There is growing appreciation among International Relations (IR) scholars that emotion matters fundamentally to the dynamics of world politics. But discerning and establishing just how has proven rather difficult. At the heart of the problem is that the phenomenon of emotion does not "fit" conveniently into any of the usual orienting categories used in IR. Emotions are the embodied experiences of concrete persons but they are not actually the "properties" of those persons. Rather than things people have, emotions are contingent ways-of-being human — that is, experiences of human being — that emerge from interactions between agencies and structures of both material and social sorts. They are neither substance nor process, neither natural nor cultural, neither cognitive nor physiological. In the context of IR, this means that it makes little sense to try to apprehend emotions through the levels-of-analysis framework that organizes the field. For those interested in understanding the role of emotion in world politics, the daunting questions begin with how one begins.

I found myself facing these questions during the course of an ongoing research project when I came to suspect that emotion was a key force in producing the outcome that interested me. Since this was not what I had expected, pursuing my suspicion meant taking a considerable detour to figure out how other scholars had managed to study emotion. What I found, both in and outside of IR, is that most scholars have met the challenge by dodging it. In IR, in particular, the existing literature on emotion succeeds in examining its role in world politics only to the extent that it wittingly or unwittingly assumes away the ontological complexity of emotion. It was in this context — that is, in search of a way to conceptualize, theorize, and perform empirical research on emotion in world politics — that I stumbled into practice theory.

In this chapter, I argue that practice theory offers a framework that embraces, rather than assumes away, the ontological complexity of emotion. It offers a way to fathom emotion that does not reduce that phenomenon to one or the other of the categories it exceeds. Because of this, practice theory lays the
foundation from which it is possible to develop a theory of the impact of emotions on world politics that is logically consistent with the phenomenon itself; and an empirical research method that is capable of capturing emotion (as opposed to some inadequate proxy of itself) literally in action. In short, in offering the emotion researcher a conceptually solid point from which to begin, the practice perspective on emotion clears the way for more compelling research into how emotions matter in world politics.

As a matter of positioning this chapter relative to the rest of this volume, a few points bear emphasis. First, this chapter is less about practice as **explanans** or **explanandum** than it is about the value of practice theory as a heuristic through which we might better evaluate emotions as **explanans** of various outcomes in world politics. Of course, were it that emotions really are practices (as opposed to being usefully modeled as such) it would be accurate to say that I am interested in (emotional) practices as **explanans**. Tempted though I am by the notion that emotions actually are practices, I do not venture to argue that here. Second, the whole of my argument—from my conceptualization of emotions as practices, to the theoretical and methodological directions that I argue this implies for emotion research in IR—is rooted in and derived from the very specific practice theory of Theodore Schatzki. ¹ This means that aspects of my chapter imply considerable departures from the terms of Adler and Pouliot's necessarily more general framework.²

Key among them is that I take practice as offering IR not a **broader** ontology but one that is at least as restrictive—albeit more complex—than the various ontologies that currently pepper the field. The source of this difference is that, with Schatzki, I take practices as unique from other forms of action only in that practical action is conceptually and analytically irreducible to more elementary, constitutive forces (as I suggest below, Adler and Pouliot adopt a rather more flexible position on this). This strong claim indicates that practices cannot **cluster around** the intersection of the axes as in Adler and Pouliot's Figure 1.1 (p. 22), but rather can unfold only at the intersection itself; only where it is impossible to disentangle agency from structure, social meaning from material fact.

From this difference follows another, which is that whereas Adler and Pouliot interpret practice as an ontological and epistemological "gluon" that cuts across IR "isms,"³ I understand practice theory as outlining an "ism" in its own right. Just as rationalism, for instance, builds its particular account of social order on the back of a specific individualist ontology of human beings, "practice-ism" (or anyway, my Schatzki-inspired version) builds its account of social order on the back of a post-Cartesian, post-individualist ontology of human being. As I turn now to arguing, adopting this practice ontology makes a considerable difference in how one can theorize and research the role that emotion plays in world politics.

