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Hill, David (2012) 'Total Gating': Sociality and the Fortification of Networked Spaces. Mobilities, 7 (1). pp. 115-129.

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‘Total Gating’: Sociality and the Fortification of Networked Spaces

Keywords: gating, ethics, sociality, ontological insecurity, mobility/moorings, proximity.

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Biography: David W. Hill is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, University of York. After completing a BA (Hons) in Philosophical Studies: Knowledge and Human Interests at Newcastle University and a MA in Philosophy at Durham University, he began working on a PhD thesis at York exploring the place of ethics in social theory via considerations of the new media environment.

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‘Total Gating’: Sociality and the Fortification of Networked Spaces

Abstract

Starting with a description of Wynyard Park in Teesside, a development that combines gated residence, workplace and leisure space, ‘fear of the other’ is identified as a key but underexplored motivating force behind this kind of ‘total gating’, an argument based on existing empirical studies of gated communities. It is argued that a radical reading of Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics of the other can do the explanatory work that would flesh out this allusion to fear: first, by reading the unknowable Levinasian other as repulsive in his/her threat to the individual’s ontological security; and second, by making ontological insecurity fundamental to Levinas’ account of ethical sociality. To conclude, this work is then situated in a mobility/moorings discourse.

Introduction

Urban spaces offer excitement. Cities are hotbeds of culture, of vital encounters and stimulating unpredictability. At the same time, so too are they breeding grounds for fear, for fear of crime, of random incivility and of the contingency of social confrontations. The gated community symbolises this provocatively. Gates and walls, security guards and CCTV cameras, are testimony to the idea that proximity to others is not solely a ‘compulsion’ (Boden & Molotch, 1994), that it can sometimes be repulsive. In this article I explore this fear of others that manifests itself in gating. Why do we fear the other? And what impact does gating have upon the ethical sociality that is grounded in proximity to others? The focus, then, is on the fortified

mooring around which expeditions into the social space of the urban environment are organised. This focus is justified given that gated communities are the centre of a network of mobilities to other privileged sites. They are also nodal points in a virtual network, technological connectivity being essential to their physically isolated existence. It is valuable to explore such remote places – to not just focus on mobility alone (as in, for example, Bauman (2008b) on liquid modernity or Augé (2008) on the bypassing of anthropological place) – in order to gain an understanding of the mutual constructions of mobilities and immobilities, or, in John Urry's terms, the 'relationality' or 'dialectic of mobility/moorings' (2003, see esp. pp.125-26; see also Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006). Mobilities of various kinds are important but what is also required is an understanding of the moorings, the periods of immobility at their core and the sites where routine socialities are grounded: this time/space will shape mobilities. My concern here is not with the locked-in immobility that contrasts with the mobility of the affluent ('the vagabonds' versus 'the tourists' (Bauman, 2007)) but with the mooring (the time/space of grounded sociality) of the mobile affluent and aspirational classes – in this case, the occupants of gated residential/work/leisure areas.

First, I will introduce the Wynyard Park development in the North East of England, a site of what we might call 'total gating': a combined gated residence, workplace and leisure space. My purpose here is not to give a detailed case study but, rather, to tell the story of what strikes me as an extreme extension of the gating phenomenon – in the area in which I live – in order to subsequently make some theoretical observations about the ethical sociality of mobility/moorings. Engaging with the wide body of literature on gated communities and networked urban environments, I will highlight

'fear of the other' as an oft-cited motivator behind the move to gating that nonetheless remains underdeveloped. Second, in order to meet the demand to fully articulate this fear of the other, I suggest a radical reading of Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of the other, most notably set-out in his *Totality and Infinity* (2007) and *Otherwise Than Being* (2008). It will be argued that Levinas' other – transcendent, unknowable – is a source of fear as s/he threatens the ontological security of the 'I' (or individual) in confrontation. The other is further repellent because of the demands s/he makes of the 'I' to enter into social commerce, to direct him/herself towards the other morally. As such we can expand on the notion of fear of the other found in gating literature with recourse to a two-fold ontological insecurity: that posed by the unknowable Levinasian other; and that which is fundamental to the Levinasian account of ethical sociality. Finally, I will expand on the idea of the repulsion of the other, utilising Paul Virilio's (1998) figure of the spastic, who controls their environment technologically to manage encounters with others, in order to situate it in a discourse of mobility/moorings.

