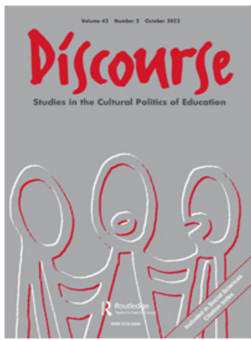

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Teaching as bodily enactment: relational formations of touch and movement

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores a common representational form of teaching that has reappeared in current educational theory: the figure of the teacher as one who points. Informed by Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics I outline how the form of pointing is actually a relational formation that invites students into certain relationships with objects of study as well as with teachers themselves. Focusing on relational encounters as central to teaching, I argue in the second part of the paper that movement and the dynamics of touch are key to reframing teaching as bodily enactment. Drawing on the work of Erin Manning, I explore how movement and touch are generative of educational relations and how they enable students and teacher to co-create educational spaces together. Teaching as bodily enactment enables us to understand how physical bodies matter in and to our educational practices as well as our representations of them.

KEYWORDS
Teaching; aesthetics; bodies; relations; movement; touch; Bourriaud; Manning; encounter; representation

There is something profoundly banal about portrayals of teaching. From famous works of art to Google searches, normalised figurations of the teacher draw a surprisingly similar picture: the teacher is recognisable as one who stands and points, with hand and finger gesturing toward something beyond the frame of the student. There is an iconographic stability in this image of the teacher, from Raphael's *The School of Athens* of 1511, to Jan Steen's school paintings in the seventeenth century, to the numerous contemporary photographs of western classrooms found on the Web. In pointing, the teacher not only seems to know about something outside the students' repertoire of experience, but the pointing itself becomes the gestural form that defines the activity *as* teaching and that allows us to identify who the teacher is in a given image.[1] Pointing also carries significant power, both in light of the teacher's relation to students and in light of its iconographic symbolism in systems of oppression: pointing often acts to tell others who they are or who they should be, displaying a modernist and colonialist impulse. Thus how teaching is represented through such seemingly innocuous imagery of pointing is tied to symbolic (and political) regimes that are far from innocent. While the ubiquity of such representations of teaching itself requires some unpacking, my aim here is to focus on the form of teaching as a relational, bodily enactment that challenges any

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easy representation of it. The 'form' of the teacher who points is one example of what Bergdahl and Langmann (2018) refer to as a 'geometries of the educational relation' (p. 311): that is, the postures, positionalities and gestures that make up our physical encounters are reflective of and promote certain relations between teachers, students and subject matter.

Although the term 'geometries' lends itself to exploring different configurations of teaching, its indebtedness to abstract mathematical shapes does not fully resonate with the idea of bodily enactment I am pursuing here.[2] Instead, I draw on the aesthetic notions of form and formation: aesthetic in the sense that something relates not only to art and representation, but also to the bodily senses, following its ancient Greek roots in *aesthetikos*, meaning having to do with perception; and form/formation in the sense of something taking shape and becoming materialised. Understanding 'teaching as pointing' as an aesthetic form allows us to inquire into teaching's specifically bodily, sensory, and relational dimensions. As art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) puts it in his book *Relational Aesthetics*, form is *generated* out of specific relational encounters; it is created and not given. Thus, the form can be better understood as form*ation*, an enactment of relations that constitutes a form's materialisation.[3] This paper seeks first to investigate the form of teaching as pointing in order to think about how teaching enacts, through bodily encounters, certain conditions of educational relations. By this, I mean that the form of pointing is linked to how students are invited to relate to objects of study, how they are to relate to teachers, and how these two are connected through the gesture of pointing itself. Seen in this light, I then address how teaching might be considered differently. Focusing on relational encounters as central to teaching, I argue in the second part of the paper that movement and the dynamics of touch are key to reframing forms of teaching as formations. Drawing on the process philosophy-informed work of Erin Manning (2007, 2012) I explore how movement and touch are generative of educational relations and how they enable students and teacher to co-create educational spaces together.

