

THE CAPITOL INVASION

USE TERMS OF REGIME OF VIOLENCE AND AFFECTIVE IDEOLOGY HERE.

Here in Part IV I look at political events in relation to their regimes of violence, which can be overt, as in the current chapter, or implicit, entangled with racism, as will be the case in the following chapter.

Something happened at the Capitol on January 6, 2021: an event, a drama, a haecceity, a case. Many others have interpreted the meaning of the actions – among them, fighting, shitting, praying – so rather than simply repeat their efforts, I want to contextualize the meanings of the event by looking at the “political affordances” of the Capitol building. Think of this as a case study in ecological psychology, a Gibsonism (Gibson 1986; Radman 2012), of political actions, bodily affects and architectural affordances in a politically charged built environment (Harrison 2020).

In looking for the conditions of the event, I’ll first tackle the methodology of case studies, I’ll follow that with a recap of current work on the convergence of enactivism with Gibsonian ecological psychology. I’ll end with a look at how features of the building solicited actions that are ordinarily mundane but were spectacularly out-of-place when performed by those people that day at the Capitol. In particular, I’ll look at how the dais in the Senate Chamber solicited prayers by Jacob Chansley, the “Q Shaman.”¹ Chansley declaimed in the simultaneously grandiose and paranoid “Trumpian ecumenical” style (Jenkins 2021b); the contrast case to his speech is that many prayers in the American civil religion style have been offered in the Senate chamber by the Senate Chaplain. (The classic statement on American civil religion is Bellah 1967.)

The events of January 6

I present a case study of the Capitol invasion. (I have been working with the method of case studies since Protevi 2009). Case studies are an under-used tool in philosophy, as opposed to thought experiments such as brain transplants, brains-in-a-vat, zombies, and others. Case studies do not aim at identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for an essential distinction, as do thought experiments. Instead, case studies reveal the outlines of concrete problems, which are the points of intersection of "multiplicities," a Deleuzian term of art which means a "problematic" field in which linked rates of change create conflicting pressures, so that any one move changes the conditions for future moves and no one solution exhausts the potentials for future creatively different solutions. In other words, Deleuzian problems, the problems of life, cannot be "solved" once and for all; they can only be dealt with. (I present several case studies and develop their philosophical background at some length in Protevi 2009 and 2013.)

The events of January 6 had a sense, “insurrection.” Sense lies at the surface separating the transcendence of words, concepts, and names and the depths of bodies, things, states of affairs. Sense is expressed in propositions and attributed to states of affairs, but it is neither height nor depth, but surface. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze suggests that it was the Stoics who first discovered the dimension of sense. We can attribute the proper name “Capitol insurrection of January 6” to a particular state of affairs, but the insurrection itself is an incorporeal event (or sense) with no other reality than that of the expression of that proposition; what we find in the state of affairs are bodies mixing with one another—flagpoles stabbing flesh, bullets flying through the air, bear spray shot into faces, bodies being trampled—and the insurrection itself is the *effect* or the *result* of this intermingling of bodies.

The insurrectionary events were dramatic in the ordinary sense, but they were also a “dramatization” in Deleuze’s sense, a set of actions or “spatio-temporal dynamisms” that resolved tensions inherent in a problem, or network of intersecting processes. Dramatization is something like, though more dynamic than, a Kantian schematism, which is the rule for producing an object consistent with a concept (Deleuze 1994, 218; Deleuze 2004.) For Deleuze, problems cannot be solved once and for all, though they can be dealt with, or resolved, practically and temporarily in concrete situations by singular actions (Williams 2005, 130). As networks of intersecting processes, problems admit only tweaks to open-ended situations that produce another iteration of the problem. In other words, just as hurricanes only temporarily resolve the problem of global heat transfer, the insurrection was only a temporary resolution to the pressures built up by Trump’s intransigence regarding the normal processes of certifying presidential elections.