Total Gating

Near Billingham in the North East of England is Wynyard Park. The village of Wynyard itself is part of the sprawling urban conurbation of Teesside. Together with Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Billingham, Redcar and Ingleby Barwick, Teesside is a sizable urban area with a population of 365,323, according to 2001 census data. If we add to this the towns of Eaglescliffe and Yarm – contiguous to Stockton and Ingleby Barwick respectively, as well as to each other – then that population increases by 18,335. Although, by population, it is one of the smaller

conurbations in the UK, it is in this urban environment that Wynyard Park Ltd has positioned their mixed-use development: a combination of business park and residential area, targeted at the aspirational middle-classes. The site is still in development and, whilst the business park is already in use, at the time of writing the residential area is yet to be constructed.

The area of Wynyard is already home to a gated housing estate, the location of which Wynyard Park Ltd plan to take advantage of whilst construction is ongoing. As the developers emphasise, '[t]he North East's most exclusive private housing development is literally a stones [sic] throw from Wynyard Park';[1] namely the Wynyard Hall estate, currently home to millionaire entrepreneurs and footballers past and present. This may only be a temporary endorsement until Wynyard Park's own 'exclusive housing' – the Wynyard Park Estate – is in use. In their own words:

> Wynyard Park is an exceptional site ideally situated in the heart of the Tees Valley in the North East of England. The site provides businesses of any type or size with a fantastic opportunity to establish them selves within a prestigious development that is designed to balance Lifestyle, Living and Business perfectly.

This coupling of living/lifestyle with business is central to the Wynyard Park ethos, as they seek to mesh the domicile with the workplace, and boast 'a standard of living that is unsurpassed' and 'the very best in both country and urban city living'. Also integral then is the privacy of suburban life coupled with the vibrancy and connectivity of city life. Transport links to the surrounding areas are emphasised but the developers also highlight the proximity of local leisure facilities ('health clubs, championship golf courses, internationally renowned sports facilities, shopping and nightlife') and plan for the construction of their own such facilities to service the

planned ‘exclusive’ (i.e. gated) housing estate. The site will offer ‘advanced’ ICT infrastructure, as ‘Wynyard Park Ltd are currently in discussions with a number of major ICT suppliers to ensure that the site is at the forefront of the latest technological advancements’. Also emphasised is ‘24-hour security with full CCTV coverage’. This security is to include road monitoring and patrols, whilst many of the roads will be private anyway. On the business side of things (if we can so easily separate this from the domestic) the Wynyard Business Park site provides office accommodation, warehouse facilities and storage and distribution centres. Security here is ‘a prime concern’ and consists of 24-hour guard patrols (365 days a year); a manned gatehouse; extensive site surveillance with all vehicles recorded entering or exiting the site and the use of infrared CCTV; building access control systems; and an on-site police station. ICT infrastructure is again highlighted as of paramount importance. The business park also boasts its own nursery, gym, pub and bistro, with intranet file-sharing available at the latter. Moving forward, the Wynyard Park ‘master plan’ is to create ‘a sustainable community incorporating a mixed use to meet a vision of a site that facilitates work, leisure and living and provides a high quality of life and well-being’.

So: what we see here is a development that combines domestic space with commercial space; is to an extent self-contained whilst drawing on the surrounding urban conurbation of Teesside; is highly connected by physical and ICT infrastructure; and is strongly defended by gating, 24-hour security and CCTV. I suggest that this is an extreme type of gating – its logical extension – and so a useful site for exploring questions of ethical sociality in the urban environment, chief amongst them: what

motivates this move towards total gating, the desire to live in a gated estate in the same development as one's gated place of work?

Gating

Total gating, then, describes the combination of fortified residences, workplaces and leisure spaces, close in proximity and connected by defended commuter pathways. In what follows I will draw on the existing literature on gating in order to demonstrate that 'fear of the other' is one of the key motivating factors behind this phenomenon; that is, that the perceived social danger exhibited by the unfamiliar 'others' of the urban environment results in the desire to live and work in closely linked gated communities.

Of course, fear of the other is one amongst numerous motivations for moving into gated communities, whether 'mixed use' or not. Setha Low sets out a comprehensive list of factors in her *Behind the Gates* (2003), noting class, the search for community, finance (for example, maintenance of property prices or tax incentives), and fear of crime, alongside fear of the other. Whilst notable studies into class (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Low, 2001), community (Bauman, 2008b, pp.90-109; Wilson-Doenges, 2000), finance (Low, 2006; Webster, 2002) and crime (Helsley & Strange, 1999; Wilson-Doenges, 2000) have added significantly to our understanding of gating, the notion of fear of the other has often remained underdeveloped.

