Late in his academic career, Ralph Turner, an eminent social psychologist in UCLA’s sociology department, still had a vivid awareness of his first teaching experience some fifty years earlier. Turner had meticulously worked up lecture notes for all of the class sessions. His initial lecture ran without hitch or tangential indulgence. Pleased with the flow of the session, at the end he consulted his notes. He had gone through all his preparations for the course.

On hearing Turner’s story, Ted Sarbin, an eminent social psychologist whose career as an academic psychologist stretched over about the same span at UC Berkeley and then at UC Santa Cruz, recalled his first teaching experience. He had prepared lecture notes in a stack of 3 x 5 cards, which he turned as the hour progressed. Coming to the end of the deck he checked on the time: about 15 minutes of the 50 minute hour had elapsed. What to do? Trying to comfort himself with the psychologists’ understanding that repetition improves memory, he flipped the deck. After another 15 minutes, he flipped the deck again.

Lecturers’ tactics for fitting preparation to the teaching hour will differ, and when they realize their preparation was inadequate, so will their emotions. However it is handled, the challenge is emotionally provocative, which is to say that professional horror stories from the biographies of perhaps the two most famous “role theorists” are useful for focusing on an existential vulnerability in social life. With experience novice teachers usually develop resources for minimizing the risks of fitting their anticipated performances of self to the immaterial yet obdurate frames of scheduled class times, but living life cannot be completely insured by preparations, no matter how fully rehearsals may be dressed. From the self-protection that the teacher can seek in advance, there is always a deductible demanded in the historically unique, socially situated durations we call “real time.” The self as actualized is always more and less than its anticipated expressions. However imaginative in origin, symbolic in interaction, and ephemeral in its historical traces, the performed self always congeals in something palpable.

The teacher may seek insurance by reading the lecture. Script details may include timed pauses, delimited segments for questioning and answering, even joking asides. Still there are risks, including losing one’s place and train of thought when looking up to indicate to the audience that those present in the immediate situation are being given respect.

Lecturing implies being pre-organized. In the context of the stratified power relations in a class, pauses which in a conversation would be provocations for a correspondent to take a turn in speaking quickly stand out as awkward. But if lecturing implies a degree of preparation that is inconsistent with the tenor of spontaneous monologue or conversation, it also implies being alive to the instant situation. If he or she never looks up from notes, the lecturer runs the risks of a prosody that suggests that nothing more than reading is occurring. For lecturing to hold onto its raison d’être, something more responsive to the moment is usually required. If the lecturer is not doing something to fit preparation to the
immediate situation, why incur the trouble of assembling students in a common, designated place? Why not distribute the text “for free” in digital form, transferring the costs of lighting, heating, security, roof maintenance and fire insurance to the dispersed, individual accounts that students or someone else already is paying?

As illustrated by the opening horror stories, the lecturer’s dilemma is rooted in matters of timing, more specifically in the temporal challenges of structuring action into coherent sequences. Turner and Sarbin both produced recognizable lectures but the former did not break his course preparation into sufficiently differentiated units while the latter made his teaching units too small to fit the length of even a single class. Lecturing is a specialized kind of work but its requirements of timing narrative sequence may be understood as special forms of a challenge that is universal in social life.

Putting aside personality and strategy differences, the sources of emotional provocation as experienced by lecturers are continuous with emotional provocations that arise generally out of the narrative structuring of social life. If we examine how, in the most general sense, social life is constituted by narrative structuring, we can see how, through practice, style acknowledges and with practice eclipses emotions. Over time, lecturers’ commonly develop an occupational aesthetic with which they tame the insistent explosive potential of their defining work situation.

Feelings are distinctively three dimensional experiences. In order to find the sources of emotions in social life, we are advised to look for matters of texture, or how the practice of behavior becomes sensible to the practitioner. Our feelings are ways that our corporeality comes into our awareness in two directions, as an awareness of internal depths and recesses and as a sensibility guiding and attending our reach into the world. The foundational question, then, is how does behavior, what we do in projecting ourselves into the world, become self-sensible?

The three dimensionality of the subject’s experience of social life is founded in the very processes through which action is made social. At a first level, action becomes social by becoming socially situated. This occurs in the narrative sequencing that makes behavior meaningful as a recognizable kind of doing. Structuring experience into a familiar form of conduct does not require that any other person be present. To appreciate how solo action becomes social, and in becoming social becomes sensible, we need to drop temporarily the focus on lecturing, which implies a co-present interactive relationship with others, and turn to an example which does not. A simple example like putting on one’s own shoes will do.

When a person acts in the responsive co-presence of another, his/her action becomes social in a compounded way. The narrative that the person uses to structure action must itself be narrated. To see the emergence of this second way in which action becomes palpable to the actor, we can look at how one person puts on another’s shoes.

For a full appreciation of how behavior takes on corporeal resonance as it becomes social, a third inquiry is required. At a first level, which is observable when acting alone, the person feels the rhythms, flow and hitches in the narrative structure through which he/she makes action socially meaningful. When acting with another, a second level comes into play: each feels the push and pull by
which two versions of a project become the collaborative production of single executed narrative. But something more also is always involved. The person knows that his/her life transcends any situation he or she may be in. Masking various transcendent meanings is also a required part of acting collaboratively with another. Emotions arise to register situation-transcending meanings that must not be displayed to the other.

These three processes create an ontogenetic dialectic in which action becomes socially meaningful through private practices, then becomes social in a publicly shared way, then again becomes privately meaningful in ways others cannot appreciate. Somewhere along the range of this three dimensional composition of social life, all feelings and emotions take shape. Emotions and feelings are ways of grasping, appreciating and corporeally reflecting on the very structuring of life into social forms. Lecturers’ emotions emerge as they realize aspects of the in-class situated structuring of their behavior that the audience cannot know. And over time, lecturers’ transform the sensate substrata of their professional lives—we might say, depending on the subject’s mood and the analyst’s political perspective, that lecturers control, tame, discipline, manage, or civilize their emotions—by developing aesthetics for structuring their working behavior at each of these three levels.