From form to formation: teaching as pointing

Images of teachers who point are fairly ubiquitous within the western context. Whilst one might be tempted to dismiss this form of teaching as merely reflecting a traditional transmission model of instruction, it has nonetheless emerged quite strongly in recent scholarship focused on reclaiming teaching beyond a notion of instruction – a notion that so often permeates current instrumentalist accounts of education (Biesta, 2017; Säfström, 2021; papers in this volume). Some scholars within this renewed attention to teaching write specifically of the importance of the teacher as someone who directs students' attention to 'stimulate interest' (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 86; see also Rytzler, 2020; Vleighe & Zamojski, 2019). For these authors, the teacher is one who points out to students what is to be attended to and plays a pivotal role in enabling students to study it – that is, to make a relationship to whatever object of study is at hand. As Masschelein and Simons (2013) see it, it is 'things and one's relation to those things' as opposed to catering to the needs of the student that matter most to teaching (p. 86). However, a few questions arise if we think of the practice of attention-making not just in figurative terms but as literal and embodied, seen not only through the *form* of 'the

teacher who points' but also as a *formation* that embodies a particular set of relations: What does such a form of teaching presume about educational relations? What kinds of bodily, sensory encounters does it make (or not) possible?

It is important to contextualise the form of teaching as pointing within the broader perspective of education being argued for. Although the authors listed above do not collectively speak of the 'form' of teaching, as I do here, they do write of the school as a form that emerges out of specific 'scholastic' practices. For instance, Masschelein and Simons (2013) write that practices of study and attention are what create the form of school.[4] As a form, the school can thereby be found in a multitude of spaces and places and not just within the four walls of a building we call a 'school' through social convention. Thus, wherever the scholastic practices arise, the form of school likewise arises. Masschelein and Simons's understanding of form is indebted to what Isabel Stengers (2005) refers to as an 'ecology of practices'. The school can only take the form of a 'school' if the practices making it a school are present; otherwise the school becomes an empty signifier. For example, what we habitually call 'schools' – the physical places of formal education within our communities – do not necessary take on the form of a school in Masschelein and Simons's meaning if they are not engaged in 'scholastic practices'. On the other hand, schools can take form in refugee camps, library spaces, or forests, wherever people engage in practices of study and attention. However, when viewed from the perspective of formations, what creates the form of the school shifts away from *practices* to the *relations that subtend or inform those practices*. What is central to my mind is not just *that* study and attention are practised, but *how* they do so actually matters to the creation of the form of school itself. As Bourriaud (2002) points out, what is central to formation is understanding how it is bound up with states of encounter – that is, the relational contact certain practices limit, make possible, or challenge. In this sense, the formation of the school is continually emergent and dependent upon the relations students have to things, ideas, and others *as* they study and attend. While this seems to echo Masschelein and Simons' own focus on students' relationships to things (see above), my point is that because teaching is a bodily formation, it *sets into motion* relationships that are not fully accounted for within their conceptualisation of school or teaching. Most importantly for my discussion is that it is not only the relationships between students and objects of study that matter, but also the relationships that are afforded by the form of teaching being enacted. The formation of the school it seems to me must also therefore be deeply dependent on which relations teaching makes possible or not.

For Masschelein and Simons (2013) teachers are engaged in putting objects 'on the table' in an act of suspension, disentangling these objects from their 'worldly meaning' to allow them to circulate anew in a common space of study and inquiry. As they acknowledge, teaching involves expanding students' horizons beyond their everyday concerns, stimulating new areas of interest. It involves teachers pointing out to students something that students can explore, examine, and inquire into that is neither dependent on the object's 'ordinary' use in society nor determined by the student's social background, identity, or context. For Masschelein and Simons, the act of suspension means that students are able to encounter objects of study freed from the predetermination (and resultant prejudices) of ability and interest that is so often presumed to ensue from their social positioning. In this, the idea of suspension helps us move away from deficit models that frequently plague students coming from minority or 'disadvantaged' communities. While