Dramatizations can also be seen as immanent haecceities, that is, compositions of the movements and affects of bodies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 260-61). On the different treatments of events in *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which events qua intensive “spatio-temporal dynamisms” are no longer schematism-like dramatizations mediating virtual Ideas and actual objects but are immanent material haecceities, see Toscano 2006, 175-180. In the concept of haecceity, an event is individuated in part by its temporal and spatial coordinates, its being situated. That is, the “block of space-time” that was January-6-at-the-Capitol-building provided some of the dimensions of the event of the insurrection. A haecceity is also defined by its “longitude” – the “speeds and slowness” of its material motions – and by its “latitude” – its set of affects (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 260-1). Following Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari define affection as the change in the material relations defining a body by an encounter with another body, while affect is the change in the power of acting of the affected body due to the affection. Think of a haecceity as the temporary configuration of a kaleidoscope that constantly shifts its aspects as its components act and react on each other, shuffling their affections and affects.

The multiple and interconnected pressures and consequences of open-ended and evolving problematic haecceities can be studied better in case studies than in experiments done in the armchair or even in the lab. There can be synergy here: an apprenticeship in case studies can help us identify key dimensions of situations that can be isolated from their real-world context and tested experimentally, and that very experimental knowledge helps us critique old case studies and produce new ones. For a case study itself involves the choice of what to include: a map that produces a 1-to-1 duplication of the territory, as in the Borges story, is no map at all. Hence my focus on the Q Shaman's prayer being solicited by the Senate Chamber dais.

Political affordances

Ecological psychology gets its inspiration from JJ Gibson's work, in which invariant structures of the "ambient optic array" or field of light in an environment allowed organisms to attend to these structures to guide their perception and action. While there was some tension between ecological psychology and early enactivists (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991, 203), recent work shows a rapprochement of the two orientations (McGann et al 2020). Kevin Ryan and Shaun Gallagher highlight some "resonances": "Orthodox ecological psychologists and enactivists agree that the best explanation for a large share of cognition is non-representational ... instead of focusing solely on factors interior to an agent, a good part of cognition is to be found in the link or coupling between an agent and the external world. This link is fluid, dynamic, and active in a variety of ways (Ryan and Gallagher 2020, 1147).

Enactivism had always conceded that only certain environments allowed world-enactment for certain organisms. The environment had to provide viability; but this requirement provided only loose constraints rather than inciting adaptive optimization. As Varela, Thompson, and Rosch put it,

The constraints of survival and reproduction are far too weak to provide an account of how structures develop and change.... The enormous diversity constantly generated at all levels in the genetic and evolutionary process both shapes and is shaped by the coupling with the environment.... Much of what an organism looks like and is "about" is completely underdetermined by the constraints of survival and reproduction. (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991, 194-96)

For the enactive approach, the action came inside-out as it were, from the side of the world-enacting organism, whose organizational closure allowed for structural coupling. Ecological psychology worked from outside in, specifying invariant structures in the ambient optic array, but it was never naïve realism or objectivism any more than enactivism was naïve subjectivism or constructivism. Affordances are not features of the environment, but are relations between organism and environment. In other words, the ambient optic array is analogous to viability constraints for enactivism: it provides outer

boundaries but under-determines the exact ways in which an organism engages its environment. (For the classic work in setting forth Gibsonian affordances in an approach to cognitive science, see Chemero 2009).

For a closer look at affordances, let us turn to Chemero's work. Chemero offers us a recap of what he calls "Affordances 1.1" in three claims: 1) "affordances are what we perceive; they are the content of experience"; 2) "affordances are relations between what animals can do and features of the environment"; 3) "the perception of affordances is also a relation; it is a relation between an animal and an affordance" (Chemero 2009, 200). We should note that in his discussion of Affordances 1.1, Chemero insists that abilities are not dispositions, which on Chemero's understanding are automatically triggered under the right circumstances (145). Thus, Chemero will claim that abilities are not inherent in animals (as are dispositions), but in animal-environment systems.