1 Putting on Shoes: Evocative Aspects of the Social Situation

With few exceptions, from the time an adult in the contemporary West rises to the time for bedding down to sleep, he or she is in an unbroken continuum of situations. The situation, a subjectively understood, narratively-framed sequencing of action, is the basic unit, the most universal, ubiquitous and simplest structure of social life. Situations are sometimes encountered, as occurs when a student enters a class in progress, or they may be constructed in solitary phases of living, as when a lecturer prepares class notes. Whether collaboratively or individually shaped, situated action makes up the stuff of social life.

At any moment in a person’s life, multiple corporeal processes are always in motion. Some are made behavior by being producing as narratively meaningful. Each situation is a strip of sequential actions, coherent moment to moment as what the actor him or herself understands to be narratively interrelated behaviors. Action is narratively meaningful when in its execution it references former and subsequent behavior as occurring within a course of terminable conduct, which it may do at any given moment by heralding, initiating, continuing or advancing; pausing in, departing from, or abandoning; restarting, reviewing or finishing some kind of colloquially recognizable doing.

As a rough test of the claim that in our wide-awake life we are almost always in one or another situation, we may ask about any moment of our daily life, What am I doing? There is usually a gerund-like answer that will fit the moment. Each moment’s doing is shaped with reference to an overarching course that is substantively known. Each “ing” is at least a mini narrative. The narrative structuring usually goes on without announcement, but should anyone ask with even prosody (versus in the complaint forms, “What are you doing?” or “What are you doing?”), the question may be taken literally, in which it will seem natural to answer with phrases like “putting on my shoes.”
One reason for working with the example of putting on shoes is that for most readers, putting on shoes will come early in the day’s situations. What comes before is a transition from repose to motility and then often a trip to the bathroom for eliminations and ablutions, the latter being routines that are culturally recognized, elaborately commented upon strips of activity that are often learned through emotionally charged, close supervision. That urination, defecation, bathing or “washing up” are so obviously socially structured for the individual makes them too robust as examples for focusing on the prior question of how, by shaping behavior according to situated narratives, the individual structures social character into his or her life. Putting on shoes is a more innocent, stripped down, usefully unimportant example. And unlike “getting up” from a sleeping position and bodily eliminations, putting on shoes is a social construction, not a physical imperative.

We can briefly note several ways that sequential narrative meaning is used by the person to constitute the situation of putting on shoes. There is the matter of recipe and the effect of dramatic result. Putting on shoes requires the ordering of constituent actions. For example in most cases the shoe should be put on the foot before laces are tied. Multiple, sequenced actions are required to get to the end of the process, at which point an effect is achieved, a qualitative change on the order of an ontological transformation. With shoes on, a new being emerges, a life form with a bundle of capacities for simultaneously probing and getting energy from the world. If not quite winged sandals, shoes gird the wearer with a new competency to carry on the journey ahead, altering traction, often enhancing endurance. Of course not always; shoes may make balance exceptionally precarious and rapid travel dangerous, in which case their use means acquiring, and incidentally demonstrating, a certain talent. In either case shoes affect the physics of the body’s movements through space, changing the muscles engaged in transportation and creating a new posture, in the process revealing self, in the form of capacities, to self, even as the world is revealed in different angles and rates of passing landscape.

We are looking for the grounding of feeling in behavior. The routine of putting on shoes is marked by corporeal changes at its onset and at its terminal boundaries, and also in the shaping of its constituent stages as they are produced within the social logic of accomplishing the project. Feelings at base are not after thought but part of the process of structuring personal life into social form.

This is not to say that all situations have recipes leading to transformations that change one’s practical competency for being in the world. Making the bed, for example, is a ritualization of the ending of sleep, a sentimental resource for starting the day but not a preparation that in some other, practical sense will facilitate later actions. Indeed, making the bed routinely will require additional work, the work of unmaking the bed, before the bed is again treated as practically useful for sleep. This practice, a making that requires an unmaking, is doubly ritualistic. It guides people to move on to the next situations, whether in the world of wide-awake practical action or into a drowsier routine, in the way that prayers do; it allies one with patterns and presumed forces of order.

So the recipe metaphor, which promises a corporeally significant payoff, is too strong for much of social life, which has more meandering and less transformative results than recipes imply. But a core idea in recipes of action, that of progressing toward an ending, captures a defining feature of all situated action. Whenever one is engaged in a kind of doing, one operates in anticipation of completion. Pre-
visioning an ending to the doing at hand is not promise, much less reliable commitment. But it is a meaningful foundation for structuring each moment’s behavior.

The progression through the behavioral recipes that constitute social life can be delayed or aborted by any number of tangential involvements and emergent contingencies. Fascinations may be discovered in matters intrinsic to a given phase. Progressions toward completing situated projects may be put in pause through meditations, reveries, intoxications, sleep or other losses of consciousness that may take the structuring of experience out of the bounds of situated social life. A phone call can get you out of the shower before you have finished that routine; still, the phone’s ring is answered with an understanding that lifting the receiver is not embarking on a rest-of-life engagement. All doings foreshadow endings in the minimal respect of anticipating eventual, and event-occasioned, moments of moving on to other situations, even if the mode and timing of departure is as yet unspecified, and even if departure when it comes is not in fact marked as a departure.

An anticipation of moving on, literally of moving the body in space, is the basis of the temporal foundations of situations as units of social life. The bodily changes in moving on create the dimly sensed but most universal feeling sub-structure of social life, the tenor that underlies what Schutz referred to as wide awake everyday life. Relative immobility of the body, dialectically related to an absence of traction and friction in moving over space mentally, distinguishes the various “fantasy” worlds of reveries, witnessing in a theater, dream life, etc.

Across their range, situations are narratives in that they have endings. More precisely, people make their lives social by creating a series of situations, which they do, minimally, by starting lines of action with an understanding that the line of action will be ended. The ‘ending’ feature of the social situation is not necessarily more focal in awareness than is the moving-toward-death that is a part of all living, but it is always implicitly attended to in the way situations are entered. As turning on the shower anticipates turning it off, so starting to put on a shoe by picking it up anticipates walking away from the shoeing process.

Any social situation minimally has a narrative character by virtue of some action premised on an ending. The situation-constituting action may be no more than a preparation for a beginning that never occurs, an enacted promise to start that is reneged upon, or a project aborted, like putting on a shoe which is then discarded in favor of the decision to go barefoot. The fundamental actualization of social life is not the positive step of completion but something negative, a commitment to ending, whether through completion or abandonment. I may be engaged in doing something without knowing what my action will lead to, but I know something will come next. I progress through the project of putting my shoes on, not yet knowing where I will be going. My uncertainty about the future does not detract from the socially organized character of my experience in putting on my shoes.