### The emotion problem

In this section, I lay out the emotion problem in IR. I argue that when faced with the challenge of developing theoretically tractable and empirically researchable propositions about the role of emotion in world politics, emotion scholars in IR have done what emotion researchers in so many other fields have done: they have responded to the elusive complexity of emotion by seeking to simplify the phenomenon. The result is that they (wittingly and unwittingly) "squish" emotion into one or another side of the categories it exceeds. This solution has come with a cost for, in approaching emotion as a product of either/or types of causal forces, emotion researchers in IR end up belying their own arguments about how emotion matters in world politics. In fact they end up ironically indicating that emotion **per se** does not have a distinctive impact on world politics. Its effects are more fundamentally reducible to the work of willing agents, or determinative material or social structures.

Few IR scholars would deny the importance of emotion to world politics but, until recently, only a few have endeavored to understand the ways in which this is so. In the last decade this has begun to change. In her seminal article, Neta Crawford reminded IR of the "passions" upon which theories of international politics and security depend, paving the way for scholars to explore emotions not just as properties of decision-makers but as forces within the broader dynamics of world politics among collective actors.⁴ Crawford’s entreaty, combined with growth in constructivist theorizing and the events of 9/11, has prompted IR scholars to turn their attention to this previously marginalized area of study. A burgeoning body of research now exists that inquires into the role of emotion in a wide range of global political dynamics, including state rationality and the logic of deterrence,⁵ the war on terror,⁶ patterns of ethnic and civil conflict,⁷ the explosion of violence between states and transnational actors,⁸ national reconciliation,⁹ and political identity formation.¹⁰

As in any emerging literature, however, foundational questions remain—not least how to cope analytically with the complex nature of emotion. Although common parlance suggests that emotions are "things" that individuals "have," experts have increasingly come to appreciate a more subtle ontology and epistemology of emotion. At its clearest, "emotion is one of a large set of differentiated biologically based complex conditions" that is constituted, at

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¹ All references to Schatzki’s practice theory are specifically to Schatzki, 1996.
² Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume.
⁵ See Mercer, 2005 and 2010.
⁶ See Bennett, 2002; and Saurette, 2006.
⁷ See Kaufman, 2001; and Petersen, 2002.
¹⁰ See Campbell, 1998; Hutchison, 2008; and Hutchison and Bleiker, 2008.
the very least, by mutually transformative interactions among biological systems (e.g. cognition, physiology, psychology) and physical and socio-cultural ones. Emotions, that is, are energies or capabilities, which are acquired by individuals through complex engagements with objects and others in the world. Key here is the fact that the human body is an open system, which responds to its environment by developing its capacities. While emotion, in general, is one such type of capacity, the particular emotional experiences of which one becomes capable are socially, historically, and personally contingent. Far from universal, then, emotions are emergent from and irreducible to agency or structure, substance or process, nature or culture.

Given the complex, emergent character of emotion the challenge for researchers has been how to develop a conceptual system that appropriately "acknowledges the complexity of emotional functions" while still effectively capturing their discreteness as phenomena. While conceptual integrity is a prerequisite for achieving "substantive conclusions ... with scientific merit" it remains unclear how to conceptually disentangle the phenomenon of emotion from its constitutive forces and effects. For instance, recent research in neuroscience indicates that even though the intellectual dimension of emotional awareness (cognition) and the unconscious dimension of bodily affect (physiology) interact in the production of emotional experience they can also be independent processes, with the affective arising before the cognitive, or the cognitive occurring without the affective. In other words, it is not just that emotional experiences are complex emergent phenomena but that the combination of forces from which they are emergent varies from context to context. The result is that the field of emotion research is "rife with basic disagreements about crucial conceptual definitions."17

The "wise" solution, as Ronald De Sousa puts it, is "to rephrase the question." Rather than asking, "How can I conceive of emotion in a way that reflects its complex and variable dichotomy-eluding ontology?" scholars have pursued their research on emotion by asking "What conception of emotion can offer the most explanatory purchase?" In other words, the field has solved the "problem" of the elusive ontology of emotion by focusing instead on epistemology, on the site or force through which the emotional experience becomes known to those in its throes, and to researchers. The result is a literature organized around three broad analytics: those that emphasize the cognitive or intellectual dimensions of emotion; those that emphasize its physiological or affective dimensions; and those that emphasize the forces of the socio-cultural environment in which the emotional body is situated.