the act of suspension they advocate allows us to think about educating students on terms beyond their immediate social contexts, it nonetheless poses some difficulties for thinking about the complexity of encounters between students and objects of study, which necessarily involve living bodies that are already part of a network of relations and that traverse borders of home and school, thought and feeling, past and future. By this I mean that bodies are emplaced and entangled with their environments; they cannot entirely be 'freed' from these contexts even while they should be 'freed' from the prejudice and discrimination that accompany those contexts. My concern is that suspension does not deviate sufficiently away from traditional models of teaching in recognising the complexity of students' bodily, relational lives. Masschelein and Simons's view conjures a figure of the teacher as a body who indicates and gestures toward the object of study which they have placed on the pedagogical table. Vlieghe and Zamojksi (2019) also speak of teachers as literally pointing to the materiality of subject matter in their idea of a thing-centred pedagogy: for them, teaching as pointing is a gesture of love for the world that is opened up to students. On these accounts, the attention of students is directed toward the subject matter and its object of study (e.g. a map, a poem, or an equation) and pointing it out ostensibly acts in a manner that detaches the object from its 'use' and 'meaning' outside of the school, wrested from the social lives of teachers and students themselves. Moreover, it is questionable whether objects of study can be so neatly de-contextualised from their material environments and participation in larger systems of symbolic representation. To my mind it matters, for example, that objects such as maps are deeply embedded in socio-political landscapes which are encountered differentially by students who are also interconnected with these same landscapes. For instance, it is not that all students from a particular background (for example, First Nations, Québecois, or Syrian refugee) will respond the same way to a map of Canada, but that to suggest that putting the map on the table frees it from its usual use so students can form a 'proper' relationship to it disregards the complexity with which objects and people are interrelated and contextually bound, even though they are not mutually determining. Directing attention to an object of study through pointing seems to miss the point of the very dynamics of relationality that are already implicated between the object and the student. While I entirely agree that students should be able to generate exploratory relations – and perhaps even develop passions – about those objects of study that teachers make available to them, my query is that if teachers are to offer an exploratory space for students to study and to make knowledges that are new to them, then I wonder if pointing, showing, and indicating are the gestural forms most helpful to such tasks.

Indeed, as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) recounts in a playful anecdote about her cat, pointing actually displays an ambiguity that lies at the heart of teaching itself. Located within a chapter entitled the 'Pedagogy of Buddhism', Sedgwick (2003) writes:

> Whenever I want my cat to look at something instructive – a full moon, say, or a photograph of herself – a predictable choreography ensues. I point at the thing I want her to look at, and she, roused to curiosity, fixes her attention on the tip of my extended index finger and begins to explore it with delicate sniffs. (p. 168)

This 'scene of failed pedagogy', for Sedgwick, not only means that she is 'no better at learning not to point than her cat is at learning not to sniff' (p. 168), it also signals a long-

standing pedagogical paradox within the heart of Buddhist teachings – and I would suggest within the form of teaching as pointing more generally.

Within the Mahayana tradition, according to Sedgwick, lies an understanding that while we might learn from the words of the Buddha's sutras, they themselves should be considered merely as 'the finger that points to the moon'. This well-known metaphor suggests that the words of the sutras are not to be taken literally, but are to be seen as directing our attention to something beyond what is being said. The words are not ends-in-themselves, even if students of Buddhism sometimes confuse the finger for the moon, as does Sedgwick's cat, in adhering to literal doctrinal readings of those teachings. So far, this would seem to be in line with the formulation of teaching as that which directs attention to something beyond itself. However, complications arise when we consider that the 'gesture of indication' is not simply a benign form but a performative act of teaching. As Sedgwick notes

> To put the issue another way, the overattached learner – my cat, say – is mistaking the kind of speech act, or can we just say the kind of act, that pointing is: for me the relevant illocution is 'to indicate', while for her, it is 'to proffer'. (p. 170)

Pointing is not simply a form, for Sedgwick, but an action that signals a *movement* of relations between teacher, student/cat, and object; the teacher points to an object and if the student understands this as a performative signal she then discovers the object that lies at the end of the gestural trajectory. Thus pointing is an action that both displays something beyond one's own finger and yet in doing so displays something more concrete than this: the gesture itself. One can say along with Sedgwick that it would be a 'mistake' to view pointing as a form of proffering, as though cats (or students) merely have misunderstood the intentionality of the gesture that is made for their benefit. However, I think what Sedgwick opens up for consideration is a more complex understanding of the form of pointing, which to my mind actually relies on this misunderstanding for its own authority, its own directionality. The gesture calls attention to itself in a way that paradoxically locates 'indicating' and 'proffering' along the same bodily register. That is, with this form of teaching students need to attend to the pointing *in order to* attend to the object; they need to pay attention to the physicality of the gesture and to the teacher's body who is making it. The relation between teacher, student and object presents us with a 'choreography', as Sedgwick puts it, a moving formation that is not simply about whether a student 'traces' the teacher's finger to its destination point, like a rainbow to its pot of gold, but also involves the relational, bodily conditions under which such 'tracing' can even begin. In other words, it presumes a certain bodily encounter between teacher and student (and an awareness of that encounter) so that, in turn, an encounter with the object of study can be initiated.