In addition to the quality of orienting toward an ending, life is made social by action that unites multiple moments of action into related stages. Putting on shoes requires multiple steps. Even the most accommodating “flip flops” require finding the things. Slipping into them means doing separate sub-acts for each foot. And after slipping each foot into sandals, some adjustment is typically required.
to get the strap at the desired relationship to the toes. Only in cartoons do shoes simultaneously encase both of a character’s feet and without more occasion walking.

We are specifying the narrative features that make action social by constructing a situation for organizing action. To put on shoes one must not only do a series of steps, and do each step as related to others, the steps must be done not in random relationship to each other but in a certain order. If only because of the certainty of ending involvement, there is directionality in the sequential arrangement of action that creates the minimal unit of social life, the situation. People almost invariably develop habits as to which foot they put in first, a meta-narrative of “my way.” But in any case, on each occasion the person will put the first foot in as “putting in the first foot,” knowing that the other foot is awaiting its turn. The “certain order” that is requisite is not left first, then right, nor v.v., but first one, then the other. With one pair of shoes, the tongue may be pulled up before the foot is put in; with another pair the order may be reversed. But the sense of an obdurate world, of the need for strategy based on an understanding that action must be materially pragmatic, is acknowledged in the glosses of directionality given to various steps in the project. It “matters” which order one follows because one acts in a physical world. Here is a first bit of resonance or sensual reflexivity, a first analytic step toward an understanding of how feelings arise and are patterned in social life.

We may note that there is a “Babushka” or nested quality to the sequential structure that makes action into behavioral units of social life. If putting on shoes is a project with several internal steps or stages, each stage is itself a mini-narrative. At one stage in the project, one may be tying the laces. Tying laces is itself an ordered sequence. Each end of the lace is grabbed; the grabbing motion has a start and a finish. The tying of a knot requires following an ordered sequence: this end goes over and then around the other end of the lace, which then is pulled around the first, etc.

Should a problem arise or should a special examination be engaged, any step may be broken into sub-units. Still, a description of the typical experience of putting on shoes does not lead to infinite regress. In the routine of putting on shoes, commonly nothing structural intervenes to create internal stages between an attentive start to grasp and the grasping of the lace. If the lace is not found where an eye-guided hand’s trajectory expects to find it, a corrective sub-unit will be devised. But commonly the move is a flow, requiring no sub-molecular unit of attention.

Narrative is meaningful as a concept for describing the social structuring character of action because it is empirically differentiating. At some point of deconstruction we reach the smallest narrative doll; the actor’s production of demarcations typically becomes no more microscopic. We inspire and exhale; inspiration has a beginning and an ending; but between the start of inspiration at the end of the prior exhale, and before the ending of inspiration in the beginning of the next exhale, we commonly note no intermediary stages. There are flows in our action, smooth passages within stages that may be broken down into smaller units by biologists, or by oneself if for some reason one decides to pause to create a clear end of one phase before the beginning of the next. But the undifferentiated flows in behavior are as natural and as vulnerable to attentive disruption as respiration is vulnerable to holding our breath. To a degree and to achieve a certain effect for a while, what has been flow may be
made into differentiated and ordered sub-units, but as inspiration must give way to expiration, ending and continuity must both exist as constants in our social life.

As sociological description can find smaller sequences within the sequence of putting on shoes, so it can find that the project this time through is one of a series of similar projects, either experienced or imagined. Each time shoes are put on they are put on as variations of a generic action. Is this the first time you’ve put on this pair or this type of shoe or the nth occasion? The typification of the project this time through is also embodied, conveyed or lived sensually; typification is naturally not an act of cognition but a kind of feeling. Putting on a “new type” of shoe requires special attention, which is a certain tension of corporeal engagement. As the saying suggests, putting on “an old shoe” evokes a familiar self. The project of putting on “the same pair” of shoes once again provokes the execution of a behavioral recipe with a known feel. “Habit” is known from the inside more immediately than from the outside, although a close observer will often perceive the difference between “first time” and habitual action.

In searching for the foundations of feeling, we have noted the evocative implications of orienting action toward ending, ordering moments of action into stages as in a recipe, and the character of attention that gives strips of action narrative character as a certain instantiation of its type. We may also note that the narrative structuring of action is accomplished most immediately, not as a direct focus on endings, not as a focus on typification, not as a focus on the recipe of which the action may be a constituent part, but as each action is related directionally to others in the situation. Each “moment” of social life is created as each action is taken as “coming before” or “after” another. In the awareness of how doing this moment’s action is a pushing off from a prior action or a pulling toward/setting up a next action, there is a corporeal sense of how the relationship is being shaped. For example, to put on laced shoes, the grabbing of lace ends may be moved fluidly through and into a tying operation or the lacing through the eyelets may be adjusted to perfect the equality of the finger accessible endings. In the latter case the step of grabbing onto the laces is prolonged, occasioning a hesitation before the next step of tying the knot is begun. Or each step is done with the same emphasis as the prior and the next. Or a given step that completes a prior step—think of tightening a double bow knot—may be done in a manner that comments upon, perhaps celebrates the completion of the sequence.

Describing the narrative structuring of action that creates the mundane situation of putting on shoes veers into vocabulary that could be used to describe a musical performance. A piece of music is given a certain feel as the component parts are marked by the performers as sub-narratives, and related to other parts in what is, despite the part-markings, a constant flow. Few people live to make music but all of social life is lived in musical ways. And as music gives rise to feelings, so does the prosody of each social situation. Perhaps in this morning’s putting on shoes, the move from one step to the next is especially even and smooth; perhaps tomorrow it will be balky and awkward. There is feeling here, although we are reluctant to call it “emotion.” An aesthetic feeling, perhaps: a matter of sensually experienced style that is part and parcel of the very doing of social life. A person putting on shoes is at once producing a colloquially recognizable identity and a sensate self.
Analytically we can get to something more obviously recognizable as emotion because experientially the move can be quick. Say the laces seem to be too short for a customary bow. Or maybe, even though the shoe is new, the laces break. “Shit!,” one might exclaim, referring to the breakdown of order and the messy release of the negative powers for which everyday rituals are prophylaxes. More interestingly for our purpose, one might also blurt out “Stupid!” Stupid is a characteristic of a person, not a shoe. Falling out of involvement with the practical project, the person turns to recognize, emphatically if indirectly, that the shoe already is a social object. Someone, more likely some corporate set of people, made it. And in the design process they anticipated how people would put the things on. The user is enacting a version of a role that complements the manufacturer’s script as presented to the user in the material of the shoe. “Stupid!” is about the people who made and sold this thing.

