical dimension that is not reducible to a narrative function. It presumes that someone, and it seeks to recruit and act upon that someone. Something is being done with language when the account that I give begins: it is invariably interlocutory, ghosted, laden, persuasive, and tactical. It may well seek to communicate a truth, but it can do this, if it can, only by exercising a relational dimension of language. (63)

Butler's suggests that narrative can distort and disrupt the relationality of structures of address, that a structure of address precedes narrative rather than vice versa. As she points out, narrative 'recruits' someone else, often a listener or a reader to be a recipient of that narrative. This is 'persuasive' or 'tactical' in that narrative thereby sets up a particular mode of address (where we have a speaker of the narrative and its recipient). Her critique of narrative continues when she says, 'To hold a person accountable for his or her life in narrative form may even be to require a falsification of that life in order to satisfy the criterion of a certain kind of ethics, one that tends to break with relationality' (63). The ethics that Butler here alludes to is that narratives, as specific accounts of actions and events, have a tendency to organize the giving of the account in a chronological way ('this happened… and then this happened…') that, to her, lead to a kind of falsification of one's life. I do not believe that her interest in falsification (as a matter of ethics) lies solely in the fact that when giving narrative accounts we often, sometimes even only minutely, alter events and actions so that they better fit in with the rest of the story – the seamlessness stories often have as alluded to in your citation. Rather, she is also concerned with the ways in which narrative accounts often *necessitate* the teller to create cohesion or seamlessness in their story. The 'break with relationality' that the narrative account then tends towards lies in all the events, sensibilities and so on that not only remain unsaid within the narrative account (as though a conscious decision to omit on the teller's behalf) but rather that are ignored and never become articulated through narrative at all, since narrative is a particular way of giving an account (one that creates and determines order through sequentially relating actions and events).

I do not think Butler's critique of narrative is the same as a dismissal of narrative outright. But this critique allows us to understand narrative

as a protocol in the way we've been discussing it: as that figure of giving an account that functions as a 'primary glue', as a near automated way of organizing our life in chronological fashion. As such it is not only the dominant way in which accounts of the self are given, but rather often becomes, similar to a scholar's gravitation towards a certain methodology, the only relational structure of address imaginable. Protocols possess a degree, or dimension, of formality that is related to that aspect we may call the protocol's 'givenness'. Protocols can be highly formalized and procedural in nature, written down and documented. They can also be, as Galloway suggested, very informal in nature, non-hierarchical and smooth ('That's just the way we do things around here…'). Next to this spectrum of high to low formalization, protocols need not only be interpreted then, but also *recognized* as protocol (or not). In either case, the protocol's power rests on the fact that, while we may disagree about how we interpret the protocol, the protocol itself is felt, affectively, as a given. However, it is a given only insofar as it is glued to us in this primary way (where they tend to elude us, to evade their recognition *as* protocol as we go about our business).

For example, in your situation of needing to gain ethical approval in order to do research with 'human subjects', you rightly point out that such an ethical approval is not (yet) formally required when working with objects. Yet I'd argue that it would be incorrect to say that working with objects in academic research has no ethical protocols, since in CA one needs to give an account of one's methodology, framework and so on when studying so-called cultural artifacts, which can have strong ethical aspects to it regarding the way objects are treated. As such, the formalization of the protocol is often related to its recognizability as protocol. Yet it does not seem to be the case that, just because a protocol is highly formalized and therefore more easily recognized as one, it is subsequently more easily questioned. It seems plausible to argue that the more formalized a protocol is, the more supporting argumentation for its existence there would be (for example, it is easily explainable why there exist all sorts of ethical commissions to deal with research with 'human subjects'). But because of this, the 'givenness' of the protocol can be strong, its existence self-evident. Protocols that are largely informal, meanwhile, tend to elude critical questioning because their givenness rests precisely on the fact that they are not, or only informally, documented; they have become part and parcel of some kind of interaction. For example, even if the ethical commission might restrict you from gathering personal data, one of your respondents might let it slip that today is their birthday, that they are taking their family out to dinner at their favorite little restaurant… All details which you are

perhaps not allowed to record, but which are themselves part of the protocols of what we know as 'small talk'. It could be argued that what I'm calling 'protocol' here is mere convention, and yet, I'd argue it is 'protocol' in that pervasive etymological sense; something that has become glued to us in a primary way.

Here, I find your project of an autoimmune methodology fruitful to think with. It connects our discussion of methodology with that with which we necessarily do our research, but in our case is also an 'object' of research, the body. You write that 'living with an autoimmune body means being in a constant negotiation between the different disagreeing notions of self in mind and attending to these disagreeing notions of self with tolerance and care'. If I understand correctly, what draws you to this notion of the autoimmune body is that it draws our attention to the ways in which the body is *not* in control of itself, can resist or attack itself even. I am reminded here of a quote by Annemarie Mol and John Law (2004), who write that:

> We all *have* and *are* a body. But there is a way out of this dichotomous twosome. As part of our daily practices, *we also do (our) bodies*. In practice we enact them. If the body we *have* is the one known by pathologists after our death, while the body we *are* is the one we know ourselves by being self-aware, then what about the body we *do*? (45).

The body attacking or resisting itself seems to me to be one way of 'doing' the body in this way, precisely because we are not in control of the ways in which the body resists or attacks itself in ways that lie beyond the domain of control (which I would say is linked to 'having' a body).