Another aspect of this form of teaching as pointing is important to bear in mind from the vantage of the body, and this concerns the 'uprightness' from which the teacher points: the literal erectness of teaching. The teacher who points is both literally and figuratively the one who, in directing students' attention, does so from a position of height, echoing a strong European – and Eurocentric – humanist tradition, which finds its ultimate expression, perhaps, in Pestalozzi's (2018/1801) 'object lesson'. Critiquing the 'rectitude' of the teacher as put forth primarily by Masschelein and Simons, Bergdahl and Langmann (2018) draw particular attention to posture as key to understanding

different modes of subjectivity in education. Following Adriana Cavarero (2016), they see rectitude as mapping onto a history of particularly masculine figurations of teaching. Rectitude signals for Cavarero (2016) an 'egocentric verticality' (p. 11) that has masqueraded as the epitome of the subject throughout philosophy as well as the humanities and the arts more generally. It relies on a form (what Caverero calls a 'postural geometry', p. 11) of standing upright and independent – a form which denies the relational aspect of subjectivity. Drawing on her line of thought, Bergdahl and Langmann (2018) consider a posture of inclination as an alternative to rectitude and what that can mean for teaching and for reimagining scholastic practices. Here they excavate inclination as a maternal posture from its subjugation under 'homo erectus'

> the maternal posture we are suggesting is the posture of someone who is aware of an *originary indebtedness* to what and who is 'other', 'after' or 'before'. Here, the most truthful response to a complex content matter or question might be this: 'I lean towards x', 'I support my argument on y' or 'I am inclined to think x'. (p. 322)

Inclination calls for a different kind of understanding of the educational relation than rectitude does. The inclination here works against a presumption of uprightness in its movement toward someone or something and sees attention as less about visual focus, or mental concentration and more about a 'reaching out' – from the Latin *a-tendere* – with the 'tenderness' of touch. The inclination is more about a horizontal plane of teaching that is supportive of students than it is about a vertical one whose task is to initiate students into the world 'so that they can begin forming themselves' (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, p. 144). For Bergdahl and Langmann (2018), this suggests a lack of acknowledgement of the 'relational' (and I would say entangled) aspects of teaching. This does not mean that postures of rectitude do not promote their own educational relations *in actuality*, based as they are on particular dynamics of authority, but unlike postures of inclination, they do not acknowledge relations themselves as central to their concept of teaching.

Taking a look at Rembrandt's (c. 1635) drawing of a child learning to walk, one can see the inclination in action. Two women lean towards a young child between them in a gesture that is both supportive and potentially open. The arm of the one on the left extending outward, directing not the child's attention to an object but opening toward something indefinite, while her other hand, along with that of the second woman, holds the child and offers stability in these early steps. While we could say that the outward-seeking gesture of the woman's arm is either merely an aesthetic decision on the part of Rembrandt to balance the composition or that it yet again is trying to direct the child's attention, this would be to reduce the gesture itself to a static one of pointing. In fact, the whole drawing is about balance in movement, about tending to the wobbly infant, about the relationality that constitutes walking. Teaching a child to walk is not about pointing something out from a position of uprightness that the child is then to pay attention to, but a bending, tending and attending gesture that balances between the present and the future, between stillness and movement. It is powerfully suggestive of the relation of attunement to the child's movements that is necessary to keep the child from falling (Figure 1).