It is more difficult but for our objective more important to appreciate the positive feelings that shoes can give rise to. Through practically using shoes the shoe buyer ties him or herself to the designer and manufacturer. As social analysts we are used to focusing on the status qualities laid on marketed objects, so that when they are satisfying to users, it may seem to us that the users are preoccupied with the artificialities of prestige structures. But putting on shoes requires craft; some high fashion boots require exceptional effort and trained dexterity to get on. Accomplishing putting them on can confirm oneself as successfully connected to the others who made the shoes. Children know this and adults do not forget it. Those others may be inaccessible--anonymous, not present now or ever in one’s life, collective, never envisioned as flesh and blood individuals-- but even as the shoe is “mine” it never exhausts its being in my possession. It connects me to “them,” and even if I don’t care about their prestige, even if I begrudge them the profits they are making, there can be a puzzle-solver’s pride in getting the things to work smoothly as mine. This appeal, a kind of material seduction to a time-fragmented intercourse, works throughout the spectrum of society, from the elaborately and creatively laced up “ghetto” sneakers to designer boots gratuitously elaborated with functionless buckles and ribbons that circumnavigate the calf before ending in front displayed bows. There are feelings, emotions, irrationalities here, but they are not necessarily related to advertized status distinctions. Getting into social objects and making them “mine” is a way to confirm that I can connect with an invisible, transcendent community of others. For some that irrationality is religious in a way that advertising semiotics may not know. When the narratives for using bought objects work well, they invite recognition of how they complete a social act that was still fragmented at the point of purchase.

2. Putting Shoes on Another

We are tracing the emergence of emotions in social life within a pragmatist perspective. Emotions emerge in response to problems in the organization of conduct. The structure of conduct is in the first instance created by the use of what the actor experiences as corporeally distinguished, sequential actions in the course of getting something done. Using the example of putting on shoes, we note that a sequence is anticipated in the design of shoes. In putting on shoes on any given occasion, a person may go through the course in different ways. He or she may follow the designed patterning of action, employ a customary but idiosyncratic approach, or stumble on details of materials or of the
scenic context that are taken to call for a novel approach this one time. The project may run smoothly or become a balky process as the person moves from one phase to the next.

Some feeling is always involved. The practices that constitute social situations are somehow sensually appreciated. Working in the world inevitably evokes some sense of self on a continuum of being merged naturally with and being artificially inserted into the world. Perhaps the repertoire is performed as a flowing motif in the background of thought and talk that are at the center of consciousness. Perhaps the situation is lived through as a halting operation requiring repeated focus on the details of the operation. On occasion the little daily routine of putting on shoes provokes a more fully formed emotion. The practitioner may become irritated when focusing on some perceived fault in design, delighted in the totemic fit between self and world that is implied in proficient use, or caught up in self-recrimination as the process is taken to exemplify a general state of personal disorganization.

Note that interaction is already involved even though no one else is present. When putting shoes on another person—call the latter the “wearer,” the former the “aide”—the interaction in the project becomes more obvious. Think of putting shoes on a child, an invalid, or a customer in a store. Will the wearer remain passive, the aide active throughout? If not, who will do each of the necessary practical acts? Who will pick and pick up the pair of shoes? Who will guide each foot into each shoe? Who will do the buckling or lacing up? Who will adjust sock or stocking, if any is worn, to shoe? Will one or both define errors in the process, such as uneven lengths to lace ends, wrong match of left/right shoe and foot, tongue not pulled out, degree of fastening too loose or tight? Who will finalize the adjustment of foot and shoe? Perhaps the wearer in the initial steps of walking in the shoes, perhaps the aide by judging that the size or style is off and triggering a return to the start of the process with another pair.

Each of the two, wearer and aide, come to the process with narratives more or less in mind. And will find that the pair of shoes applied this time requires some innovation of an unprecedented narrative structure, if only because each operates from an historically unique physical position. Theoretical differences may get implicated, as when the aide presumes that shoes should be tied but the wearer does not. The two must work out which narrative to use, who will do each part, and when each will do what. The aide may lift the shoe towards a foot, the wearer may then take over the stage of getting foot into shoe.

A coordinated single narrative will usually be worked out. We may gloss the action as “the work of putting shoes on another,” or “having another put on one’s shoes,” but either formulation is a bit off because the process inevitably is collaborative. Each will give off and perceive the other as giving off expressions that indicate offer and acceptance of contributions to the collaborative process.

It is tempting to refer to the interaction, now occurring between two co-present individuals, as a “conversation,” and then to rethink the action of putting on one’s shoes alone as a silent conversation. Some claim that conversation is the fundamental or primordial form of social interaction. But children learn to negotiate patterned interactions with the world before and as a way into language use. For understanding the rise of emotions, “conversation” must be appreciated as metaphor: it can mislead in
a way that loses the phenomenon it would illuminate. Talk, or descriptions of expressive gestures, can be reduced to transcriptions, but transcriptions are irreducibly static and disembodied; the transcription process inevitably loses much of the corporeal reality that makes lived experience a three dimensional reality.

If we are to understand the rise and fall of emotions in social life, we need to keep the moving line of intertwining between self and other (or world) at the center of our investigation. If the wearer remains passive throughout, the aide will repeatedly cross a gap in touching the other through touching the shoe and foot. Conversely, if the aide supervises without laying on a hand, the worlds of experience remain at a distance. But as soon as the two engage motions toward the other, their movements enter an area of ambiguous overlap. The aide pushes the shoe on the wearer; the wearer moves foot into shoe. Interaction has become intercourse, a temporally meshed form of interaction that creates existential ambiguities about who leads, who follows, who owns the project.