What I'm curious about is how this translates to your research practice, and how this relates to protocols. Tending to disagreeing notions of self in mind seems to me different from the body resisting or attacking itself. In a way, the body resisting or attacking itself is a body that is following protocol; it is the response to which it is originally and primarily glued. But I wonder to what extent comparing different notions of self in mind relates to this, since it strikes me as a more cognitive, deliberate exercise. Admittedly, we could argue that the internal conflicts of the self, or the selves, is a holistic protocol of modern subjectivity, the unrelenting need to always (if briefly) reflect on ourselves. Yet I suspect that you are driving at something different.

I want to briefly return to the notions of the 'exposition' and 'meeting' that Strathern and Bal started with in describing the ways in which scholars doing ethnography or CA give an account of their scholarly practice. For Strathern, it is clear that exposition entails a specific configuration of elements (or information), executed by the

scholar, which then require analysis, interpretation, and so on. In this understanding, the scholar is still working with a protocol (it is required that an account of the methodology be given), but Strathern primarily places the responsibility in the execution with the scholar in terms of the constellation of elements presented. Bal, meanwhile, has a different notion of the exposition or the meeting, in which the analyzed object is attributed a high degree of agency (the object elicits conversation, the object speaks back) in its transition from thing to sign, eliciting both the scholar and respondent to then enter into a discussion with it. Neither of these two frameworks take into account the scholar's body in how the exposition or meeting becomes situated, or rather it could be said that they presuppose a certain normative body (certainly not a body that resists or attacks itself).

From what I understand you are not altogether against the notion of the cultural analyst being engaged in giving shape to expositions or meetings, but rather you seem to suggest that the body is necessarily implicated in this meeting, as you write that 'the agential figure of the analyst is destabilized as both object and subject of their analysis'. I am particularly interested in how we should understand the role(s) protocols play in all of this. As I have suggested, it seems that we could say both the organizations and institutions in which we work follow protocols (in how we are to conduct ourselves within them, in how we give accounts of our scholarly practice), but our bodies simultaneously follow protocols of their own. How do you envision this – seemingly turnstile – oscillation between subject and object that you situate the scholar/analyst in? And to what extent are these two terms (subject/object) still exhaustive enough to give an account for the processes you are referring to, especially given the lack of control that you stress on the analyst's part? I'm wondering if we could also approach this from different 'sets' of protocols meeting one another?

Ohad: Thank you Andries for this lucid response. In favor of keeping my response short I will get straight to the 'sticky' parts. I think that throughout our correspondence I somewhat predominantly focused on protocols or the inherent glue between scholar(s) and object(s), while neglecting the simple social factor of the inherent relationality between scholars themselves. Scholarly work, as we are exploring it from our vantage point of being PhD candidates and colleagues ready or getting ready to be held (more) accountable for our scholarly work, demands a certain sense of recognizability in order to stick to others, to influence, to inspire. In that sense there is indeed a hidden or informal protocol as your reference to Galloway suggests. In paraphrasing Butler (2009) for

the matter of our discussion, 'a [scholarly] life has to be intelligible *as a* [scholarly] *life*' (7). In that sense we have to 'conform to certain conceptions of what [scholarly] life is, in order to become recognizable' (7) in the respective fields we do scholarly work in. Perhaps this is the primary glue that also glues us and our bodies to each other, taking in consideration both of our educational backgrounds and everyday occupation as teachers and researchers at the same university. I might not agree or want to admit to it but protocols seen in this way are the simple ritualistic (f)act of rites of passage being put in place separating and sifting potential candidates who are swimming in a kind of primordial gluey soup of methods, influences and affluences and turning them into 'true' members of a given academic society or circle.

I also appreciate how Galloway identifies protocols as a technological problem with 'overlapping, sometimes contradictory and often interrelated theoretical problems at play today' which brings me to your question about the autoimmune methodology I am trying to develop. The certain constraints I talk about when discussing how to narrate, theorize, perform or 'do' my lived experience of being diagnosed with an autoimmune condition also has to do with the fact that, as Anna Poletti (2020) suggests in *Stories of the Self*, 'all lived experience is mediated experience (…) the very categories of 'a life' and 'a self' emerge through mediation and the materiality of media, and respond to the inherent relationality of our being' (4). In this case the quite evident and material medium is the body or my autoimmune body and the way that medium also organizes my thought and praxis as a scholar and researcher. The immediate and mediated experience of my autoimmune body perhaps does introduce a certain overlap of 'sometimes contradictory and often interrelated theoretical problems at play today' or in my own words the need of 'tending to disagreeing notions of self in mind'.

For me the ontological or epistemological theoretical problems Galloway talks about and the disagreeing notions of self are somewhat brought together through the primary mediated experience of *living with* such a body which can 'attack itself'. I am not sure if this initial 'attack' or resistance of the body is following protocol as the same body did not follow this protocol prior to the autoimmune event when my body did start to attack itself or when my autoimmune condition was diagnosed which is seen or metaphorized as *flaring up* in a war-like fashion. Is my body and its protocol prior to the autoimmune event different from the body and its protocol after that event? This is a difficult question to answer also taking into consideration that I already do not experience any symptoms and have fully recovered or healed

from such a 'condition' that is said to be 'chronic'. Rather than understanding 'chronic' here as the normative 'everlasting', I prefer to understand the chronos time frame in this case as *time out of joint* to use Jacques Derrida's (1994) words which somewhat does or performs bodily time differently. Inherent in it is also the an-archic desire or wish to be out of protocols or *with-out* protocols that in their primary stickiness, whether formally or informally, follow us and organize our scholarly practices.

I would love to elaborate further on some more of the wonderful points mentioned in your responses but I am afraid we are, here, as elsewhere, jointly *out of time*. Thank you very much for this very fruitful, thought-provoking and sticky exchange. Happy to be stuck together with you on this one.

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