With this in mind we ought now to ask: What accounts for this move towards the kind of total gating seen in the Wynyard case? We see in numerous studies, as well as in Zygmunt Bauman's synthetic work on community (2008a), as a motivating factor the

preoccupation with the imagined need to avoid encounters with those people seen to be dangerous by virtue of difference or unfamiliarity. With the loss of permeability brought about by gating comes the exclusion of the general populace, a restriction on the movement of unrecognised others, and so the imposition of a feeling of safety. There is, on the one hand, exclusion of others and, on the other, self-imposed exclusion or withdrawal. For the residents the aim is to create predictability and safety through disengagement:

> The process of gating surrounds an attempt, in part, to disengage with wider urban problems and responsibilities, both fiscal and social, in order to create a 'weightless' experience of the urban environment with elite fractions seamlessly moving between secure residential, workplace, education and leisure destinations (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005, p.180).

Whilst the above passage mentions gating alongside the elite, we can see, as with Wynyard Park, the potential for use of such strategies by the aspirational middle-classes. Methods vary according to budget but the search for security seems to be prevalent across the spectrum. The sliding scale of forms of withdrawal begins with insulation (residential preference determined by personal identity), progresses to incubation (sheltering and the linking of home to places of work, leisure, etc.), and ends, in its most extreme form, with incarceration (total insulation – e.g. the gated residential/work area) (Atkinson, 2006, pp.822-23). Progression through these strategies is a movement towards social homogeneity and disconnectedness. It should be noted that incarceration relates both to the aspirational or affluent who lock themselves in and the poor who are locked away with little hope of escape; the difference is the interconnectivity of the spaces of the former, as gated residential areas are 'live' (i.e. wired up to the information society) as opposed to 'dead' (i.e. cut

off) (Lash, 2002). So: there is a scale of strategies used to restrict the access of the unwanted, varying from symbolic to concrete methods of defending space:

1) Insulation: greater proximity to similar others;
2) Incubation: greater proximity, or more secure corridors to key sites;
3) Incarceration: reduced proximity to dissimilar or unknown others.

Across the spectrum these strategies have in common the creation of impermeability and an increasingly private lifestyle for those on the inside.

Crucially, the (fragile) feeling of safety created by gating seems to manifest itself as the evasion of unnecessary social interaction: 'It is important to recognise that security is not aimed solely at protecting residents against serious crime but also meets an apparent desire to avoid day-to-day incivilities and random social contact' (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.880); so, incivilities *and* unexpected civilities. The irony is that forting-up seems not to decrease fear; after conducting interviews with residents, Atkinson and Flint report that gating increases sensitisation to social dangers such that 'fear of outsiders appeared to increase' (ibid, p.880). Anxiety about unsolicited encounters remains and feeds into the perceived need for fortification. Rowland Atkinson highlights the desire for spatial autonomy represented by strategies of fortification, a desire rooted in 'a deeper strategy to manage contact with socially different or "risky" groups' (2006, p.819). He further notes that segregation is the result of deep-seated inclinations towards like-with-like interaction, and is reinforced by a similarly deep-seated 'fear of otherness' (ibid, p.820). Needless to say, there is little interaction between insiders and outsiders. As Atkinson and Blandy note: 'GC

[gated community] residents do not mix at all with residents outside the gates' (2005, p.184).

Before we continue we should note the intimate link between this sort of fortification and new media technologies. That is, new technologies make the bunker mentality of these defended spaces more practicable than ever before. It is not only the CCTV cameras and high-end alarm systems – the most visible and audible features – that make it possible to live a life cut off from social 'danger'. More subtly, new media technologies make living behind the gates more practical and more comfortable. Social media, online shopping, online newspapers, online gaming, teleconferencing, teleworking, and so on; all these things make *unnecessary* excursions into the world outside less likely. Now, this is not to say that new media technologies lead necessarily to an indoors existence and to less frequent contact with others; it is only to say that for those with a desire to avoid contact with certain others there are options. And, as we have seen, there are people with just such a desire. For Wynyard Park ICT connectivity is paramount, with particular emphasis on high-speed broadband connections.[2]

Ellison and Burrows (2007, p.300) note that the disengagement from proximate surroundings is likely to be virtual as well as physical:

> the development of inter-spatial networks of communication with others who possess similar economic and cultural capital, increasingly facilitated by the dramatic expansion of ICTs, conjures an image of 'communities of the mind', where social interaction is as likely to be electronic as 'physical' or face-to-face. Indeed, where it *is* face-to-face, such proximity will be the result of individualised journeys using private transport, taking 'private' families from one

> spatial locality to another with similar socio-spatial and cultural characteristics (ibid, p.303).

Drawing on Robson and Butler (2001) Ellison and Burrows suggest that the urban middle-classes create a 'virtual urban village' in which 'there is an awareness of others but not much in the way of actual interaction' (2007, p.301). Disengagement here is as much virtual as it is actual; evasion of encounters with others is as much about the use of new technologies as it is physical barriers and isolated commuter corridors.