In putting shoes on a child, the area of ambiguous overlap may be revealed to the adult-aide in an unexpected protest: “Let me!” In watching a clerk put on a pair of shoes, a customer may take over the lacing up in a way that may be defined as abrupt by the clerk even while it is appreciated by the wearer as considerate. These are not simply differences in the “vocabularies” or “scripts” engaged by each. The sounds in all forms of intercourse may be pleasure or protest, or neither or both, depending not only on what is happening at the audible moment but on what ensues. On the transcript, the expressions of each are unambiguously assigned to the correspondents. Just as writing conventions put spaces between letters and words that are uttered and heard as continuous sounds, so they divide identities in ways that falsify social life. On one line we read what he says (does, gestures, moves); on the next, what she says (does, gestures, moves). In the practice of social life, emotions emerge in the inherently ambiguous overlap between his action and her reaction, which sequence is itself ambiguously preceded by her invitation, indifference or alienation and his response to that prior phase.

We have now specified two levels of analysis necessary to the description of how emotions arise in moments of social life. First we traced the practical social narrative of the wearer, as he or she interacts with the shoes. We find that shoes are not “just put on,” they are put on through following a sequential logic of one sort or another, a recipe with discrete stages and transition strategies. The process entails following and editing a logic encountered as built into the shoes. Engaged in this little project of everyday life, feelings arise, usually more in a sensate, perhaps aesthetic but not clearly an emotional form.

When we examine a situation of co-present interaction such as putting shoes on another, a second level of sociological work appears. Now in addition to finding and following the social logic of the objects, one must collaboratively work out a meshing with the social logic perceived in the other’s practices. The two must produce an effectively single narrative train through emitting and observing signs of who will do the next move.

For understanding how emotions arise in immediate interaction with another, the metaphoric vocabularies that are common in social interaction studies today are inadequate and misleading. There
may be talk in the process, and there will be streams of mutually responsive gestures, but so long as these are regarded with the fragmenting assumptions with which transcribed language is represented, the intertwining of syllable with syllable, word with word, and the motions of one with that of another, remains artificially fractured. Likewise the processes that give rise to emotions are not grasped by looking at the “symbolic” aspects of the interaction. It is specifically the embodied interwinings that matter, the physically registered intercourse that occurs when one touches the other and when the two collaboratively produce trajectories of motion in which actions by one, say in pushing on a shoe, are met with a simultaneous reciprocating action such as pushing the foot in. What we call emotions are reflections on these embodied interwinings.

From one to the other side of the transaction, and in ways that the participants may not themselves appreciate, the emotions being experienced may diverge. The wearer may think that both are experiencing the project as done crudely or rudely; the aide may imagine that both are appreciating a clockwork, mutually respectful collaboration in the event. The embodied, interactive coordination of individual contributions to the project is one thing. The emotional upshot of the process entails individual disengagement from the other and it may be quite different for each.

Interaction with another is inevitably three dimensional. From moment to moment, in finely shaded degrees, each more or less gets traction from the other’s actions. The phenomenon of traction is not a figure of speech or thought; it is refers to the practical grounding of action. Your pulling up and tightening the laces makes it a more immediately accessible task for me to tie the bow. Considering the transaction, each may become resentful or charmed by the offering of his/her body that the other has not or has made.

We see that to get the science of emotions right, we have to go beyond received interaction vocabularies and we have to go beyond the notion of a mind/body binary. Emotions are not an alternative to or an enemy of thought. They arise and are perfected in thought-like reflections. In the shoe example, emotions may arise in a positive form, in recognition of the other’s sympathetic consideration for what one can and cannot readily do, or in a negative form, perhaps as a perception of “too much” passivity or, conversely, as an arrogation of the narrative course. In any case, emotions will arise as the individual, in his or her existential autonomy, turns in interpretive isolation on the areas of ambiguous overlap in the process.

In retrospection, when they are taken as objects for analysis, thoughts may be deep, big or small, painful, behind other thoughts, etc. But as lived they commonly have no experiential place in space or the body. As matters of experience, thoughts are one dimensional; they last for different lengths of time. Emotions are dimensional elaborations in which the corporeal aesthetics of practical social action are drawn upon to flesh out thought.

3 Situated Action and its Transcendence

Using the shoe dressing example, we have traced two ways that feelings arise out of processes of making personal action into social behavior by producing coherent narrative sequences. There is the recipe-like sequential coherence required to accomplish the project, a requirement that applies whether
acting alone or with a co-present other. The structure of the sequence is created through changes in the embodiment of action. Pauses, transitions, problems and shortcut solutions for getting from one stage to the next are all experienced corporeally.

When acting with another to put shoes on, the process requires that each work out an understanding with the other as to the relevance to a jointly executed recipe of one and the other’s actions. The narrative of practical action must now be narrated: I have to indicate where I am in the process, my narration has to be monitored for effective comprehension, I have to register the other’s indications of the other’s offers to execute steps in the other’s version of an effective narrative, and on these grounds each stage in the project is subject to misunderstanding, adjustment, repetition, etc. I have to signal and monitor the reception of signals as to when the process begins, which foot I am first trying to fit, who pushes the foot in, when a sub-strip of incidental inspection of the foot’s anatomy has begun and ended, what is and is not meant as a tickle, etc. Not uncommonly the other will volunteer to complete parts of the recipe, perhaps grabbing for the second shoe, completing the tying of laces, or standing up to press a resistant foot into a possibly too-small shoe. If we are to collaborate in putting on the shoes, I must follow the other’s mobilization of the sequential structure of the process as the other may idiosyncratically understand it.

Now my actions and inactions are doubly embodied, in my own and the other’s responsive/nonresponsive body. At some moments, the other lends his/her body to complete my actions; the other’s body becomes an extension of mine. Further, the embodiment process is cubed. I perceive and confirm the other’s registration of my participation in the collaborative narrative through alterations of my body, for example by continuing without hitch or hesitation in a task I perceive as delegated to me; and in the shaping of my attentions, for example as steady or uncertain, I reactively perceive the other’s confirmation of my delegation of a given task to the other.

We must note another way that the social actions entailed in putting on one’s own shoes in private differ from those in collaboratively putting shoes on another person. In contrast to the private self-dressing process, putting on shoes with another requires an essentially negative repertoire of expressive action. When I am putting my shoes on alone, I do not have to be concerned that the shoes remain committed to the project at hand. But when putting shoes on another, I and the other are both accountable in a Janus-like sense. Each of us has to shape his/her action so that it will be witnessable as produced for the shoeing situation that prevails here and now, which means avoiding or negating personal involvements that transcend the situation.