The emerging body of emotion research in IR largely reflects this analytic trend: attuned though scholars are to the complex emergent ontology of emotions, they tend, even if unwittingly, to focus for analytic purposes on one or another of its constitutive forces. For instance, Stephen Rosen accepts the significance of social environment and cognition in constituting emotional functions but, to make emotion tractable, adopts an evolutionary view in which those forces are reduced to biological imperatives of survival. Jonathan Mercer, who is also concerned about "getting lost" in the ontological complexity of emotion, resolves the problem by instead emphasizing the cognitive. On his account, emotion is analyzed as the "substrate" of such thought-based constructs as rationality and belief. Even Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, who are bothered by such reductionist tendencies, end up reducing emotion to one of its constitutive components. In focusing their attention on visual media (e.g. art, film) as a site of collective emotional expression and stimulation, they marginalize the cognitive and embodied aspects of emotional experience in favor of a focus on its social ones.

Intentional or not, the "streamlining" of emotion into biological, cognitive, and social analytics has been fruitful from the perspective of getting on with the business of studying emotion in world politics. Whereas Rosen's biological determinism enables him to explain the curious obsession of military leaders with social status, Mercer's cognitive bias supports the ground-breaking argument that credibility, and so the logic of deterrence, is constituted by emotional beliefs. Bleiker and Hutchison's unintended reduction of emotional functionality to social representations also pays dividends. Their focus on visual media makes possible the argument that emotion played a much larger role in shaping the political impact of 9/11 than "had the news of the attack been communicated by texts alone." Given that such innovative propositions about the role of emotion in the dynamics of world politics was made possible by the framing of emotion research in epistemological terms, De Sousa's suggestion appears wise indeed.

And yet, upon deeper reflection the benefits of the epistemology-first focus appear less certain. The heart of the problem is that it is impossible to adopt any epistemological analytic that does not also imply specific ontological foundations, which then tend to become reified in the theorizations and insights that follow. Hence, from biological analytics of emotion tend to arise accounts of

12 De Sousa, 2008.
14 De Sousa, 2008, 12.
15 Marcus, 2000, 234.
16 See ibid., 224; and Fisher and Chon, 1999.
17 Marcus, 2000, 234.
18 De Sousa, 2008, 12.
19 See Nussbaum, 2001; and De Sousa, 1987.
20 See Panskepp, 1998; and LeDoux, 1996.
21 See Kövecses, 2000; Barrett, 2006; and Fisher and Chon, 1989. This taxonomy is from De Sousa, 2008.
22 Rosen, 2005.
24 Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008.
25 ibid., 130.
world politics in which emotions appear as materially determined, naturally given forces; from cognitive analytics tend to arise accounts in which emotions appear as instrumental tools in the repertoire of reasoning agents; and from social analytics tend to arise stories in which emotions are simply one among many social structures or discourses that constitute subjects. In other words, the pursuit of analytic clarity about the distinctive effects of emotion ironically ends up rendering emotion indistinguishable from other forces.

Consider, for instance, Jacques Hymans’ acclaimed research on nuclear politics. Although he begins with a sophisticated account that recognizes the socio-cultural, cognitive, and physiological dimensions of emotions, Hymans, like Mercer, makes cognition the cornerstone of his analytic framework. Arguing that beliefs about national identity constitute different emotional dynamics that in turn inspire decision-makers to make a variety of different nuclear choices, Hymans tells a story in which emotions appear all but indistinct from the rational calculations about beliefs from which they emerge. The result is a story about nuclear politics that is virtually impossible to differentiate from the traditional strategic security stories about nuclear proliferation that have long dominated the field. Even Mercer, who puts emotion before cognition, ends up telling a story in which emotional functionality appears as an empty set or a conceptual placeholder rather than a substantive experience with particular cognition-shaping features. Instead of the story he wants to tell about the process by which emotional experience constitutes rationality and credibility, Mercer ends up with a story about how cognition assimilates emotional information. In both cases, one learns little about the role of emotion per se in world politics and quite a lot about that of reasoning agents.