So: this 'sod-off architecture' (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.882) of the networked gated community stands as a physical marker of the combined physical-virtual disengagement from the urban scene. Just as Manuel Castells (2006, pp.434-40) observes of what he calls the 'mega-city' (or networked city), the networked gated community may be globally connected but locally disconnected. The strategies described above illustrate the double-edged sword of virtual and physical withdrawal from a locality, highlighting the evasion of encounters with others perceived as sources of insecurity and fear. The biggest danger is that physical and virtual withdrawal marks a withdrawal from the public sphere in general, leading to apathy towards proximate spaces, the people in them and the city as a whole.[3]

'Bubbling'

In exploring total gating we should not focus only on the mooring itself (the fortified homestead or workplace or leisure space); these fortified spaces are 'protected nodes in a wider network that create a counterpart city with flows of affluent residents moving while cloaked from the observation of the majority of residents' (Atkinson &

Flint, 2004, p.886). These protected nodes are linked by patterns of movement that are divorced from the social context. There is pronounced car use amongst the residents of these fortified spaces and they rarely walk anywhere. This is significant in that it feeds into the 'privatisation of mobile space' (ibid, p.888). Taken to the extreme, for some residents the only public space traversed is that between their car and their destination (the office, shop or school). As such, their cognitive map of the urban environment results in homogenous contact and limited encounters with others; they move through 'shielded corridors' (ibid, p.889). This represents yet further withdrawal from public space. Travel becomes 'shielded from interface by other social groups' (Atkinson, 2006, p.821). Movement is protected to and from gated residential areas; sports utility vehicles (SUVs), secure car parks, private roads, and semi-public shopping centres allow for 'passage in seclusion or near-invisibility' (ibid, p.830). The insiders live in a separate world, leading a commuter lifestyle. Segregation extends from the fortified home out into public space. Eduardo Mendieta describes this exploitation and manufacturing of urban fear as a 'new anti-urbanism' (2005, p.195). He suggests we add the SUV and the Hummer – 'a vehicle of war, a machine of escape and velocity in and through the urban jungle' (ibid, p.195) – to strategies of gating as another element of urban fear. He notes:

> The barbarians at the gates have mutated into the dwellers of the slums and ghettos of today's global elites. And if the defences are overrun and the gates collapse, the fleets of SUVs and Hummers are parked in the underground garages of these self-contained bunkers of late modernity, ready for the escape caravan (ibid, p.198).

The SUV, when combined with the gated community, demonstrates 'the interaction between a desire for social homogeneity, predictability and status' (Atkinson &

Blandy, 2009, p.96). These vehicles are seen to provide the sense of safety through 'hazardous' (unpredictable) spaces.

Atkinson (2006) has described the mobility of gated community residents as 'bubbled'; that is, the residents attempt to manage and minimise unexpected encounters with others whilst in transit to locations away from the fortified homestead.[4] These locations are very often fortified, or at least exclusive, themselves, leaving only the spaces (for us 'places', for them 'spaces') in between as 'dangerous' (read: strange, unmanageable, other).[5] As we saw with the case of Wynyard Park, fortified homes and workplaces are connected by private roads and private transport, and are monitored by CCTV. The whole site is compact, with all the desired services in close proximity to home and workplace. The result is that the occupiers will be able to commute (often short distances) without being bothered by others. As Atkinson and Flint note: 'It is now possible for social factions to exercise unprecedented control over their experience of the city in terms of to whom, how and when social encounters are made' (2004, p.877). Bubbled mobility – a sense of remove and safety from the heterogeneous, unpredictable, and therefore dangerous urban environment and its inhabitants – makes total gating possible.

Recapitulation

Drawing on the existing literature on gating has allowed me to identify four key points for the present study: first, gating appears to be motivated, in part, by fear of the other (Atkinson, 2006); second, this fear of the other does not decrease as the level of fortification increases (Atkinson & Flint, 2004); third, total gating is made possible by ICT connectivity (Ellison & Burrows, 2007); and finally, the space in between

fortified places (home, work, leisure) can be navigated in a bubble (Atkinson, 2006), maintaining the fortification and making total gating possible.

Ontological Insecurity

As we have seen, we can account for the move behind the gates with reference to fear of the other – but what is experienced with the other that instantiates this fear? Whilst fear of the other is noted by many researchers, what is required now is to work out quite what this consists of. Low (2003, p.131) is correct to say that this fear is difficult to express. Nevertheless, if it is to be of any explanatory use it must be in some way explored and articulated. In what follows I will draw on the 'ethics of the other' articulated in Emmanuel Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (2007) and *Otherwise than Being* (2008). It is first argued that Levinas' unknowable other is a source of fear by virtue of his/her ontologically insecure nature. It is further argued that this ontological insecurity should be understood as fundamental to Levinas' conception of ethical sociality. An active reading of Levinas' work will not only make it possible to offer an account of this fear of the other, but also to situate gated disengagement in a moral discourse.