In the collaborative situation I do not have to execute any particular positive action. I can negotiate over a range of possible mixed responsibilities defining who does which part of the necessary operations (finding the shoes, lifting the foot, adjusting laces, etc.). When I am alone I must do all of the sequence, and in this sense the solo situation requires more positive or constructive action. But should I wish to sustain continuous collaboration with another in the project of putting on shoes, I must not only do the positive narrative work of indicating where each of my motions is in the progression of the project, and the positive work of indicating my perceptions of where the other is in his/her understanding of the narrative’s progress, I must also do a multiply negative kind of work. I must also
indicate that I am not too little involved, not ‘away’ on a reverie or otherwise so little engaged that the
other must take up solo responsibility for completion; and I must avoid indicating I am too much
involved in what is transpiring here and now in a way that goes beyond the dressing narrative, as I might
be if I become seduced by a foot fetish.

When dressing alone, I need not be concerned to perceive indications that the shoes remain in
the situation, that they have not abandoned the project. But when putting shoes on with another
person, I know that: the other’s life simultaneously persists in other ongoing relations, the totality of
which are unknowable to me; has a past and a future, both of which transcend the framework that is
practically relevant to the project at hand; and has a realm of private meanings that I cannot access in
the immediate situation. As I work out a common narrative practice with the other, I will be responsive
to signs that the other is “away,” desirous of pausing from the construction project, or giving it more
meaning than as a practical dressing task. As I am putting a shoe on another person’s foot, I may
wonder whether her pause in pushing her foot in the shoe conveys an expectation that I should push
the shoe on, or means that she has abandoned the process of putting on this pair in favor of trying
another, or indicates that her attentions have moved to some other area of concern, etc. I attend to
signs of a certain tension of consciousness—signs of an at-tension—that are consistent with a
presumption that she is negating orientations that transcend the launched project of putting on the
shoes at hand.

The contrast should not be overdrawn. While I do not need to be concerned to perceive signs
that the shoes remain in the situation, when putting on my own shoes in private I will at a certain stage
in the project need to be concerned to show to the shoes, in a manner of speaking, that I remain in the
project. Shoes are social objects, made in ways that anticipate how they will be used. Once engaged,
material objects differ in the demands on persistent attentions that they require. Shoes impose a
notable if minimal constraint. Once engaged in the project to the point that one shoe is on, there are
consequences for not continuing; one is in a more awkward position for walking than before the project
began. If my mind wanders, the shoes will in effect call me back to finish or to reverse the project. As
objects aiding motility, shoes make matters worse before they make them better. Shoes have not yet
been designed to facilitate a thoroughgoing disrespect for their ontology. I must respect them in the
sense that, once I introduce myself to the shoes and accept the willingness of one to be put on, I will
suffer if I do not negate concerns that transcend the dressing project until both shoes are on.

There is an asymmetry of respectfully curtailed attention in the private shoeing operation and in
the co-present collaborative version of the project, a symmetrical obligation for negating transcending
concerns. When putting on shoes with another, the project requires not only that I more or less
continuously show that I am persistently present in the task, but also that I monitor whether the other
remains present. In order to complete the project, there is an obligation that I negate my transcending
concerns and that I observe that my co-respondent is doing likewise. This doubly negative structure of
co-present social action is the foundation for a rich array of emotions as they arise in the practice of
everyday life.
Now we can return to the opening examples of lecturing in a college class. As when putting on shoes alone, there is a narrative logic that the lecturer presumes imposes demands on him or herself. The lecturer’s talk is constrained to be arranged sequentially on a number of simultaneously sustained levels: any moment’s utterances are to begin, complete or advance the progress of sentence-like phrasings; such phrasings are to be interrelated into a manifest “train of thought”; what is expressed in earlier parts of the hour is to be related to what comes later, and vice versa. By “are to be” and “is to be” I mean that each utterance is executed teleologically, in a manner that claims its emergent functionality in narrative structure: each moment’s action is performed in a way that asserts the becoming of which it is a part and how it is a part of that becoming. The lecturer makes his/her action into behavior by producing an expression accountable as a coherent advance in an emergent narrative.

Some of the lecturer’s feelings are imposed by demands on persistent attention that are encountered as arising from the social form of the lecture. Feeling-evocative pressures arise in the lecturer’s private rehearsals as well as during a live lecture before an audience. In any instance of reviewing notes or rehearsing a lecture, the lecturer will register transitions, perceive gaps among segments, realize an awareness of unfulfilled promises and unannounced tangents, etc., not necessarily in anything as abstracted, distanced, or self-contained as “thought” but through feeling the relationship between narrative structure and the action executed this time through. Perceived gaps, contradictions, unfulfilled introductory promises, awkward transitions, muddy passages, are registered not in stand-alone thoughts but in and as provocations to remedy problems. Seeing a problem in the narrative may not immediately throw up a solution but no intervening thought is required to feel the need to do more. Something “nags,” there is a source of disquiet, some part of the narrative does not feel right. Private reading of preparatory notes is already a corporeally implicated, feeling-evoking process. If when preparing lecture notes something seems wrong, the project cannot be freely abandoned. Like shoes, the lecture is a social form which, once engaged, is experienced as demanding that the user not abandon it for other concerns. That demand often appears as a haunting anxiety that more preparatory work is needed.

When delivered to a class, the lecturer will be constrained to do the class “with” the audience. This means not only displaying that he/she is in the lecture situation and not taken up by transcendent concerns, but also monitoring that the correspondents are also suppressing transcendent concerns. The class, however passive it may seem, is still a correspondent in the production of the lecture. If on consulting the clock the lecturer appreciates that the moment to begin has come but no one has entered the room, he/she will be responsive to the fact. The lecturer will understand that there is a burden to relate his/her sense of narrative sequence to the audience’s achievement of sequential narrative meaning across a range of situations that defy pre-design. Indications that the audience is not playing a corresponding role that makes sense of continuing the lecturer’s role may appear in question/answer phases, when hands are raised unexpectedly, or, most likely in today’s college teaching environment, if the lecturer takes notice that many students appear preoccupied with web-searching activities that follow rhythms not connected to the lecture’s. On such occasions the lecturer will take for granted that he/she must do the work of determining where the audience “is at” or the work of trying to ignore his/her ignorance of the fact. Even if the answer cannot be found other than in the
brute facts of physical presence, as the class time goes on the lecturer will be pressed to verify that the audience is still there as an audience.