A posture of pointing and rectitude is also deeply paradoxical. It is a form of teaching that is never merely about the target object to which it is pointing, but also an expression

Figure 1 Rembrandt, Two Women Teaching a Child to Walk, drawing c. 1635.

of movement: an arm raising, a finger lifting. A teacher's body can only assume the form of pointing through enacting certain movements. As stated above, the teacher's pointing does not simply 'indicate' the object statically as a street sign, say, would; rather it is a directional, purposive movement. Unlike inclination, however, pointing is a movement that does not recognise itself as such, since the student is to pay attention to the object being pointed at and not to movement of the finger doing the pointing. Pointing in this sense erases its own movement, and seemingly functions symbolically as opposed to corporeally – the arm or finger of the teacher's body acting as a cipher for the object to which students are to pay attention. It is a movement commanding interest as opposed to a movement of support; a movement away from the person-student toward the object-thing. And although it poses as a bridge between students and the object of study, it does so by promoting a form of teaching that ignores its own inherent relationality, its own formation, and also thereby risks ignoring its own responsibility in the conditions it is creating for students' becoming and transformation through education. By this, I mean that whether teaching takes the form of rectitude or inclination, what form cannot escape is its own movement and the possibilities and limitations it opens up physically and aesthetically for students to experience themselves differently.

As I discuss in the next section, this reticence to conceive of movement as part of teaching is in part based on a myth of stillness in educational encounters; even the most rectitudinous of teachers who point with little animation are always performing and enacting animate relations that 'say' more than what they are pointing to. Moreover, as Sedgwick

(2003) notes, there is a ‘choreography’ inherent to pedagogy and, as any dancer knows, choreographies necessarily involve bodies that move, relate, and touch.

Moving from stillness

Stillness is often associated with paying attention in education, and thus it is no surprise that the form of teaching as pointing cannot conceive of its own movement as central to what and how students encounter the world as educational. Erin Manning (2016), whose work focuses on the processual role that movement plays in creating new formations of being and becoming, writes

> Most of our education systems are based on starting from stillness. We learn in chairs. We associate concentration with being quiet. We discourage the movement of thought we call daydreaming, particularly in the context of ‘learning’. We consider the immanent movements of doodling to be a distraction. We are told not to fidget. Reason is aligned with keeping the body still. (p. 122)

Recognising stillness as a myth opens up possibilities for reconsidering the processual force of teaching. As a Buddhist meditator, I know all too well that stillness is more a state of mind than it is a total absence of movement; in its awareness of the breath, the mind knows the body is never completely still. Such stillness only comes with death and even then the physical body is consumed by bacteria, insects and other life forms; it is never static. In everyday life, even postures we think of as still are actually complex activities.

Standing, the exemplary posture of rectitude, is never completely without movement. Manning (2012) draws attention to the ‘virtual micromovements’ necessary for keeping our balance while standing: the mini, unconscious ways we ‘correct’ our posture through tiny contractions, extensions, and shifts from side to side (p. 43). Instead of seeing stillness as opposed to movement, Manning (2012) rephrases stillness as itself an action: ‘movement that is stilling’ (p. 43). This shift means understanding that ‘stillness is always on its way to movement’ (p. 43); it is not a complete absence of movement, but involves a host of smaller movements that are barely perceptible. The difficulty is that when we try to deny the movement behind the veil of stillness, as we sometimes do in yoga postures, the apparent stillness can no longer sustain itself: ‘the more we ignore the movement within stillness, the more we lose our balance. To be balanced is in fact to move with micromovements moving’ (p. 44).

Moving with these micromovements is a productive way to think of the balance required in teaching. For Manning (2012), both stillness and posture are forms of incipient action. We might understand it this way: they appear as ‘pauses’ in action, but they are merely ‘tendencies of momentariness’. They are qualities of movement that tend toward slowing it down, de-intensifying its velocity. Movement can ‘move’, ‘speed up’, ‘slow down’, or ‘still’, but it does not stop.

To return to the teacher’s posture from this perspective, both inclination and rectitude can be read through their movements. The inclining posture, like the posture of rectitude, is a movement that is in the process of stilling and to shift postures is to do so as a movement that is moving (Manning, 2012, p. 44). Changing postures requires you to move; the different modes of subjectivity and relationality that teaching postures give rise to are based on different kinds of incipient action, even when that action does not look like

an action at all. The iconographic image of the teacher as static pointer therefore invites an interpretation that recognises its movement and what this movement means for teacher-student-object relations. Manning comments that since posture is a transient movement 'there is no ideal posture: if the tendency of your intensive movement is a fidget or a squirm, the quality of your posture will itself be a squirm in the making' (p. 45).