Ontological Insecurity as a Source of 'Fear of the Other'

What accounts for the fear of the other? From the studies on gated communities examined above we can see that, although it plays a part, the actions of the other (the potential for crime or anti-social behaviour) are not essential; rather, it appears to be otherness *per se*, the otherness of the other, that is the determining factor. One way of explaining this is by turning to Levinas, first by arguing that his phenomenological

account of encounters lends itself to a repulsive interpretation of the other; and second, by demonstrating that fear of the other can be explained by the ontological insecurity at the heart of Levinas' 'I'-other relation.

For Levinas, the other is always a mystery to the 'I' who encounters him/her. The relation of the 'I' to the other cannot be classified as a totality, a 'we'; to do this, there would have to be some way for the 'I' to escape the 'I'-other relation, retreating to a point where a 'we' could be observed (Levinas, 2007, p. 35). This, of course, is not possible. 'We' means common ground, mutual understanding: 'we' are of a shared mind. Without this there is no commonality, only two isolated subjects, the 'I' never capable of knowing whether or not s/he shares motivations or intentions with the other. There can be no understanding between them. The thoughts of the other, Levinas writes, can never be reduced to the possessions of the 'I', that is, they remain hidden (ibid, 43). Quite what the other is all about escapes the individual's 'grasp' (ibid, 39).

This position can be illuminated with reference to the film noir *Lady in the Lake* (1947), a reference that also highlights the repulsive aspect of Levinas' formulation of the phenomenology of the encounter. Our experience of the other is perpetually like that of Robert Montgomery's Phillip Marlowe character: a narrow first person perspective that gives a dangerous nature to the other in proximity, as unknowable others loom close to the camera/eye – something that would be alleviated with a wider shot, a third person perspective. In reality there is no third person perspective, we are limited to the narrow first person point of view that gives only a surface image, allowing for no demystification of the strangeness of the other. In reality, as in the

film, we are denied an objective view. There is only the limited perspective of the 'I': the proximity of others, whom we cannot know – know their narrative, back story, intentions – looms with menace. As Levinas notes, even in those close to a given individual there remains something impenetrable, 'the stranger in the neighbour' (2008, p.123). Whilst we tolerate this abyss of otherness in our nearest and dearest, it makes those with whom we are less familiar too contingent, too unpredictable to tolerate. When the residents of gated communities fail to put attributes to the others they fear it becomes apparent that it is the otherness itself, which is to say the contingent and unpredictable nature of the other, that is the greatest concern.

When Low (2003, p.131) states that the fear of the other found amongst residents of gated communities is difficult to articulate she is, to my mind, correct. However, she then proceeds to conflate this fear with racial prejudice (ibid, pp.133-52). This is, as she demonstrates, certainly an aspect of the fear. But it does not take into account the desire to evade random civilities that we saw above (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.880), nor the fear of others sullying the 'niceness' of one's area that Low herself notes (2003, pp.153-54). Reducing fear of the other to fear of a particular kind of other (Latinos or Blacks in Low's study) is to lose sight of the nature of this fear. It is difficult to express because it is not in fact fear of anything in particular. It is a fear that the other might trample the flowerbeds; fear that the other might have the audacity to ask for directions or spare change; fear that the other might burgle one's house or pose a threat to one's children. Not that we should reduce fear of the other to fear of crime; as we saw above, fear does not decrease as crime does nor as security increases (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.880). This suggests that it is not the actions of the other that create fear but rather not knowing their intentions, not knowing what

their actions could possibly be. It is, precisely, fear of *Levinas'* other, that alien, ungraspable entity with whom I share no common ground. From the limited vantage point of the house-holder – unknown others seen through windows, or at the darkest corners of the estate – outsiders appear to carry a threat by virtue of being unknown, their intentions beyond us, hence the motivation for gating: to keep them out. This vantage point becomes further removed with gating, the other now viewed through the CCTV monitor or through the gates, and so ever more distant and strange – an exaggerated 'Phillip Marlowe-view'. Even neighbours are strange at heart, and so we also see the use of contractual codes of conduct within gated communities in order to keep the others *within* the gates at a tolerable level of sameness (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.881).