Chemero continues with Affordances 2.0, a dynamical theory of affordances. In developing Affordance 2.0, we are directed to start with Affordances 1.1, "then consider the interaction over time between an animal's sensorimotor abilities, and its niche, that is, the set of affordances available to it." Chemero specifies two timescales here. First, we have the developmental time scale, in which an "animal's sensorimotor abilities select its niche -- the animal will become selectively sensitive to information relevant to the things it is able to do." Secondly, we have the behavioral time scale, in which "the animal's sensorimotor abilities manifest themselves in embodied action that causes changes in the layout of available affordances, and these affordances will change the way abilities are exercised in action. . . . Affordances and abilities causally interact in real time and are causally dependent on one another" (Chemero 2009, 150-54).

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, enactivism has developed a branch that moves from a focus on the perceptual-motor linkage in individual organisms to second person participatory sense-making to third person political philosophy of mind. In a similar move, ecological psychology has moved from a focus on perceptual motor links to "social scaffolding," environmental structures that enable or afford characteristic action of properly attuned agents. Hence, Erik Rietveld and Julian Kiverstein emphasize the difference between the landscape and the field of affordances. Affordances in a landscape are potentials that might be taken up, while those in the field are currently in use by a particular organism.

The last step toward the study of the political affordances of the Capitol riot is taken by Maxwell Ramstead and collaborators, who develop the claim that the full range of affordances for humans must include the social-cultural world. When an organism is engaged with features of the environment, these features are "experienced as 'solicitations,' in that they solicit (further) affective appraisal and [hence] act as perceptual and affective prompts for the organism to act on the affordance" (Ramstead, Veissière, and Kirmayer 2016; for a radical enactivist take on the notion of "cultural affordance" see Hutto, Gallagher, Ilundáin-Agurruza, and Hipólito 2020). We will

emphasize this notion of solicitation in our analysis of the Q Shaman's prayer on the dais of the Senate Chamber.

This insistence on affordances soliciting politically meaningful action resonates with the manifesto of the "Skilled Intentionality Framework," in which the authors insist that "affordances always have to be understood in the context of an ecological niche that implies the form of life of a certain kind of animal (Rietveld, Denys, and Van Westen 2018). In something of an existence proof for what we will attempt below, Simon Harrison (2020) provides a case study that links a social affordances analysis with an ethnographic study of consumers in a cosmetics pop-up store in Hong Kong, revealing "the affective and emotional experience of perceiving relevant affordances in the environment." We will follow Ramstead et al (2018) in looking to the political affordances of the Senate Chamber, as well follow Harrison (2020) in looking at the emotional attunement of the participants as their actions unfold.

Political ontogenesis of subjects

We are almost there, but a final discussion of difference and development is in order to complete our prolegomenon. Affordances appeal to subjects, but not all subjects are the same. In my own work paving the way for a political philosophy of mind, I've always striven to disabuse us of the customary focus on the already-established characteristics of rational male adult subjects by focusing on the interplay of the supra-subjective, adjunct-subjective, and sub-subjective, following the slogan "above, below and alongside the subject" (for more detail, see the Introduction to this book as well as Protevi 2009 and 2013). We go above the subject to the geopolitical, below the subject to the neuro-physiological, and alongside the subject to the social-technical. But we have to do this using three temporal scales, the evolutionary, the developmental, and the behavioral, as well as three compositional scales for "bodies politic": the civic, the somatic, and the "evental." In doing so, we see that the patterns, triggers, and thresholds of affective cognitive dispositions are produced via trans-generational subjectification practices that are the intensive individuation processes of a social-neural-somatic multiplicity. Thus, the social and the somatic are not synchronic opposites, but are linked in a spiraling diachronic interweaving at three temporal scales, the long-term phylogenetic, the mid-term ontogenetic, and the short-term behavioral.

The relation of the production of the large-scale patterns of consciousness (the development and triggering of affective cognitive traits) by subjectification practices are themselves analyzable in terms of political economy. The question here is the "granularity problem": what is the level of specification of analysis that ecological psychology and enactivism should adopt when investigating concrete cases of political events? The question is, how can you avoid simply saying something about a generic human subject's capacity for interacting with other people and the accessing social affordances of built environments? Conversely, how far down can you go along the path of differentiation -- the ontogenetic and behavioral scale -- yet avoid being bogged down in the idiosyncrasies of singular situations?