Thus, the pointing body of the teacher, we could argue, is generated through a movement-in-the-making. However, what this movement-in-the-making can be remains caught within the singularity of the action, like all postures, including inclination. That is, we cannot know that the gesture of pointing is about an incipient squirm, a contraction, a relaxation, or an extension. Yet, the posture encourages a certain relationship with its physical, material environment in its movement. A given posture contains incipient tendencies: certain postures 'lend themselves' to certain movements. From this point of view, a posture of rectitude will necessarily lend itself to the potentiality of different movements than one of inclination. The pointing teacher has a range of tendencies, which physically span from a stiffness and rigidity in the arm to a more sweeping gesture, from a quick movement of a finger to a slow, languorous stretching out of the hand. While the body does surprise and movements can never be fully predicted, there are nonetheless certain suggestions of movement that are more or less possible from within a given posture. The body simply cannot go from prone to standing in one fell swoop. The importance of pointing, then, comes not from the teacher's supposed *intention* to direct attention but from the relations the postural affords (or not) and the kinds of encounters it makes possible for students and teachers alike through its movements. Thus pointing can act as a gesture of mastery or a gesture of invitation. But as long as it is conceived as being divorced from the very movement it is generating and as possessing a singular aim of directing attention, the pointing remains blind to what it is doing at a relational level.

Relational encounters of touch

Thus far I have been critical of views of teaching that rely on traditional iconographies of pointing and gesturing toward some*thing* for the way they fail to recognise pointing's own relational formation. While Bergdahl and Langmann (2018) rightfully call for balance in teaching, I read that balance not in terms of complementing moments of rectitude with moments of inclination, but more in terms of how teachers are always in movement and as such need to develop a sense of the micromovements of teaching. As Manning (2012) reminds us, the trick is to do so without entirely becoming conscious of them – otherwise, we fall over. Moreover, the trick is to do so also while in relation with students and objects of study, as part of a larger pedagogical choreography. On this view, teaching becomes something other than indicating that a student focus one's thought or vision on a particular object of study; instead, it suggests that, returning to its Latin roots of attention once again, *a-tendere* is about a 'reaching out' to have contact with another. This reaching out involves a complicated dance of touch. Touch becomes a sensory modality of attention and experience whereby bodily constellations and 'borders' become made and unmade, porous and redefined in the creation of educational spaces (Todd, 2016).[5]

Reading this with respect to movement, we can say that touch 'creates space' as relation. As a reaching out, it is a movement that is not easily fixed or intelligible

within given systems of meaning, since it is itself the very movement of signification. 'When I touch you, what I cannot know is what infra(sensual) language our reciprocal touch will create. Nor can I predict how my touching you will provide spaced times and timed spaces' (Manning, 2007, p. 57). This focus on the relationality of touch, the touching and being touched by something or someone, is at the heart of how we become bodily subjects in the world. Thus it is not just the physicality of touch that matters here, but how it engages in *processes* of individuation and togetherness: movement is space-making through the touch that it generates. Touch draws us together as it separates us, blurring borders between our bodies and between my body and the environment. Taking water as an example, is my body the water I drink? The rain that soaks my skin? The water I feel as warm or cool? The tears I weep?

On this view, there is no body experienced, no body materialised without either movement or touch. As Manning (2016) observes, there is no 'givenness' to the body; it is a 'dynamic constellation in co-composition with the environment' (p. 115). In a fundamental way, the body *is* touch – touch creates spaces between (at least) two. 'Touch' challenges the cultural intelligibility of the body. As Manning (2007) writes, touch draws

> to our attention the limit-space between your skin, my skin, and the world … When I reach to touch you, I touch not the you who is fixed in space as pre-orchestrated matter/form. I touch the you that you will become in response to my reaching toward. (p. 87)

This reaching toward marks the way teachers are both becoming themselves and implicit in relations of becoming for others. Understanding touch in this way can also be interruptive of the conventional ways we think about becoming, since the body is never only just fixed within a social script. As our bodies touch, they have the potential to exceed the kinds of normative relations that work to keep certain bodies in their place. In reaching toward you, I do not touch – in a sheerly physical way – the social significations of a body, or the labels attached to bodies. Because of this, as Manning (2007) suggests, there is also the resistant politics of touch inherent in bodies reaching out toward one another