Now, the negations required by the lecture as a live, correspondent social form are not just symmetrical, not only shared on both sides of the lectern, they are dynamically interactive. In order to keep the audience in the situation, the lecturer must do the work of manifesting that he/she is maintaining a lively consciousness to the situation. Pauses can go on only so long before they begin to undermine the audience’s involvement. A monotonic reading may be adequate for timing in a rehearsal, but in a live lecture it will typically be replaced with a prosody that instructively dramatizes responsiveness to the narrative of the lecture, i.e., that the lecturer him or herself is being taken by the talk as he/she expects the audience to be taken. A second generation of feelings emerges from the constraint to manifest a time/space specific collaborative posture, i.e., a being in the situation, in order to keep the audience in the situation. The emotions that arise in the live lecture are not the same as the feelings that arise in a privately conducted lecture rehearsal. Becoming a lecturer entails awakening to and developing a way of structuring a new order of sensibility.

In their debut lectures, Turner and Sarbin sustained the professional requirement that, for all immediate appearances, the show was going on unproblematically. Both not only performed the positive tasks of producing a coherent lecture neatly bounded by the duration of the class, both also did not indicate any problem with the transcendental meaning of the instant session. Both had a problem with the pre-class phase of the occasion; both came to understand that they had not prepared enough. Both came to understand the future implications of the particular challenge their first class meant, that they would have to prepare more for future sessions. As far as they understood, the students were unaware of their transcending occupational problems.

Where did the lecturers’ realization of the problematic transcendental meanings of their situationally polished performances reside? Not in “thoughts” but in emotions. As Sarbin flipped over his deck of index cards to restart the first and then the second time, he continued to respond to the requirements for maintaining apparent narrative coherence in his talk. As Turner came to the end of the hour and realized he had expended all the preparation he had done for the course, his appreciation of his dilemma was not shared with the class. Their emotions arose in the crucible formed by the requirements of situationally specific, publicly witnessable, narratively coherent action, and as an embodied manner of appreciating the transcendent meanings of their initiation into a teaching career, most immediately for the college course in progress, indirectly for their occupational confidence.

Lecturers will always experience something on the continuum that Sarbin and Turner dramatized at the extremes, although not necessarily in negative directions. At a given moment in a day’s class, one may realize that preparation for the current lecture has more resources than anticipated, that there are multiple narrative lines to develop, only one of which will exhaust the current class session. As the current lecture is delivered, the awareness that less work will be necessary to set up future classes will be appreciated in some positive emotional form.
Emotions are distinctively three dimensional experiences. Across their variety emotions are characterized by feelings that pervade and recede from anatomically unbounded corporeal realms. This three dimensionality corresponds to the three dimensions along which transcendent meanings arise in socially situated conduct. In a temporal perspective, the novice lecturer senses what he did and did not do in the past, and what the implications are for future work. Spatially, the lecturer must stay visibly rooted in the here, even as his orientation may shift to situations located elsewhere, such as his study, other class sessions, and what he will make of the experience within family and friendship circles. A boundary between the public and private self emerges in such experiences, the lecturer's emotions serving as vehicles for an awareness that must be kept inner, whether or not as a cover he/she projects a stream of emotional expressions displayed as joking, righteous rhetoric, professional élan or intellectual passion.

Few lecturers could long sustain careers that suffer the volcanic emotional upshots of the first-time experience. What happens as people repeatedly work through a given, initially intense emotional experience? They learn to manage, tame, discipline or civilize the emotional potential by developing a working aesthetic. Instead of pre-writing each word or leaving fate to situational inspiration, the lecturer will develop a preparation and a performance style. For guiding preparation, he/she will develop ways of interpreting nagging feelings of insufficient preparation. As the Turner and Sarbin horror stories illustrate, one learns to cultivate a useful disquiet, to distinguish between haunting feelings that are gratuitous (for some these will arise at 3 a.m. but not make it to morning) as opposed to practically significant (perhaps those that last into the afternoon). For a performance style, the lecturer may adopt a style that relies on a small number of pre-planned stories that are to be delivered in an ordered progression, focusing in the classroom on “hitting the mark” for each narrative component more or less at a certain time interval, leaving vocabulary and temptations to digress to be worked out in the moment within this overall strategy. Each style is its own narrative, this one being something like a cartoon frog's trip of crossing a pond by jumping from one of a delimited number of lily pads to the next. In any case, as strategy becomes style, emotions become largely a matter of occupational aesthetic. There is no escape from the challenge of relating the situation specific narrative framing of action to the transcending dimensions of social life. The lecture done this time through will be experienced as a stage in sequences not accessible to the current audience, such as the course as a whole, the course within a career, the meaning of this work within a changing complex of personal or domestic relations. For first timers, a private awareness of these situation transcending, existential meanings will often be intensely emotional. Over time transcendent awareness commonly becomes mannered appreciation.

The Crucible

At some point in the transition from infancy to social competency, we enter and move into a compelling stream of social situations. In wide-awake everyday life, we are virtually always “doing something,” organizing our conduct so that it is part of an activity or project that is accountable to self as one or another typical narrative. The person may be doing the narrative ostensibly on his or her own, like putting on shoes in private, although indirectly, in ways emotions often will grasp before thought can reflect on the matter, the process will be one of interacting with shoe designers. Or the person may
appear to be following a narrative that others have produced, like watching a t.v. show, although what a viewer attends to on the screen and in the audio track will be in some way unique, the process always being one of privately editing the script. Active or passive, behaving on our own or collaboratively with others, we shape our conduct from moment to moment so that at any time and in any place we are in the progress of doing a version of something, something that routinely has a colloquially cognizant name. The most fundamental units of social life are formed through giving narrative meaning to corporeal movement. All meaning is felt because it is produced and grasped by discrete bodily action. It is the very work of structuring action into behavior that is the crucible of emotions.
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1 There are exceptions for ritual occasions. When “prize” lectures are read, a lack of spontaneity sustains a double impression, of extraordinarily careful preparation and of the preciousness of each word. The former conveys reciprocation for the respect shown by the award committee; the latter affirms that the audience’s deference is well deserved.