What I want to suggest, then, is that the other is feared because the other is a source of ontological insecurity. With the other I can share no common ground, s/he is not wholly in my site. This is to be understood, not physically, but ontologically. That is to say that the other escapes my capacity to know *what there is* with regards the other. If no totality can be formed then the other remains transcendent, an encounter with the other is an encounter with infinity (which is, for Levinas, the opposite of totality, that which escapes understanding). It is my contention that this transcendence is a threat to the ontological security of the 'I'; if the other remains transcendent then the 'I' cannot know comprehensively *what there is*. The other as such is unknowable and therefore unpredictable; the environment which others occupy or move through becomes insecure. The urban environment – occupied by these others, with whom encounters are also unpredictable – becomes dangerous. If humans desire stability and sameness, as Anthony Giddens (1991; 1997) has argued, then total gating is a logical response to

this insecurity and otherness. The unpredictable nature of the other can be curtailed by minimising contact and maximising distance through gating and bubbling – in extreme cases, total. This, as we have seen, does not reduce fear but it does keep risk at a distance.

Ontological Insecurity as an Event of Ethical Sociality

I do not believe, however, that it is sufficient merely to explain fear of the other in the context of gating. As Bauman notes, the critical sociologist should 'refuse to accept that something is right simply for being there' (2009, p.3). Recourse to Levinas is justified not only for the explanatory gap it fills in relation to fear of the other as motivation for gating; it also allows us to state that the gating constellation, this mechanism for avoiding encounters, simply is not right. In order to demonstrate this, I will argue that ontological insecurity is a major constituent of Levinas' ethical sociality.

As Bauman (2009, pp.62-81) observes, Levinas' unknowable other and the 'I' are ontologically separate. Ontologically speaking the 'I' is only ever alongside the other; something must happen to bridge the gap, otherwise there could be no relation between the two – and this something must be beyond ontology. For Levinas this bridging event occurs in the encounter, where the other confronts the 'I' with its very exteriority. Presented with exteriority, the 'I' is called to leave the safety of interiority (the egoism or solipsism of the 'I') and engage with the other in the intersubjective realm. Levinas writes: 'the Other Person tears me away from my hypostasis, from the *here,* at the heart of being or the center of the world in which, privileged, and in this sense primordial, I place myself' (1998, p.86). In other words, it is the 'I' that bridges

the gap by eschewing this imagined privileged position and directing him/herself towards the other.

This tearing away from oneself, this direction towards the other, is, for Levinas the event of ethical sociality. The 'I' is confronted with the existence of the other in the encounter, exteriority posited against the interiority of egoism. We can speak of 'confrontation' here because the encounter of 'I' with other, interiority with exteriority, is experienced as resistance: here is another entity, an other with secret motivations and intentions. The 'I' can no longer behave as if in that privileged position, and so must instead limit her/his actions to take into account the presence of the other. By confronting the 'I' with otherness, with something other to the 'I', the freedom of the 'I' is limited. Demands are made of the 'I' to co-exist with others; the 'I' cannot behave as if s/he were alone, and so her/his powers and actions must be limited – 'the calling into question of my spontaneity' (Levinas, 2007, p.43). The very freedom of the 'I' to act without concern for consequences is curtailed; the other must now be accommodated. For Levinas, this ruptures the egoism of the 'I', enforcing 'being-with-others' rather than 'being-for-oneself'. As such, the direction towards the other is 'the ethical event of sociality' (Levinas, 2007, p.207): the 'I' enters a world of others, of 'social commerce' (Levinas, 1993, p.21) in which the freedom of the 'I' to act must be subjected to self-imposed limits. This prohibition is the responsibility for the other that constitutes Levinas' ethics.[6]

What I want to suggest is that not only is the Levinasian other a source of ontological insecurity, but so too the ethical sociality that Levinas grounds in the encounter with this other. The privileged position of egoism, of shunning the presence of the

unknowable other, is the most secure of ontological centres. To be drawn out of this and towards the other is to de-centre oneself, to open oneself up to all the contingent unpredictability of social commerce. Since we cannot know how the other will respond, directing oneself towards them in a gesture of responsibility is a risk. The other might take offence, or find this response injurious. The other might lash out, harm us. The intersubjective realm of Levinasian ethics is an unpredictable, insecure social space.