To have a political analysis of the subjectification processes that track the distribution of affective cognitive traits in a population needed for meshing with social affordances you need the right granularity, neither an unmarked generality nor a swarm of idiosyncratic singulars. In other words, there is no politics where each person has his or her own differentiated category, their own life story and "point of view." On the other hand, there is no politics either with the unmarked generic "subject" of too much cognitive science, which only limns the least differentiated dimensions of humanity, technology, and the built environment.

There are three aspects to consider to get the right granularity -- between idiosyncrasy and unmarked generality -- for discussions of social affordances: (1) synchronic variation, countering the tendency to think a generic "subjectivity" or "the" subject; (2) diachronic development, focusing on the embodied affective-cognitive development of a population of subjects in a field of multiple, overlapping, and resonating or clashing subjectification practices, countering the tendency to focus on adult subjectivity; (3) properly granular political categorization, thematizing politically important categories such as race and gender lying between generic human subjectivity and idiosyncratic personality or sub-personality.

Lacking a population perspective on the development of affective cognition capacities, we risk impoverishing a notion of "cultural scaffolding" by relegating the cultural to a storehouse of heuristic aids for an abstract problem-solver who just happens to be endowed with certain affective cognition capacities that enable it to interact successfully with the people and cultural resources to which it just happens to have access. Positing an abstract or generic subject neglects the way in which culture is the very process of the construction of bio-social subjects, so that access to certain cultural resources and to the training necessary to acquire certain forms of affective cognitive capacities is distributed along lines analyzable by political categories. This is not simply technical training for cognitive capacities in a restricted sense, but also the training necessary for acquiring positive and empowering emotional patterns, thresholds, and triggers.

But this foregoing treatment is still too simple. It does no good to replace a single generic human subject with two abstractions, "the" feminized and "the" masculinized subject. We need to think in terms of a range of gendering practices that are distributed in a society at various sites (family, school, church, media, playground, sports field . . .) with variable goals, intensities, and efficacies. These multiply situated gendering practices resonate or clash with each other and with myriad other practices (racializing, "class-ing," "religionizing," "nationalizing," "neighborhoodizing" ["that's the way we roll"] . . .). We have to think a complex virtual field of these differential practices; in dynamic systems terms, we could think a complex phase space for the production of bio-social subjects -- or in my terminology "bodies politic" -- with shifting attractor layouts as the subjectification practices clash or resonate with each other. But even this is still too simple, as these gendering practices also enter into complex feedback

relations with the singular body makeup of the people involved, in distinguishing fully differentiated multiplicities from singular individuation processes.

Prayer in the Senate chamber

When I say I'm looking at political affordances of the Capitol building as conditions of the insurrection, I don't want to avoid hermeneutic analyses altogether. Rather, I just want to see them anchored to the concrete experience of embodied and affective subjects, past and present. Some very useful readings of the Capitol insurrection, in a genre we might call Critical Race Architecture, in fact highlight the contradiction of a building that purports to represent democratic ideals of freedom and equality having been built by enslaved persons. Carolina Miranda puts it bluntly: "In the Capitol building, idealized narratives of liberty and democracy rest on brute force" (Miranda 2021; see also Davidson 2021). Peter Minosh, in an essay written before the insurrection, puts it this way:

The neoclassical design of the Capitol has been taken to represent the classical virtues of an American enlightenment. I argue that the proper subjects represented in this monument to representational democracy are not the citizens of the Republic, but the enslaved people excluded from political and architectural representation. By examining Thornton's preliminary designs for the Capitol in consideration of the greater trajectory of his philosophical projects and political activities, we can discern in this neoclassical edifice the terms of an irresolvable crisis between the enlightened Republic and its foundation within a regime of chattel slavery. (Minosh 2020)