2 As objects of expression, emotions become flattened out. Paul Ekman has shown that people universally can identify several different emotions by looking at two-dimensional photographs. We can name emotions, but to characterize feelings as “anger” or “happiness” is to reduce a three dimensional experience to a metaphor-striped semiotics that applies equally well to non-emotional self-descriptors. We can enact emotions so that others, correctly or not, infer what we are feeling. But as we feel, within our emotional experiences, we resonate with implications of what we perceive in ways that language always struggles to grasp, in ways that metaphors and audiovisual representations often convey better than does flat prose, and in ways that our enacted emotions may turn into two-dimensional masks. The study of how emotions are presented, dramatized or shaped as managed performances leaves the experience of emotion off the research agenda.

3 Defense of the claim that the dialectic is ontogenetic requires examination of fetal and neonate behavior and must await another writing.

4 Blumer persistently argued that social interaction is at the foundation of all behavior Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism; perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. By social interaction he meant taking into account the response of others in the formation of one’s own action. Following Mead, Blumer would understand that the narrative structuring of action is part of social action, whether others are present or not. Action is interactively formed when the actor, acting in solitary situations or in the presence of others, takes account of his/her own action from the standpoint of what he/she assumes is a collectively recognizable kind of doing. In picking up my shoe, I am at the beginning of what I take for granted others, were they present, would, were they to see the ensuing stages of the sequence I am launching, see as putting on my shoes (or cleaning my room, or swatting a fly...). But there is social action even when one’s solitary action, if observed by others, would be incomprehensible as narrative construction. Thus to a peeping Tom I may seem to be wandering aimlessly around my garden when I am in deed systematically structuring my gaze in discrete strips, each strip of attentive gaze internally structured to gauge the progress of previously noted pest damage, to follow trajectories of plant growth that may be progressing toward crowding, to witness novel light patterns as they emerge across the landscape, etc. In such solo experiences there is interaction, in that each moment’s observation implicates the meaning of the person’s past action (prior observations of pest damage, plant growth and light
patterns set up the meaning of the current observation as disturbing, intriguing, etc.) and next actions (time now to act or not, reason or not to continue the exploration), but to call this “social” interaction is tendentious or redundant with the concept of interaction. More clearly the activity has narrative structure.

There is no clear line between ritualistic and pragmatically required recipes. Indeed, one youthful recipe for doing anti-social is claiming and rejecting ritualistic necessity for steps that others take for granted as practically necessary. Thus adolescents who do not tie shoes perform little acts of resisting the embrace of the social in ways that may drive onlookers to mad fantasies of tying the youth’s shoes.

Adam Kendon’s studies come the closest to theorizing the relationship between body movements and the situated structuring of social life Kendon, Adam. 1990. "Behavioral Foundations for the Process of Frame-Attunement in Face-to-Face Interaction." Pp. 239-262 in Conducting Interaction. Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, —. 2004. Gesture: visible action as utterance. Cambridge : New York: Cambridge University Press. Body movement may consist of walking off, turning the page, changing gaze, and so on; no particular region of the body need by engaged, although in the responsive actions of others, the further down the corpus the alteration occurs (compare eye gaze to head turn to torso turn to walking away), the more effective it will be in shaping the understanding of a co-present other that the situation is ending. Much of McNeil’s work approaches the relationship from a direction opposite to that taken in most interaction analysis, which, following Blumer, sees body deployed in service of mind (anticipating how one will be seen, one gives a movement a certain flair). McNeil finds that gesture commonly precedes and shapes the thought to which it is related; body gives rise to mind McNeill, David. 1992. Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought. Chicago: University of Chicago, —. 2005. Gesture and thought. Chicago: University of Chicago Press., through the intermediary step of invoking a situation.

Someone who has never seen a shower might turn a handle, bringing the water on, without anticipating or understanding that a counter-directional turn will shut it off, but whatever that person is doing—perhaps turning an obviously designed object to see why it was made—he or she is not “turning on a shower.” The nouns we use to designate objects in the social world are shorthand references to narratives.

The pun is not simply rhetorical. Learning to walk is aided if one already knows how to interrelate moments of life as connected steps, and vice versa. For the young child, walking is initially a series of discrete narratives. The concept of steps, with which we populate the social world with differentiated doings, is laboriously and spontaneously, delightedly and painfully acquired.

The example of putting on shoes raises in a useful way the question of whether or to what extent the social world is all embracing. Is there escape? If we avoid commodity objects like shoes, can we declare our independence from social control? Not so easily. If one goes barefoot, it matters all the more the nature and condition of the materials on the ground one walks upon. Walking on paths will be a different experience than walking off-path. The very phenomenon of a path is a creation by others. How many have come before and moved over this space, with what weight, leaving what depressions and ridges, scattering what detritus—all that will matter even more. Walking on paths barefoot is an especially intimate way of being with anonymous others.
A caveat is necessary here. The contrast between the interaction requirements with co-present others and when using material objects in private requires complex and historically changing qualifications. Over time, the material environment of work changes in its negative demands on users. Computers, for example, are evolving to minimize the constraining pressure that a given task monopolize a user’s attentions. A few years ago, “multi-tasking” was unknown, then for some years operating systems were at a state in which multi-tasking would risk “crashing” the computer. Computer users were constrained not to be flaky. Now working alone on a computer is a robust environment for jumping in focus from here to there, from work obligations to private indulgence, and among tasks at different stages of their evolution, whether pursued on or off the computer. One can more reliably take for granted that the computer will hold as-yet-incomplete projections of the user’s virtual self—where the user is in a digitally expressed task—in steady state until he or she is ready to return. “Ticklers,” alarms, and various reminders can be programmed in to minimize the scattering of attention. These strategies understand and respond to the increasingly flexible, costless ability to depart attention from and return at will to a situated project that has begun. But the progression toward a computer that can be thoroughly treated with disrespect is not complete. Even if, given the low level demands I make on my computer, I may not have to limit my task-transcending concerns out of fear that the computer may “freeze up,” I still limit must treat the computer like a flesh-and-blood work partner, as having a life of its own. The contemporary computer has a biography beyond my project that it might divert or digress to attend to. It might pause my work for “system maintenance” or to download software updates from the internet. Depending on how I arrange my coffee around it and manipulate it, the computer may break down or otherwise effectively go away.