The “emptying” of emotion from emotion research occurs in a different way in Andrew Ross’ otherwise theoretically exquisite account of the role of emotion in political violence. Like Bleiker and Hutchison, Ross is uncomfortable with the denuded notion of emotion that follows from an analytic emphasis on its constitutive components. However, whereas Bleiker and Hutchison seek a remedy in an explicit turn to the social framework, Ross seeks a remedy in stepping away from the epistemology-first approach to studying emotion. Directly deriving his theory of emotion in world politics from the complex, emergent ontology of the phenomenon, he argues that emotion can be understood holistically as a form of human energy or “capability.” Key here is that emotion is a unique form of human experience that not only shapes cognition but also produces cognitively unmediated affect. Acknowledging that some emotional experiences are consciously felt and rationally manipulated, Ross points out that all emotions entail an affective experience. In this way, even conscious emotions entail some unreflective affective “excess” and it is, in Ross’ view, this excess that makes emotion a unique force in the dynamics of political violence.

Ross’ account is remarkable in that it effectively theorizes a “something” – elusive to other IR researchers – that makes emotion more than the sum of its parts. In this way, it promises to move emotion research past the simplifying frameworks that evacuate the phenomenon of its very distinction. Yet when it comes to “finding” the affective excess, or the unique qualities, that he argues distinguishes emotion from other forms of human experience – that is, when it comes to epistemology – Ross falls back into reductionism. Recognizing that we cannot get into heads or bodies to distinguish the character and effects of the inarticulable experiences being lived by those in the throes of emotion, Ross suggests that we can interpret such experiences by tracing “circulations” of affect through publics. Hence, Ross argues that the militarist US response to the 9/11 attacks was made possible by an affective energy or mood among Americans; a mood that was both cognitively and unreflectively activated through the circulation of particular images and representations that had become historically entrained among Americans to evoke emotions “conducive to militarist response.” Yet Ross merely asserts, rather than empirically illustrates, the embodied experience of emotional militarism that he posits was activated among Americans by the circulation of such images. Rather than capturing the character and effects of the affective energy allegedly contained within those social circulations, Ross ends up with a story more plausible as an account of strategically manipulated public discourses.

From the perspective of advancing knowledge on the role of emotion in world politics, it is discouraging that research designed so consciously to avoid reducing emotion to its constitutive phenomena would fail to do so. And yet, contained within Ross’ work is an important opening from which to remedy this shortcoming. In approaching emotions as experiences that become available to a human being through complex interactions among biological (physiological and cognitive) and social forces, Ross implicitly fathoms emotions as practices. By explicitly recognizing and systematizing this ontology, we can uncover better ways to study emotion in world politics.

See also Edkins, 2003.

Others attuned to the need to theorize emotion as more than the sum of parts have merely concluded that there is something mystical or magical about emotion that exceeds our grasp. They make no effort to account for that excessive dimension, though. Ross, 2006, 211.

For such an account, see Krebs and Lobasz, 2007. Saurette’s Deleuze-inspired model of emotion (2006) confronts similar methodological problems as those faced by Ross. In other words, Ross argues that discourse is an embodied practice as well as an intellectual one consisting of cognitive content and social meaning (Ross, Forthcoming). Yet since he offers no way to distinguish those aspects of discursive action that issue from embodied affective experiences from those aspects of discursive action that issue from intellectual choice, it is empirically impossible to parse his claim that the former does distinctive work.
The ontology of practice

Emotion scholars across disciplines often imply that emotions have something to do with practices. Hate, for instance, is commonly used not as a noun (i.e. hatred) but as an adjective that modifies the word “practices” (i.e. hateful). Alternatively, the existence or presence of particular emotions (e.g. fear) in a given context is depicted in connection to specific social practices (e.g. aggressive posturing). And yet, the connection between emotion and practice has been made mostly in casual ways, proffered without sustained analytic reflection on the character of the relationship between emotion and practice. In this section, I develop the theoretical basis upon which I seek to remedy this with a practice theory of emotions. My core burden in this section thus echoes that of Adler and Pouliot in Chapter 1 in this volume: to characterize practice and clarify the nature of a practice perspective as an analytic framework from which to approach the social world.

As a starting point, recall that practices are competent performances; they are “doings” or routines of action — e.g. teaching, buying a cup of coffee, conducting international diplomacy — that carry specific meanings within particular cultural, historical, and material space. Practice theory, however, gives us leverage on more than just “how things are done around here.” As Theodore Schatzki argues, practice theory is a theory of how humans “do” their very being-in-the-world. Practices, he argues, are the foundations, or the smallest units, of social life. From local neighborhood to world politics, practices organize human life, establish social order, and transform the orders they create.