A case study must, however, narrow its focus, even as it keeps the big picture claims that the building itself embodies a conflict of democratic symbolism and the labor of enslaved persons in the background. We will focus on the Q Shaman prayer in the Senate Chamber, which, given the civil religion aspects of the chamber, was both in place and out of place.² Let's begin with a brief description of the of Senate Chamber (Architect of the Capitol n.d.). The chamber is encircled by a balcony serving as the viewer's gallery. The entrance doors to the chamber open under the balcony onto a gently sloping floor lined with the Senator's desks in a semi-circular pattern. In the well of the chamber, we find first the clerk's desk, then, a small level up sits a long marble counter, and finally, another small level up we see Senate President's desk, flanked by the US flag and the US Senate flag, serving as the focal point for the room.

I'll now use the Luke Mogelson video from *The New Yorker* to document a small subset of the events, culminating in the Q Shaman's prayer (Mogelson and Wolansky 2021). We first see Jacob Chansley, the Q Shaman, shouting and chanting from the balcony. It's something of a commonplace of political architectural analysis to note the penchant of authoritarians to give balcony addresses, and in fact Trump's balcony appearance after

being released from the hospital for Covid in October 2020 sparked dozens of commentaries noting just that (Ben-Ghiat 2021). So, we can speculate that for Chansley, the balcony solicited a powerful urge to vocalize, not simply from being higher than others (but not neglecting that physical relation), but also with the resonances of balcony speaking by strongmen. The chants and howls were, however, more of a California-style Men's Rights, Iron John, back-to-nature performance, befitting Chansley's wild-man look, his bare torso and tattooed body (prominent among the signs is Thor's hammer), and by now infamous horned helmet with cascading fur pieces framing his face.

We then see Chansley triumphantly striding down the aisle, face jubilant, chest expansive, feeling the power of strides aided by the slope, shouting "Fucking A, man!" while carrying his bullhorn and spear wrapped with the American flag. He greets people already in chamber, congratulating them, paternalistically, on their service. Shortly thereafter, a police officer enters the frame and asks if an injured man needs help. Having established his bona fides as a public servant, he asks if they could leave. The injured insurrectionist says, "I been making sure they ain't disrespecting the place." The policeman says, "just want you to know, this is like *the* sacreddest place." This exchange definitively primes the participants to recall the civil religion aspect of the Capitol as a "temple of democracy," further charging the affective space of the chamber for Chansley.

Chansley has soon mounted to the President's desk, where he puts his bullhorn down and takes off his backpack; he then sits in the President's chair. The police officer asks him to move, but Chansley replies that he's sitting there "'cause Mike Pence is a fucking traitor". Sitting in a chair is the classic example of meshing action with an affordance, but this is not just "a" chair, for Chansley is taking possession of a chair whose occupant has forfeited the right to control it.

The police officer asks the people if they could leave. There is some agreement, but Chansley demurs, staying around to write a note, appropriating paper from the desk. The policeman objects to this, saying "I feel you're pushing the line." The injured man further primes the scene as one resonant with civil religion: "c'mon man. This is our Capitol, let's be respectful. There's 4 million people coming in... we love you guys, we love the cops." We now see a shot of Chansley's note: "It's only a matter of time. Justice is coming!" So, we've moved from the injured man's rootedness in the day (albeit rather hilariously exaggerated) to Chansley's apocalyptic channeling of what he thinks will be justice.

There are now four men at the dais, behind the President's desk. One raises his fist to the heavens in a power salute, arm at 90 degrees, and yells out "Jesus Christ, we invoke your name, amen!" Chansley takes over, suggesting to the participants, "let's say a prayer in this sacred space" (Jenkins 2021a). As Chansley begins, the man to his left doffs his MAGA hat as sign of respect. All the men at the dais follow suit, further

cementing the dais as an altar and the men as responding to its solicitation as a place of prayer. During the prayer, Chansley's companions offer rhythmic gestures of affirmation and supplication (arms extended, palms up, then clenching in triumphant fists). Chansley's prayer finishes with a triumphant chorus of "amen!"