> What touch achieves … is the potentiality to apprehend bodies not as containers of preordained individual significations, but as orbs continually readjusting themselves to the infra-languages and movements of desire through which they interact. (p. 57)

Touch as a form of movement and reaching out is not only aesthetic in light of the sensory dimension of touch, but is also political. It not only resists dominant vocabularies of what bodies signify, but creates a 'relationscape' (Manning, 2012) that enables new formations of becoming. Bodies are engendered through their encounters with things, objects, and other matter as well as with other bodies. Our capacity to touch and be touched creates an environment of entanglement and interrelationality; an environment that enables new movements and actions to emerge, and through them new bodies and new formations.

Teaching as a bodily enactment in this sense co-generates spaces with students as well as with objects of study. It also means that teaching, through its relationality, creates aesthetic and political possibilities of co-becoming. Teaching is therefore a sensory engagement with the environment that brings into being the teacher herself while opening up new worlds through which their – and students' – becoming is never complete.

Concluding thoughts

While understanding teaching as bodily enactment might seem complex, opening as it does new relations of encounter through movement and touch, it nonetheless allows us to think and feel more concretely about how bodies physically, sensually, materially relate to both objects of study and other bodies. My point here is not to tell someone how to teach, or to dictate what forms teaching 'needs' to take. Rather, it has been to demonstrate how a form of conventional teaching as pointing is not merely a symbolic gesture but a performative act, composed through a series of movements that invite students into certain relations with their world over others. Students, of course, will take up – or disregard – such invitations in differential ways, making their movements and their own reaching out part of co-generated educational spaces. Understanding our own teaching as formation means that we cannot teach as though such relations of movement and touch with students do not matter. This does not mean that we become hyper-aware of our every move as we make it – seeking to control our micromovements in any posture we take will inevitably have us flat on our faces in no time. Rather, it is to become sensitised to the nuances of our gestures, comportment, positionality – in short, to the physicality of teaching itself that we so frequently take for granted. In becoming sensitised we can also begin to feel our teaching as a practice that is open to improvisation through its responsiveness to other bodies and objects we are encountering. Just as dancers who perform a choreographed piece can only do so in response to other dancers' movements, so too do teachers bring a quality of bodily response to their practice. The issue is to allow ourselves not only to think about our teaching, but to feel it.

I hope that in exploring the importance of teaching as formation we might consider giving some thought to the following questions: How might teachers attend to their own micromovements in ways that recognise their very necessity to their own actions in the classroom? How can shifting one's understanding from the 'form' of teaching to the 'formation' of teaching recognise that how one moves both assumes and sets up certain relationships to students (and not only to our subject matter)? How can we re-imagine teaching as a formation that places weight on the choreographies of relations and the touch of encounters? And, finally, how can we develop a sensibility that is attuned to students' own movements and gestures of contact through these encounters? Perhaps our responses to these questions can lead to new iconographies of teaching that display the tender dance of reaching out – *a-tendere* – as a fundamental part of what we do as teachers with, and not merely to, others.

Notes

1. In on-line photographs of conventional western classrooms, students are frequently portrayed as either sitting still or sitting with their arms raised – a paradoxical form whose skyward trajectory belies their earthly presence in the room. Students seem to signal through such a gesture their anticipation of acceding to something the teacher already has access to.
2. This is not to suggest that other mathematical models cannot engage with the body more dynamically. See for instance, the discussion in de Freitas and Sinclair (2013) which suggest the ways mathematical concepts and bodies are entangled. I wish to thank one of the reviewers of this paper for pointing this out to me.

3. To be clear, I am not speaking here of formation in the sense of socialisation, of someone becoming 'formed' by and through social norms. Rather, I am referring to the processes and relations that constitute things, objects, and others, including ourselves. See Bourriaud's (2002) discussion of form, drawing on Epicurus and Lucretius (p. 19).
4. Specifically, they conceive of these practices within notions of suspension and profanation (Masschelein & Simons, 2013, pp. 31–41), and I will be discussing suspension in more detail below. Also, my focus will be primarily on the practice of attention since teaching is closely bound up with directing it in Masschelein and Simons's view.
5. See my discussion in Todd (2021).

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