The logic of Schatzki’s bold propositions can be traced back to his account of practical action. Along with most of other theorists of practice, including Adler and Pouliot, Schatzki posits that practice rests on a unique ontology. The question is precisely how. Echoing other practice theorists, Adler and Pouliot argue that what makes the ontology of practice unique is that practice is “suspended” between structure and agency, materiality and sociality. Hence, while other forms of action may also entail and combine these basic components of social life, only practice actually exists or “unfolds” in the distinct ontological space where all four components converge. Practices, after all, are competent performances while other forms of action are not; and competence necessarily involves sociality and structure while performance necessarily involves materiality and agency. In this way, practice is not possible without all four components of social life.

There is a problem, however, for to say that practice is not possible without all four components of social life is not necessarily to defend the claim that practical action rests on unique ontological ground. Quite the contrary, this formulation risks conflating two very different views of practical ontology: one in which practice is ontologically suspended between sociality, materiality, agency, and structure, and one in which practice is an ontological amalgamation of these components of social life. While Adler and Pouliot use these concepts as if they are continuous and compatible with each other, one ought not do so. After all, something that is suspended between other components is distinct from them. In contrast, an amalgamation is a composite phenomenon that can still be reduced to its original components. Insofar as practice rests on an amalgamated ontology, practical action might just as well be analyzed in terms of the contributions of each of its ontological components. Doing so disaggregates practices into the very ontological dichotomies that, according to practice theory, practice exceeds. In fact, if one accepts that practice has an amalgamated ontology, practice hardly seems like a distinct form of social action. At best, it appears as a complex form of other forms of action; and, at worst, it becomes analytically indistinguishable from them.

For an example of this one need look no further than the debate between Bourdieu and his critics. Because Bourdieu (unwittingly) adopts an amalgamated practical ontology, his critics are able to disaggregate it into its component parts, upon which they find that Bourdieu has not sufficiently considered agency. The result, they argue, is that practical action in Bourdieu’s model becomes analytically indistinct from structurally driven forms and equally as a-historical. Etienne Wenger’s “communities of practice” framework has been charged with the same problem in reverse. The rather minimal contribution of structure to his amalgamated practical ontology fashions practical action so that it is analytically indistinguishable from agent-driven action. In either case, practical action collapses into some other form of action because practice theorists have failed to capture the unique ontology of practice. It is into this breach that Schatzki steps, endeavoring to clarify the precise way in which practice is ontologically distinct from other forms of action.

Using the apparent failure of Bourdieu’s practice theory as his jumping off point, Schatzki argues that the problem lies with the way both Bourdieu and his

34 Partial exceptions exist. Durkheim described emotions as cognitive fictions produced “outside in” through the embodied conduct of social rituals (Fisher and Chon, 1989). Others focus on the ways that such embodied rituals (especially “emotive” speech) induce emotions in the form of lived affective experiences. See Massumi, 2002; and Reddy, 1997.
35 Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume.
36 Biological reflexes, for instance, entail both materiality and structure.
37 In the case of competence, a “doer” only acquires the technical knowledge and social understanding to properly perform a practice in light of her access to and recognized position within the relevant symbolic and social orders. In the case of performance, the very possibility of action depends upon an animate physical presence, a being, with the capacity to take action. Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume.
critics imagine the "nexus" or "fulcrum" in which practice unfolds. They do not imagine it as producing a distinctive phenomenon: one that is emergent from the complex interplay between agency, structure, materiality, and sociality; one within which these original components dissolve and become indistinct from each other. Instead they see the fulcrum as a meeting point or intersection at which each component retains its elemental form. The result is that both Bourdieu and his critics remain "trapped" within the very dichotomies that practice is thought to elude. To illustrate, Schatzki notes that while Bourdieu and his critics disagree over whether he really "locks out" agency, both sides implicitly agree that practical knowledge itself is devoid of agency. After all, practical action rests on tacit and unreflective knowledge, or what Adler and Pouliot call the "Background."40 It follows that Bourdieu and his critics assume that agency comes from "the mind," in the Cartesian sense of reflective, cognitive, processes.41 They abide, that is, by the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy. Schatzki, in contrast, proposes that there is no reason to expect that cognitive, reflective actions are the only kind of actions that exude agency. In fact, the key to appreciating the suspended ontology of practice lies in recognizing other forms of agency—especially those entailed in "the body."42 Toward this end, Schatzki offers a post-Cartesian account of agency. Approaching agency as a force of creativity, or the ability to do things differently, Schatzki argues that agency is a result of practice rather than its source.43 Just as the score from a football game is an accomplishment of the practice of playing football so is agency an accomplishment of a practice: specifically, the practice of being human. Whereas the practice of football involves the competent performance of specific techniques for playing ball (throwing, catching) the practice of being human involves the competent performance of specific techniques for expressing one's way-of-being human to other humans. As Schatzki argues there are four dimensions to way-of-being human: states of conscious awareness, like feeling itchy or hearing a sound; intellectual conditions, like attitudes, beliefs, and interpretations; behaviors, or what one is doing, like buying coffee; and emotion, or how one is experiencing their own existence in the world at a given moment. While I return to these below (especially emotion), for now the point is that one becomes human only to the extent that one makes present to other humans one's way-of-being.44 In this way, agency emerges from being human, where being human, rather than an innate condition, is itself a practical activity.