Such an account of ontological insecurity would stand in contrast to that offered by Giddens (1991; 1997). For Giddens, ontological security is a desirable state of stability (knowing *what there is* with the other) whilst ontological insecurity is a negative state of uncertainty. Giddens' approach is psychological whilst a Levinasian approach would be phenomenological: the former is limited to what the individual thinks and feels (egoism) whilst the latter opens up an intersubjective dimension by exploring insecurity as an encounter with another, the phenomenological experience of the other. This latter approach recasts ontological insecurity as the necessary state of encounter from which sociality is derived, and ontological security as its evasion. By doing so, the concept of ontological insecurity can do a lot more work in the context of gating. Giddens' account, by making ontological security a desirable state, would force us to understand the gated community in a positive light as an extreme strategy for achieving security. A Levinasian account would put ontological insecurity at the heart of the encounter, rather than as something to be managed through encounters. Further, it makes the individual's response to this fundamental insecurity an ethical event. This allows us to look at gating in a more critical manner.

The other as resistance to the freedom of the 'I' is curious in the context of total gating; it would suggest that the operation of these fortified spaces is fundamentally backwards: the bunker architecture that physically resists the intrusion of the other is an exaggerated reversal of the idea that the other resists the bunker-dweller. It would also seem to explain, in part, the motivation for the construction and use of these structures; the sense of ontological security is maintained by this backwards resistance: *if the other resists me then I will resist the other*, seeking security in networked gated communities. This is a pathetic and irresponsible gesture. The repulsion that motivates gating, the fear of the other, is derived from the two-fold ontological insecurity outlined above: the unknowability of the other and the risk of the intersubjective environment. Nevertheless, these two factors can be understood as grounding the responsibility that binds sociality. *Pathetic* because no amount of fortification or bubbled mobility could ever hope to evade something so fundamental to social existence. *Irresponsible* as it is to renege on the duty to be-for-others that makes sociality possible. The very possibility of sociality is the debt we owe to the other.

Morality occurs in social space. As such, how we change that space impacts upon the ethical relationships that occur within it. The interpretation of Levinas outlined above allows us not only to account for the fear of the other, the repulsive other, in terms of ontological insecurity, but also to understand these developments as what Robert Sack would call 'bad places' (ibid, p.270).

Concluding Remarks: (Repulsive) Proximity, Mobility, and Mooring

In what remains I will expand upon the narrow focus on fear of the other in instances of total gating in order to make some general observations of the consequences for a theory of mobility/moorings that hinges on proximity.

Urry (2002) has argued that the desire for co-present encounters shapes human mobilities. Despite the availability of increasingly ingenious technologies that offer virtual proximity – Apple's iPhone 4 with its video calling, Skype, avatar interaction online, for example – we still take the time to travel out into what Don DeLillo calls 'meat space' (2003, p.64), eschewing the virtual in favour of the fleshy proximity of the face-to-face. What Boden and Molotch (1994) called the 'compulsion of proximity' organises our mobility.

However, what this does not take account of is the *repulsion* of proximity that is also felt, the negative response to the over-proximity of others. Slavoj Žižek (2008) has articulated this well. 'What increasingly emerges as the central human right in late-capitalist society,' he argues, 'is *the right not to be harassed,* which is a right to remain at a safe distance from others' (ibid, p.35). We see this in the obsessive fear of harassment and random in/civilities noted of the gated community residents above, or, Žižek would add, in a society obsessed with stalking and sexual harassment. Fear of over-proximity, he observes, has become a major constituent of our subjectivity (ibid, p.34). The repulsion of proximity must be understood alongside its compulsion if we are to understand the way that mobilities and moorings are organised.

Paul Virilio, in his *Open Sky* (1998), understands this well. His notion of 'the spastic' not only evokes this repulsion to proximity but offers an original device for framing

the response to it. Virilio's spastic uses technologies to control his/her environment, minimising face-to-face encounters after an aversion to human proximity. What is valuable here is Virilio's concern for what is lost by this spastic kind of disassociation. He writes that with the 'degradation of the physical proximity of beings' we lose the tie that binds sociality (ibid, p.58). The problem is that although Virilio understood this repulsion to proximity he could not explain it in the first place, nor does he ground sociality in anything more cogent than the sort of 'blood and soil' rhetoric that would make any historian of the twentieth-century shudder. This is where the reading of Levinas adopted above can come in. Proximity can be repulsive because the unknowable other is a source of ontological insecurity – fearsomely so – and because the encounter with the other demands that we limit our actions, act against our will, despite ourselves, which is to say, 'for-the-other' (ethics). The degradation of proximity is disastrous (Virilio associates it with the sort of pollution that leads to environmental disaster) because ethical sociality is grounded in the encounter.