I will leave a full semantic analysis of the prayer to others,³ but I did want to at least mention the way Chansley evokes the ambience of the chamber: "Thank you divine, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent creator God for filling this chamber with your white light and love, your white light of harmony." Is it going too far, or not far enough, to note the possible racialized overtones of a "white light" as part of "Trumpian ecumenicalism"? (Jenkins 2021b).

There's much more to be said about Chansley in terms of what we can call his being swept up into a "stochastic affective ideology" that brought him to the place where the dais could solicit his prayer. For instance, we can't deal with just Chansley's ideas without tackling his emotional investments; in doing so, we follow Deleuze and Guattari's break from Wilhelm Reich on the question of direct libidinal investment of the social field, a break which requires a notion of "affective ideology" (Chapter 5). As for stochastic factors, we can't set up impossible demands for exact times in which Chansley imbibed one or another idea from Trump, Q Anon, and so on. Rather we can look to the way in which increased political stresses will reveal those in a population with lowered thresholds for action. In this way, we can see Chansley as a "socially invaded mind" as opposed to the "socially extended mind" of 4EA cognition (Protevi 2013, Chapter 5).

There's also much more to be said about other actions that day at the Capitol. What was the intersection of emotional investment and political affordance that led some to heed the call to climb walls, storm doors, and fight cops? (Collins 2021). Let us also ask ourselves if there was something about the cold, hard, shiny marble floors that called for shitting, for defilement? The *Daily News* writes, "They took a dump on American democracy — literally. Some of the unhinged pro-Trump rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday defecated inside the historic building and 'tracked' their feces in several hallways, the *Daily News* has learned" (Sommerfeldt 2021). It's unclear whether the insurrectionists shat on the hallways on purpose or if it was just a toilet overflow that was tracked about unintentionally. What is clear is that media attention assumed it was intentional due to its symbolic shock value. But should it have been shocking? If you only get cleanliness by abjecting the accursed share, then shit defiling a clean Capitol could only be shocking to those whose good conscience is achieved by repressing the memory of the enslaved laborers who built the Capitol. Perhaps we should let that shit remind us that the Capitol was already defiled, from the start, by its very construction.⁴

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Capitol

NOTES

¹ For a portrait of Chansley's affective ideology, a motley libidinal politics, consisting in a mélange of Trump, Q Anon, and appropriations of Native American and Nordic themes, see Kunkle 2021.

² From the website for the Senate Chaplain: "Throughout the years, the United States Senate has honored the historic separation of Church and State, but not the separation of God and State. The first Senate, meeting in New York City on April 25, 1789, elected the Right Reverend Samuel Provost, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, as its first chaplain. Since then, all sessions of the Senate have been opened with prayer, strongly affirming the Senate's faith in God as Sovereign Lord of our Nation. The role of the chaplain as spiritual advisor and counselor has expanded over the years from a part-time position to a full-time job as one of the officers of the Senate. The Office of the Chaplain is nonpartisan, nonpolitical, and nonsectarian" (Office of the Chaplain, n.d.)

³ One interesting task would be to compare Chansley's prayer with the one offered by the current Senate Chaplain at the conclusion of joint session ending on January 7, from the lectern in the House Chamber: "Lord of our lives and sovereign of our beloved nation, we deplore the desecration of the United States Capitol building, the shedding of innocent blood, the loss of life, and the quagmire of dysfunction that threaten our democracy. These tragedies have reminded us that words matter and that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We have been warned that eternal vigilance continues to be freedom's price. Lord, you have helped us remember that we need to see in each other a common humanity that reflects your image. You have strengthened our resolve to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies domestic as well as foreign. Use us to bring healing and unity to our hurting and divided nation and world. Thank you for what you have blessed our lawmakers to accomplish in spite of threats to liberty. Bless and keep us. Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to do your will and guide our feet on the path of peace. And God bless America. We pray in your sovereign name, Amen" (Adventist Review 2021).

⁴ On abjection and architecture, see Akahane-Bryen and Smith 2019. For a standard social science look at defecation as sign of disrespect, see Friedman 1968. For a classic in the politics of shit, see Laporte 2002.