What, then, is it about the practice of being human that creates agency? In certain respects, the practice of being human is like all practices. For one, a being acquires the knowledge and competency for its performance in and through concrete social relations in specific social contexts.45 That is, one learns how to express one's being—how to "do" one's human being—by acquiring the social understandings and technical skills appropriate for making a given way-of-being intelligible to other humans within a given social and symbolic order. Also like with all practices, the performance of human being (i.e., self-expression) reproduces the social structures from which it emerges by positioning those who perform it according to the degree of competency of their performance; that is, in terms of how recognizable and intelligible their human way-of-being is to those at the "core" of the practice.46 In this sense, the practice of being human generates a human social order within which it positions its practitioners.

Unlike other practices, though, the practice of being human is both a practice in its own right and a necessary and inevitable component of other practices. Put differently, all practices also enact or do human being because being human is done by making present one's way-of-being in the world to others. All practices do this at some level. From those that emerge overtly to serve the purpose of self-expression, like talk therapy, to those that at first blush seem irrelevant to self-expression, like football, all practices necessarily express some dimension of their practitioners' way-of-being to other humans. Consider football. Not only does its enactment "do" the playing of football but for others to whom the practice of football is intelligible it also expresses the practitioner's behavioral way-of-being in the world; that is, what he is doing. Indeed, depending on a variety of factors the doing of football might express its practitioners' way-of-being along other dimensions as well—from the conscious to the intellectual to the emotional. In this way, no matter what else a practice does,

40 The problem, argue critics, is that tacit and unreflective as practical knowledge is, its practitioners appear as mechanistic carriers and executors of competencies that "inherit" from the habitus; and practical action devolves into a self-reinforcing "locked-in" structure that is impervious to change (Reckwitz, 2002). Bourdieu, interestingly, does not dispute that practical knowledge translates to action in a mechanistic way but instead argues, as do Adler and Pouliot, that agency still creeps in. Bourdieu tries to avoid structural determinism by suggesting that the habitus only disposes bodies to do certain things that it is generative, providing resources that agents can use to improvise practice. Yet, Bourdieu offers no account of how agents draw on their habitus as a resource of some kind—"that is, of where they get their improvisational creativity (Farnell, 2000, 402-403)"

41 This problem persists in the Bourdieusian practice literature in IR. See Pouliot, 2008; and Jackson, 2008. Adler and Pouliot assert that background knowledge "does not create uniformity of a group" and they argue that there is always "wiggle room for agency even in repetition" but they do not offer a theoretical account of how this is possible. Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume.

42 I place this in scare quotes because part of Schatzki's agenda is to problematize the very idea of the body as distinct from the mind.

43 Compare to Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume. Though often conflated with individuality and individualism, Schatzki sees agency as a broader phenomenon of which individualism/ity is one effect.

44 See also Varsca, 1995. 45 Adler and Pouliot, Chapter 1 in this volume. 46 Ibid.
all practices organize their doers within the social structures from whence the practice emerged in a process that generates and stabilizes human social order.