Substantiated in this way, the usefulness of Virilio's spastic device is illustrated by the 'total gating' example. Total gating utilises urban, vehicular and ICT technologies to control the environment of encounters. The gating and security of residential space provides a mooring safe from random encounters, from within which the insider's mobility can be organised whilst the outsider's mobility is impeded. If places of work and leisure are included in the gated constellation then those places that are shared with others (the office, the gym) become safe moorings shared with similar others. Bubbled mobility utilising private roads and/or the tank-like Hummers or SUVs further prevents the random encounter, ensuring safe passage to those engagements

with individuals whose proximity is compelling – for example, business meetings, which Boden and Molotch note are frequently face-to-face affairs despite tele-conferencing technologies (1994, pp.270-74; 2004, p.104). ICTs allow for virtual engagement with privileged others whilst locked-in behind the gates, or moving within bubbles between private/fortified nodal points. What we see, then, are strategies of mobility organised around strategically situated moorings designed to allow for a *selective* disassociation.

Selective disassociation means that interaction can be limited only to those who are similar, and so a veil of security can be drawn over those insecure others. Without the confrontation with these supposedly risky others there is little real awareness of them (outside of an 'awareness' or 'fear' of their risk) and so no sense of responsibility for them. Without responsibility there is no social bond: they remain on the other side of the veil. Spasticity, then, is this refusal of the other through technologically-assisted selective disassociation: a refusal to acknowledge the other and to bear any responsibility for them achieved through the use of technologies to control the experience of the environment and of those within it. As such, total gating can be seen as a systematic form of spasticity. It is motivated by the fear of the other rooted in ontological insecurity and has as its effect the refusal of the responsibility for the other – which grounds sociality – through selective disassociation as a form of controlling the environment of encounters.

Proximity shapes mobility. Urry has also drawn attention to the 'relationality' or 'dialectic of mobility/moorings', to how mobilities and moorings are mutually constructed (2003, see esp. pp.125-26; see also Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006).

Moorings are the fixed site from which we negotiate our social encounters, travelling out into the world by compulsion of proximity. Moorings are the time/space of grounded sociality. However, proximity can also be repellent. The other's otherness is repulsive, the demands they make of us force us to act despite ourselves. But ethics is a way of being, a direction – and directing ourselves towards that which is repellent is the very stuff of moral behaviour. What I want to suggest is that a theory of mobility/moorings must also include an account of ethical sociality. Social space is moral space. When we organise mobilities around a moored centre we are simultaneously exerting control over encounters, encounters that awaken us to responsibility. I have demonstrated how a radical reading of Levinas can help us to understand the fear of the other that motivates the gated mooring around which bubbled mobilities are organised. Reading this alongside Virilio's notion of the spastic has enabled us to explore the idea of the repulsion of proximity through the sort of technologically-assisted mobility management strategies seen with total gating. Including this Virilio-Levinasian notion of spasticity, of strategies of mobility/moorings utilised in response to the repulsion of proximity, alongside compulsion driven mobility, might better help us to examine the impact on one of the core ties of sociality – that is, responsibility – in future case studies. Alongside the stranger (Simmel), the flâneur (Benjamin), the tourists and the vagabonds (Bauman), we might add this spastic to the *dramatis personae* of the city's flows and stoppages.

Notes

[1] All references to Wynyard Park come from the online brochure available here: http://www.wynyardpark.com/

[2] Following Crang, Crosbie and Graham (2006, p.2553) I suggest we understand what is meant by ICT to include telephony, television, computers, etc – and the interaction of these elements together. An understanding of how these technologies are used together will allow us to assess their impact upon the urban environment.

[3] Virilio puts the dangers of withdrawal somewhat poetically: 'the world, the planet, is becoming a blockhouse, a closed house, foreclosed' (2002, p.88).
[4] Phillips and Smith (2006, p.899) also talk of moving in a 'protective bubble of air' in their study of urban incivility, demonstrating the intuitive value of the 'bubbling' metaphor.
[5] See Flusty, 1997, p.48 for an excellent account of what he calls 'interdictory spaces': spaces that intercept, repel or filter would-be occupants. See also Bauman, 2008b, pp.98-104 for his account of anthropoemic spaces (spaces that vomit or repel the other, such as fortified places of business) and anthropophagic spaces (spaces that assimilate or make same the other, such as shopping centres). Note: the gated community would be both, repelling others and making same any remaining otherness of the residents through housing agreements.
[6] My reading of Levinas on sociality is informed by that of Bauman, who observes: 'We are not moral thanks to society […]; we live in society, we *are* society, thanks to being moral. At the heart of sociality is the loneliness of the moral person' (2009, p.61). Such a reading highlights the connection between the social and the pre-ontological, ethical movement that allows two ontological distinct entities – the 'I' and the other – to engage with one another.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Nick Gane, Rowland Atkinson, Dave Beer, and Vicki Wilkinson for comments on earlier drafts. Thanks also to three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. Finally, my thanks to Chris Hill and Jenny Hambling for all their help.

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