Second, practices of being human (and therefore all practices) create agency because, as Schatzki argues, bodies simply exceed the self-expressive routines of practical action that they perform. Insofar as each body is biologically unique, its being-in-the-world is also distinctive in ways that simply cannot be rendered intelligible (often even to the being herself) through self-expressive practices. However, precisely because these ineffable ways-of-being are biologically grounded, they cannot help but reflect the way that a given practitioner performs the competent techniques of a given self-expressive practice in a given moment. Hence, no matter how local and cohesive the practice, and no matter how competent its performers, different practitioners will always perform it in somewhat different ways. Through movement and comportment, tone and pitch, position, appearance, and orientation, human bodies, unlike machines, exceed the techniques they perform. They make present, even if unintelligibly so, those aspects of a performer’s being that are lost, evacuated, or otherwise rendered inexplicable with available practical techniques.

This bodily excess, argues Schatzki, is agency. Unintelligible as bodily excess is to others, even in the midst of other socially meaningful performances, it materializes as a surprise within the social space of its performance. Because it is other than what is expected, bodily excess amounts to creativity that can contribute to a transformation, not only in the particular practices into which it “leaks” but also potentially into the order of human social life generated by those practices. Of course, understood this way, agency is not a property of the human being (i.e. of either mind or body) but a momentary effect created by the competent performance of practical techniques of self-expression that “do” being human. But since all practices “do” human being and since each human being is competent in any number of practices, the potential sources of agency are infinite, as are the potentially transformative effects of each “leak.” As Schatzki explains, humans do their being at the nexus of a unique, contingent constellation of practices such that a practitioner’s competencies in one domain become his bodily excess in the next.

Against the backdrop of Schatzki’s post-Cartesian account of agency, it becomes possible to appreciate the unique ontological status of practice. First, practice depends upon and reproduces social structure but it also produces the material agency that transforms itself. Second, however, more than just simultaneously entailing all these components, practice renders them so mutually imbricated that they become indistinguishable from each other and practice becomes reducible to none. While structure is necessary for the emergence of practice, practice does what structure cannot: it generates human being. In turn, while practice creates agency, agency does what practice cannot: it transforms practice. In fact, it is only because practice creates agency that practice is distinguishable from structure. In transforming the practices from which it evolves, agency keeps practice from ossifying into a static structure. Against this backdrop, practice appears as far more than an agglomeration of other components of social life. It is a moment of “doing” (a moment in the doing of human being) when structure becomes agency, when sociality becomes materiality, and when continuity becomes change. Practice is a component of social life in its own right.

This last point bears emphasis. On Schatzki’s rendering, practice is the fundamental component of social life for it appears that there is no form of social action that is not also a component of some practical action. For one, purely agent-driven action is simply impossible. Not only is there is no such thing as an agent per se but agency, as a force of difference-making creativity, presupposes an intelligible status quo against which cognitive and/or physiological excess stands out. In this way, agency is always bound up with practical action. And while structurally driven action is theoretically possible, it can only exist when forces are brought to bear on inanimate bodies or machines outside of social relations. In this way, structurally driven action is, by definition, socially uninteresting. It only becomes socially interesting when structure becomes encoded in the doings of human being – that is, when it becomes an agency-producing practice.

Given practice as the fundamental unit of social life, the potential contribution of practice theory to IR is nothing less than a full transformation of how scholars approach the field. To take a practice perspective on world politics is to do more than just “add practice to world politics and stir.” It is to ask how practice is world politics; it is to ask how practice organizes and transforms the human social order that IR scholars call world politics. In this way, the practice perspective on IR constitutes an “ism” in its own right.

Emotional practices

I have argued that research on emotion in IR succeeds only by analytically reducing the dichotomy-eluding, emergent phenomenon of emotion to the constitutive components to which it cannot be analytically reduced. I have

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47 Schatzki, 1996, 54.
48 It bears emphasis that were it not a stable routinized practical setting there would be no stable expectations in the first place, and hence, there could be no discerning difference or creativity. In this way, agency is impossible outside of practice.
49 The physiological and/or cognitive excess that extrudes into a being’s competent performance of self-expression distinguishes her from other performers. In this way, the practice of self-expression not only constitutes a being as human in the human world but also makes socially possible the distinction between human beings. Because the practice of being human produces agency it makes possible the individual.

50 Adler and Pouliot also see practices as a foundation for the order of human life, but given this discussion this view sits uneasily with their broad view of practices as a “gluon” and not an “ism.”
further argued that Schatzki has modeled practice, a similarly dichotomy-eluding, emergent phenomenon, in a way that overcomes these problems. In this section, I bring practice theory into contact with emotion theory in order to examine whether and how the practice heuristic might offer some more compelling leverage on emotion. I argue not only that it is conceptually appropriate to model emotions as competent performances but also that in doing so we gain new ways to think about how emotions might matter in the social world – and, by extension, world politics.

When it comes to approaching emotions as practices Schatzki is, unfortunately, of little help. Certainly, Schatzki recognizes the centrality of emotion to human being and social order. Indeed, as noted above, Schatzki takes emotion as one of the four dimensions of human ways-of-being that one might express through practice. And yet, Schatzki treats emotion, itself, as a given; as an internal experience of existence, the externalization of which through expressive practices constitutes one’s human being. While I share Schatzki’s view of emotion as a way-of-being, and of practice as expressing emotion, the developments of emotion theory, as laid out above, suggest that we might also think of emotions – that is, the very experience of “having” a particular affect – as themselves as practices. After all, if emotions are capacities that beings acquire in and through the complex interplay among biological (physiological and cognitive) and social forces, a practice perspective is as well suited to analyzing emotions as it is to football. Doing so involves considering not, as Schatzki does, how beings express emotions through practices but rather how beings acquire the competency to “do” a given emotion; and how the “doing” of that emotion affects (literally) the social orders from which the emotional practice emerged in the first place.

Understood this way the challenge is whether it makes sense to approach emotions as competent, socially meaningful, bodily performances. Some aspects of this idea ought to be uncontroversial, not least that emotions are bodily phenomena. Whether cognitively processed or entirely unmediated by cognition, emotions are biologically grounded, subjectively experienced phenomena that cannot be apprehended without analytic attention to the human body. It ought also to be relatively uncontroversial to propose that emotions are socially meaningful. While the meanings of different emotions vary from context to context, emotions are nothing if not socio-linguistic categories through which humans tacitly or reflectively convey information to others about how one is doing.\footnote{Lutz, 1988.} In this way, Schatzki is right to propose that the expression of emotion makes a being present to other humans. However, to approach an emotion as a practice is to treat emotions not as strictly internal phenomena that can only be externalized through expressive practices.\footnote{I agree with Schatzki, though, that emotion can also be expressed through various other practices beyond that of its own doing.} It is to take emotion, itself, as an expressive social practice. It is to say that emotional ways-of-being become socially intelligible as bodies competently perform the techniques that bring them into being.

The idea that emotions are competent performances or actions (no less ones that are intelligible to others) calls for a more sustained defense. After all, competent performances are things that people (intentionally or not) do; and, in fact, that they learn how to do through social engagements. In contrast, emotion, in the lay imagination, is something that naturally happens to people without effort. And yet, as argued above, current research on emotion suggests that there is a lot less difference between practical action and the process by which a given emotional experience is created. Just as practical action (even that which is cognitively mediated) is ultimately rooted in the unreflective “Background,” so are emotions. Emotions, of both the cognitive and cognitively unmediated sort, “happen” only as a result of a series of physiological bodily doings. For instance, the experience of excitement is the result of all kinds of biological actions that literally move and change the way a being exists in the world in a given moment. These may include physiological actions that create, say, increased heart rate, sweaty palms, and a burst of adrenaline; psychological actions that ameliorate one’s mood; and cognitive actions that generate a heightened sense of expectation. In any case, emotions do not happen; they are done. Like football games, and all other practices, emotions happen through the labor of the human biology.\footnote{Haraway, 1990.}

Second, the ability, or labor-capacity, to “do” a given emotion is not given to bodies by nature. Rather, as noted above, the biological capacity to create a particular emotional experience is something that humans develop as the open biological system traditionally called “the body” interacts with the environments within which the being is positioned. Consider fear. Like any emotional way-of-being in the world, fear exists as a specific flow of sensations and feelings, which are produced in the body by the stimulation of a particular complex of biological processes. And yet at every level the activities involved in constituting fear are contingent. At the cultural level, the contingency concerns which sensations and feelings “count” as fear; at the biological level, the contingency concerns the particular complex of physiological and/or cognitive processes entailed in constituting and expressing fear-associated sensations and feelings; and at the level of the environment, the contingency concerns the kind of stimuli that will activate those biological processes. In short, a being learns how to experience, understand, and recognize fear. In other words, emotions are not just doings; they are competent ones.